

GENERAL DISCIPLESHIP II

General Discipleship II 2-15.doc

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This course is designed to be a lecture/discussion study. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: students could be given a copy of the course syllabus at the beginning of the course, and the teacher would assign a certain number of pages for the student to complete prior to coming together for each class discussion. Or, if it is not practical to give each student a syllabus, the teacher may wish to explain and assign particular activities (**indicated in “red” type**) which the students can do for homework each evening, in preparation for discussion in the next day’s lessons. These activities, described in each lesson, are also conveniently summarized and listed together at the beginning of each “unit” to make it easier for the teacher to plan the lesson and make homework assignments for the next class. If students read scriptures and “think about” questions before class, they will benefit more meaningfully from class time discussion. Class time should be spent discussing the principles presented in the assigned material. Students should be graded (subjectively) on their class attendance, performance in completing the required work on time, and their involvement in classroom discussion. Or you may choose to give quizzes/tests on the material you cover. This class should not be so much an academic exercise as an opportunity for each student to examine the depth of their inner commitment to knowing and doing the will of God.

The material is presented in 60 lessons, divided into 12 units. For this 3 credit course, then, approximately 38 minutes could be spent on teaching each lesson. You can add activities and illustrations of your own; and some activities or illustrations in the text may need to be passed over for the sake of time. But do be prayerfully discerning about those decisions because the spiritual principles of “Experiencing God” build upon each other. **On 2-11 an exam was added to the end of the material but nothing else was changed.**

In April of 2012 the sample test was removed and incorporated into the sample test file for all subjects. **No changes were made to the actual material.**

In February of 2015 I added pictures and changed wording on item # (2) page 121, and also corrected scripture references on page 180.

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Names, Titles, and Descriptions of God

PREFACE

Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God was written in 1990, to describe how God wants us to understand Him and His ways.

(Psalm 25:4-5, NKJV) Show me Your ways, O LORD;
Teach me Your paths.
Lead me in Your truth and teach me,
For You are the God of my salvation;
On You I wait all the day.

Since 1990 God has chosen sovereignly to use this study to touch and change millions of lives and thousands of churches around the world. At this 10th anniversary more than 3,000,000 copies of the workbook have been distributed, and other Experiencing God resources have been used by God. It is now in 47 languages, and has been used in almost every denomination.

It has been appreciated in prisons, in the military, in all walks of life, such as by lawyers, judges, CEOs, professional athletes, and politicians. Thousands of churches, high schools, colleges, and seminaries have been greatly helped and radically changed by using it as a guide for study groups. God has used these truths to affect people around the world including leaders of countries, government officials, and diplomats.

Hundreds of missionaries are on the fields of the world because of this study and hundreds of others are now serving as pastors, evangelists, and faithful servants.

(1 Cor. 4:1-2, NKJV). "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful"

UNIT 1

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 activities:

Memorize the following Verse:

—**JOHN 15:5** I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Write out and quote your memory verse for this unit. (You may use a different translation for your memory verses if you prefer.) Practice your memory verses daily.

When you come to the Lord Jesus to seek His will for your life, what questions do you ask of God to seek His guidance?

(Gen. 12:1-5) Read about the call of Abram to do God's will. Watch to see how much detail he was given before he was asked to follow. Underline where he was to go and what he was to do.

Are you ready to follow God's will that way?

Read Matthew 6:33-34; then pause and pray.

Lesson 2 activities:

Read the following Scriptures about God's (Jesus') call for people to follow Him. Write the names of those who were called to follow without being given much detail about what the future would hold for them.

1. Matthew 4:18-20 _____
2. Matthew 4:21-22 _____
3. Matthew 9:9 _____
4. Acts 9:1-20 _____

John 5:17, 19-20; Read and answer the following questions.

1. Who is always at work? _____
2. How much can the Son do by Himself? _____
3. What does the Son do? _____
4. Why does the Father show the Son what He is doing? _____

Lesson 3 activities:

Read and write your thoughts about the following scriptures:

(Phil. 2:5-8) (Matt. 20:26-28) (John 20:21)

What is a servant? In your own words write a definition of a servant.

Read 1 Kings 18:15-39

Lesson 4 activities:

Read Exodus 2—4

1. Related to Israel, what was God already doing?
2. What evidence shows that God wanted a personal and real relationship with Moses?
3. How did God want to involve Moses in the work He was already doing?

Lesson 5 activities:

4. What did God reveal about Himself, His purposes, and His ways?
- 5a. What did Moses have trouble believing about God?
- 5b. How would you summarize Moses' faith as it is described in Hebrews 11?

6. What adjustment(s) did Moses have to make?
7. How do you think Moses must have felt when God delivered the Israelites through him?

LESSON 1; UNIT 1

GOD'S WILL AND YOUR LIFE

(The following illustration is the first of many included in this study from the book **Experiencing God**. You may use these illustrations in teaching, or not; and feel free to use illustrations of your own.)

[When the 1986 World's Fair was coming to Vancouver, our association of churches was convinced that God wanted us to try to reach the 22 million people that would come to the fair. We had about 2,000 members in our association's churches in greater Vancouver. How in the world could 2,000 people make a great impact on such a mass of tourists from all over the world?

Two years before the fair we began to set our plans in motion. The total income for our whole association was \$9,000. The following year our income was about \$16,000. The year of the World's Fair we set a budget for \$202,000. We had commitments that would probably provide 35 percent of that budget. Sixty-five percent of that budget was dependent on prayer. Can you operate a budget on prayer? Yes. But when you do that, you are attempting something only God can do. What do most of us do? We set the practical budget, which is the total of what we can do. Then we set a hope or faith budget. The budget we really trust and use, however, is the one we can reach by ourselves. We do not really trust God to do anything.

As an association of churches, we decided that God had definitely led us to the work that would cost \$202,000. That became our operating budget. All of our people began praying for God to provide and do everything we believed He had led us to do during the World's Fair. At the end of the year, I asked our treasurer how much money we had received. From Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world we had received \$264,000. People from all over came to assist us. During the course of the fair, we became a catalyst to see almost 20 thousand people come to know Jesus Christ. You cannot explain that, except in terms of God's intervention. Only God could have done that. God did it with a people who had determined to be servants, moldable and available for the Master's use.]

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[The life of one professional football player was deeply changed by Experiencing God and another book my son, Tom, and I wrote called The Man God Uses. God immediately laid on his heart to offer these studies for others on the team, where he was serving as chaplain. He was not given permission to use any facilities for such a study, but he knew it was God's will, so he began to disciple one other player in his truck! Soon that life was changed, and then everything

changed! He was soon leading three studies; one with coaches. Other chaplains heard of this and asked to know about it until, during 2000, many professional football and baseball teams began using these studies.]

One man knew the will of God and did it, as God directed. God is now working in hundreds of lives, and they are being changed.

Memorize the following Verse:

—JOHN 15:5 (Jesus said:) I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

INTRODUCTION

JESUS IS YOUR WAY

As you follow Jesus, one day at a time, He will keep you in the center of God's will.

How??? By **KNOWING** Him

(John 17:3) Jesus said, “**This is eternal life:** that they may **know** you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent”.

(p 1) **The heart of eternal life and the heart of this study is for you to KNOW GOD and to KNOW JESUS CHRIST** whom He has sent. Knowing God does not come through a program or a method. **It is a relationship with a Person.** It is **an intimate love relationship** with God. Through this relationship, God reveals His will and invites you to join Him where He is already at work. When you obey, God accomplishes through you something only He can do. Then you come to KNOW GOD in a more intimate way by EXPERIENCING GOD at work through you.

Not a program;

Not a method;

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP with God

This course is designed to help you move into the kind of relationship to God, in which you will truly experience eternal life to the fullest degree possible.

(John 10:10) Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”.

Relationship to Jesus Christ—a Prerequisite

—1 Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

ARE THERE ANY STUDENTS WHO MIGHT NOT ACTUALLY HAVE A PERSONAL REALATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST AS SAVIOR??? (Teacher can use this section, or not, as you see the need. It is recommended that this opportunity be offered to see if, by chance, there might be an unsaved student.)

In this course I assume you have already trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and that you acknowledge Him to be Lord of your life. (If you have not made this most important decision in your life, the rest of the course will have little meaning for you because spiritual matters can only be understood by those who have the indwelling Spirit of Christ (**1 Cor. 2:14**).)

If you sense a need to accept Jesus as your Savior and Lord, now is the time to settle this matter with God. “If you have yet to invite Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior, please take the time to read each of the following passages from a Holy Bible. Ask God to speak to your heart and give you understanding as to your sinful condition, and what He has done to provide for you a way of forgiveness. It is only through Jesus that any man can be made righteous. Not because we deserve it, but because He gave His life for you. The forgiveness of God is found in Jesus Christ. When we place our trust in Christ and His sacrifice for our sin, God the Father accepts us because of what Jesus, His Son, has done on our behalf. Eternal life becomes the gift of God to all who place their trust in Jesus.” (**RevC**)

Romans 3:23—All have sinned.

Romans 6:23—Eternal life is a free gift of God.

Romans 5:8—Because of love, Jesus paid the death penalty for your sins.

Romans 10:9-10—Confess Jesus as Lord and believe God raised Him from the dead.

Romans 10:13—Ask God to save you and He will.

To place your faith in Jesus and receive His gift of eternal life you must:

- **Recognize that you are a sinner and that you need a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.**
- **Confess (agree with God about) your sins.**
- **Repent of your sins (turn from sin to God).**
- **Ask Jesus to save you by His grace.**
- **Turn over the rule in your life to Jesus. Let Him be your Lord.**

“If you now wish to commit your life to Jesus Christ and accept His gift of forgiveness and eternal life, you can do so by simply praying with sincerity from your heart the following prayer of faith and repentance. I invite you to **pray this prayer out loud** that you would have the assurance of your forgiveness and salvation. Please pray:

Heavenly Father, I come in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ your Son. I confess that I am guilty of sin, which has separated me from you. I ask that by your grace you would forgive me of all my sin, as I place my faith and trust in Jesus. I acknowledge that Jesus died on the cross

in my place, so that I could know the depth of your love for me, and your gift of eternal life. I wish to turn from my sin and commit the rest of my life to live for Jesus, making Him Lord of my life. I invite your Holy Spirit to come into my life to guide and direct my steps. I acknowledge you as the only true and living God, and receive you as my God. Thank you for hearing my prayer and allowing me to become one of your beloved children. In Jesus' wonderful name: Amen.” (RevC).

“Now that you have given your life to Jesus, I wish to invite you to view each new day of your life as a daily walk with the Living God. If you will commit to seek God and to do His will in all that you do, you will come to truly know and experience the wonderful reality of His love for you; His constant presence by the Spirit of God who lives within you; and His mighty power that is able to deliver, provide, and sustain you through all trials. He is able to keep that which we commit to Him against the Day of Judgment, and is able to present us faultless. To God be all the praise, honor, and glory! Know that you are in my prayers as you enjoy the following study” (RevC).

Looking for More in Your Experience of God?

You may have been frustrated in your Christian experience because you know God has a more abundant life for you than you have experienced. Or you may be earnestly desiring God's directions for your life and ministry. You may have experienced tragedy in your life. Standing bewildered in the middle of a broken life, you don't know what to do. Whatever your present circumstances may be, my earnest prayer is that **somehow in this time together you will be able to:**

- hear when God is speaking to you
- clearly identify the activity of God in your life
- believe Him to be and do everything He promises
- adjust your beliefs, character, and behavior to Him and His ways
- see a direction that He is taking in your life and what He wants to do through your life
- clearly know what you need to do in response to His activity in your life and
- experience God doing through you what only God can do!

Your Teacher-- The Holy Spirit of God will be your personal Teacher (**John 14:26**). He is the One who will guide you to apply these principles according to God's will. He will be at work revealing God, His purposes, and His ways to you.

(**John 7:17**) Jesus said, “If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own”. This will be true of this course as well. The Holy Spirit at work in you will confirm in your own heart the truth of Scripture. When I present a “biblical principle”, you can depend on the Holy Spirit to confirm whether that teaching comes from God. Therefore, your intimate relationship with God in prayer, meditation, and Bible study will be an indispensable part of this course. —**John 14:26** “The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things.”

Your Source of Authority--The Bible is God's Word to you. The Holy Spirit honors and uses God's Word in speaking to you about practicing your faith. You cannot depend on traditions, your experience, or the experience of others to be accurate authorities on God's will and ways. Experience and tradition must always be examined against the teaching of Scripture.

Anything significant that happens in your life will be a result of God's activity in your life. He is infinitely more interested in your life than you or I could possibly be. Let the Spirit of God bring you into an intimate relationship with the God of the Universe

(Eph. 3:20) "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work with-in us".

JESUS IS YOUR WAY

[For 12 years I pastored in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. One day a farmer said to me, "Henry, come out and visit with me at my farm." His directions went something like this: "Go a quarter mile past the edge of the city and you will see a big red barn on your left. Go to the next road and turn to your left. Take that road for three-quarters of a mile. You'll see a tree. Go right for about four miles, and then you will see a big rock . . ." I wrote all of this down, followed the directions, and I got there!

The next time I went to the farmer's house, the farmer was with me. Since there was more than one way to get to his house, he could have taken me any way he wanted to. So, he was my "map." What did I have to do? I simply had to listen to him and obey him. Every time he said, "turn" I did just what he said. He took me by a way I had never been. I could never retrace that route on my own. The farmer was my "map," he knew the way.]

When you come to the Lord Jesus to seek His will for your life, what questions do you ask of God to seek His guidance?

- 1 .** Lord, what do you want me to do? When do you want me to do it? How shall I do it? Where shall I do it? Who do you want me to involve along the way? And please tell me what the outcome will be.
- 2 .** Lord, just tell me what to do one step at a time, and I will do it.

Isn't the first response most typical of us? We are always asking God for a detailed "road map." We say, "Lord, if You could just tell me where I am heading, then I will be able to set my course and go."

But...

He says, "You don't need to. What you need to do is **follow Me one day at a time.**" We need to come to the place where the second response is ours.

Who is it that really knows the way for you to go to fulfill God's purpose for your life? God is.
—**John 14:6** Jesus said, **"I am the way and the truth and the life."**

- He did not say, "I will show you the way."
- He did not say, "I will give you a road map."
- He did not say, "I will tell you which direction to head."
- He said, **"I am the way."** Jesus knows the way; He is your way.

If you were to do everything that Jesus tells you, one day at a time, do you suppose that you always would be right in the center of God's will for you?

1. No, Jesus does not really know God's will for my life.
2. No, Jesus might mislead me and take me the wrong way.
3. No, Jesus would rather I wait until He tells me all the details before I start to follow Him.
4. Yes, If I follow Jesus one day at a time, I will be right in the center of God's will for my life.

When you get to the place where you trust Jesus to guide you one step at a time, you experience a new freedom.

If you don't trust Jesus to guide you this way, what happens if you don't know the way you are to go? **You worry every time you must make a turn.** You often freeze up and cannot make a decision. This is not the way God intends for you to live your life.

We can release the way to Him. Then take care of everything He tells us, one day at a time. He gives us plenty to do to fill each day with meaning and purpose and will use us for a special assignment.

Abram Followed One Day at a Time

Abram (later, God changed his name to Abraham) is a good Biblical example of this principle at work: he walked by faith and not by sight.

(Gen. 12:1-5) Read about the call of Abram to do God's will. Watch to see how much detail he was given before he was asked to follow. Notice where he was to go and what he was to do.

"The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you."

“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

So Abram left, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there.”

What did God say? How specific was He? “Leave” and “go.” Go where? “To a land I will show you.”

Are you ready to follow God’s will that way?

- NO, I don’t think God will ever ask me to go anywhere that He doesn’t show me ahead of time where I am going.
- I’m not sure.
- YES, I am willing to follow Him by faith and not by sight.

Many times, as with Abram, God called people just to follow Him. **He is more likely to call you to follow one day at a time than He is to spell out all the details before you begin to obey Him.** As we continue our study together, you will find this truth active in the lives of many biblical characters.

Read Matthew 6:33-34; then prayerfully agree.

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.” —**Matthew 6:33-34**

- Agree that God is absolutely trustworthy. **Is God..**
- Agree with God that you will follow Him one day at a time. **Will you, even when...**
- Agree that you will follow Him even when He does not spell out all the details.
- Agree that you will let Him be your Way. **Will you..**

If you cannot agree to these right now, openly confess your struggles to Him. Ask Him to help you want to do His will in His way. Claim the promise:

(Phil. 2:13) “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose”.

“Remember, God loves you, and knows your weaknesses better than you do. There is nothing hidden from Him, not even your thoughts. You can openly with humility come to Him and confess your weaknesses knowing He will not only understand, but will help you to know how to face and conquer them.” **(RevC).**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

(Students may wish to keep a continuing list of lesson “summary statements” in the back of their notebook in order to have a concise outline of the content of this study.)

- **As I follow Jesus one day at a time, He will keep me in the center of God’s will.**
- **Jesus is my way. I don’t need any other road map.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 1

JESUS IS YOUR MODEL

Interpret Experience by Scripture

Jesus watched to see where the Father was at work, and joined Him

During this course and during your life you will have times when you want to respond based on your own experiences or your own wisdom. Such an approach will get you in trouble. This should be your guideline: **Always go back to the Bible for truth** (or, for the Holy Spirit to reveal Truth).

Look to see what God says and how He works in the Scriptures. Make your decisions and evaluate your experiences based on biblical principles

When you study the Scriptures, do not base your decision on one isolated case. Look to see how God works throughout the Scriptures. When you learn how God has worked throughout history, you can depend on His working in a similar way with you. Your experience is valid only as it is confirmed in the Scriptures. Our experiences cannot be our guide. Every experience must be controlled and understood by the Scriptures. The God revealed in Scripture does not change.

1. Human interpretations of my experiences are not an effective way to know and follow God.
2. I should always evaluate my experiences based on the truths I find in the Word of God.
3. I may get a distorted understanding of God if I do not check my experiences against the truths of Scripture.
4. I can trust God to work in my life in similar ways that I see Him working throughout the Scriptures.

How do you let the Word of God become your guide?

Does God call people to follow Him without giving them all the details up front? We know that He called Abram to follow that way. Is that pattern consistent in the Scriptures? **Read the following Scriptures about God's (Jesus') call for people to follow Him. Notice who was called to follow without being given much detail about what the future would hold for them.**

1. Matthew 4:18-20

Matt. 4:18 through Matt. 4:20 ¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹**"Come, follow me,"** Jesus said, **"and I will make you fishers of men."** ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.

2. Matthew 4:21-22

Matt. 4:21 through Matt. 4:22 ²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

3. Matthew 9:9

Matt. 9:9 ⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. **"Follow me,"** he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.

4. Acts 9:1-20

Acts 9:1 through Acts 9:20 ¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, **"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"**

⁵"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶**"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."**

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, **"Ananias!"**

"Yes, Lord," he answered.

¹¹The Lord told him, **"Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying."**

¹²**In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."**

¹³"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.

¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, **"Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."**

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and ¹⁹after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

In some cases God gave more details than in others. We will look at Moses' call and discover that God gave him a bigger picture of the assignment than He usually gave others. In every case, however, the individuals had to stay close to God for daily guidance. For Moses and the children of Israel, God provided daily guidance through the cloud by day and the fire by night.

For Peter, Andrew, James, John, Matthew, and Saul, (answers to the above activity) God gave very little detail about their assignment. He basically said, “Just follow me, and I will show you.”

What Is God’s Will for My Life?

When people seek to know and do the will of God, many ask the question, What is God’s will for my life? A teacher said, “If you ask the wrong question, your answer may lead you to a wrong conclusion.”

!!
What is God’s will for my life? - is NOT the right question. The right question is, What is God’s will? Once I know God’s will, then I can adjust my life to Him. In other words, **what is it that God desires to do where I am.** Once I know what God is doing, then I know what I need to do. The **focus needs to be on God, not my life!**

Jesus’ Example

To learn how to know and do the will of God, there is no better model than Jesus. During His 33 years on earth, He perfectly completed every assignment God the Father gave Him to do. He never failed to do the will of the Father. He never sinned.

John 5:17, 19-20; Read and answer the following questions.

17 “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working. “ 19 I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. 20 For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, to your amazement he will show him even greater things than these.”

1. Who is always at work? _____
2. How much can the Son do by Himself? _____
3. What does the Son do? _____
4. Why does the Father show the Son what He is doing? _____

!!
This is one of the clearest statements of **how Jesus knew what to do.** Outline Jesus’ approach to knowing and doing God’s will like this:

- The Father has been working right up until now.
- Now God has Me working.
- I do nothing on My own initiative.
- I watch to see what the Father is doing.
- I do what I see the Father already is doing.

- Because the Father loves Me.
- He shows Me everything that He, Himself, is doing.

This model is for your life personally and for your church. It is not just a step-by-step approach for knowing and doing the will of God. **It describes a love relationship through which God accomplishes His purposes.** Watch to see where God is working and join Him! **Watch to see where God is working and join Him!**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **I will look to see what God says and how He works in the Scriptures. I will make my decisions and evaluate my experiences based on biblical principles.**
- **The Bible is my guide for faith and practice.**
- **The right question is, What is God's will?**
- **Watch to see where God is working and join Him.**
- **God is always at work around me.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 1

LEARNING TO BE A SERVANT OF GOD (p24)

To be a servant of God you must be moldable and remain in the hand of the Master.

Many Scripture passages describe Jesus as God's Servant. He came as a servant to accomplish God's will in the redemption of humanity. Here is what Paul said about Him:

(Phil. 2:5-8) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

In His instructions to His disciples about servant-hood, Jesus (the Son of man) described His own role of service:

(Matt. 20:27-28) Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Jesus also told us about our relationship to Him;
(John 20:21) “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you”.

Discuss your thoughts about the following scriptures: (above)

(Phil. 2:5-8) (Matt. 20:26-28) (John 20:21)

Based on these Scriptures and others you may be familiar with, do you believe you should be God’s servant?

Have you ever given your very best effort in trying to serve God and felt frustrated when nothing lasting resulted from your work?

What is a servant? In your own words, give a definition of a servant.

What is a servant?

Did your definition sound something like this: “A servant is one who finds out what his master wants him to do, and then he does it”? The world’s concept of a servant is that a servant goes to the master and says, “Master, what do you want me to do?” The master tells him, and the servant goes off by himself and does it. That **is not a biblical concept of a servant**. You cannot take your definition for biblical truth from the world. You must find your definition of terms in God’s Word.

Like the potter and the clay

(See Jer. 18:1-6. below) A **servant of God** is more like the potter and the clay. The clay **has to do two things**. First of all, the clay **has to be molded**. The clay has to be responsive to the potter, so the potter can make any instrument of his choosing. Then the clay has to do a second thing —it **has to remain in the potter’s hand**. When the potter has finished making the instrument of his choosing, that instrument has no ability to do anything whatsoever. It now has to remain in the potter’s hand. Suppose the potter molds the clay into a cup. The cup has to remain in the potter’s hands, **so the potter can use that cup in any way he chooses**.

That is very different from the world’s view of a servant. When you come to God as His servant, he first wants you to **allow Him to mold and shape you** into the instrument of His choosing. Then He can take your life and put it **where He wills and work through it to accomplish His purposes**. Just like a cup cannot do anything on its own, you do not have any ability to do the command of the Lord except **to be where He wants you to be**.

—**Jeremiah 18:1-6** “This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: ‘Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message. ’ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. “Then the word of the Lord came to me: ‘O house of Israel, can I not

do with you as this potter does?’ declares the Lord. ‘Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.’ ”

What are two things a servant must do to be used by God?

A servant is a person who has to do two things: (1) be moldable and (2) remain in the Master’s (potter’s) hands. Then the Master alone can use that instrument as He chooses. The servant can do nothing of Kingdom value by himself or herself.

(John 5:19) Just as Jesus said, “The Son can do nothing by himself”

(John 15:5) and “Apart from me you can do nothing”.

With God working through that servant, he or she can do anything God can do. Wow! Unlimited potential! Servant-hood does require obedience. He must do what he is instructed, but the servant must remember who is accomplishing the work—God is.

Elijah

When Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal (a Canaanite fertility god) to prove once and for all whose God was the true God, he took a big risk in being a servant of God.

1 Kings 18:15-39; Read and answer the following questions.

{1 Kin. 18:1 through 1 Kin. 18:2 ¹After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” ²So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab....}

1 Kin. 18:15 through 1 Kin. 18:39 ¹⁵Elijah said, “As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today.”

¹⁶So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. ¹⁷When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

¹⁸“I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’S commands and have followed the Baals. ¹⁹Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

²⁰So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. ²¹Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

But the people said nothing.

²²Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’S prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. ²³Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. ²⁴Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.”

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

²⁵Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” ²⁶So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “O Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

²⁷At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” ²⁸So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. ²⁹Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins. ³¹Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” ³²With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs^o of seed. ³³He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

³⁴“Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.

“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. ³⁵The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

³⁶At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

³⁹When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!”

1. Elijah was God’s servant. **How many prophets of other gods did he face in this stand-off at Mount Carmel?**
2. What was the test Elijah proposed to prove whose was the One True God?
3. What did Elijah do to the altar of the Lord?
4. At whose initiative did Elijah offer this challenge? His own or God’s?
5. What did he plan to prove through this experience?
6. How did all the people respond?
7. What was God’s work in this event?
8. What was Elijah’s work in this event?

Elijah was outnumbered 850 to 1. If God had not displayed His own work by coming in fire and consuming the sacrifice (and altar) as Elijah had proposed, Elijah would have utterly failed. That would probably have cost him his life. Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord. He had to stay with God and do everything God commanded him to do. He was acting in obedience to God’s command; not on his own initiative. He went where God told him, when God told him, and did what God told him. Then God accomplished His own purposes through him. Elijah wanted the people to identify the Lord as the True God. That is exactly how the people responded.

Did Elijah or God bring down the fire from Heaven? God did. What was Elijah doing? Being obedient. Elijah had no ability to do what God was about to do. When God did something only He could do, all the people knew that He was the True God. And, God did it through His obedient servant.

Reflection Time

As study time permits, **read and think about how you would answer the following thought provoking questions.**

2. Will there be a difference between the **quality of service** and the **quantity of lasting results** when God is working and when you are working?
2. What are you **doing in your life personally and in your church that you know cannot be accomplished unless God intervenes?** Could much of what we are doing in our lives and in our churches be done without reference to God at all?

“Don’t Just Do Something”

We are a “doing” people. We always want to be **doing** something. Once in a while someone will say, “Don’t just stand there, do something.”

But God is crying out and shouting to us, “**Don’t just do something.** Stand there! Enter into a love relationship with Me. **Get to know Me.** Adjust your life to Me. Let Me love you and reveal Myself to you as I work through you.” A time will come when the doing will be called for, but we cannot skip the relationship. The **relationship with God must come first.**

(John 15:5) Jesus said, “**I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing**”. Do you believe Him? Without Him you can do nothing. He means that.

Do you want to be a servant of God?

- Find out where the Master is, then that is where you need to be.
- Find out what the Master is doing, then that is what you need to be doing.

(John 12:26) Jesus said: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me”.

God wants you to come to a greater knowledge of Him by experience. He wants to establish a love relationship with you. He wants to involve you in His kingdom purposes. He wants to accomplish His work through you.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **To be a servant of God I must be moldable and I must remain in the Master’s hand.**
- **Apart from God, I can do nothing.**
- **God can do anything through me.**
- **When I find out where the Master is, then I know that is where I need to be.**
- **I come to know God by experience as I obey Him and He accomplishes His work through me.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 1

GOD WORKS THROUGH HIS SERVANTS

You cannot stay the way you are and go with God.

We often act as though God tells us what He wants us to do and sends us off all by ourselves to try and do it. Then, any time we need Him we can call on Him, and He will help us. That is never the biblical picture. **When He is about to do something, He reveals what He is about to do to His people.** He wants to do it through His people, or through His servant.

When God is about **to do something through you, He has to get you from where you are to where He is.** So He comes and tells you what He is doing. When you know what God is doing, then you know what you need to do—you need to join Him. **The moment you know that God is doing something where you are, your life will be thrown in contrast to God. You cannot stay the way you are and go with God.**

[illegible]

Seven Realities of Experiencing God

(These principles are the core of this study, and will be explained in detail in future lessons. Please take time to have students write this list, and each day have them review it together in class.)

- 1. God's work**—God is **always at work around you**.
- 2. Relationship**—God **pursues a continuing love relationship with you** that is real and personal.
- 3. Invitation**—God invites you **to become involved with Him** in His work.
- 4. God speaks**—God speaks **by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church** to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
- 5. Crisis of Belief**—God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to **a crisis of belief that requires faith and action**.
- 6. Adjust**—You **must make major adjustments in your life to join God** in what He is doing.
- 7. Obey and Experience**—You come to **know God by experience as you obey Him** and He accomplishes His work through you.

[illegible]

Most of this course will focus on one or more of these realities to help you understand them more completely; to help you learn how you can respond to God's activity in your life.

Assignment:

- Read each reality slowly. **Write questions you have** about any of the realities you do not quite understand.
- Make **note of key words or phrases** in the seven realities above, **that help you remember them.**
- Using only the words or phrases you wrote, **mentally summarize** all seven of the realities.

- On a separate sheet of paper, **try writing each of the realities from memory, covering the important information of the realities.**

Example:

In the assignment above, you could choose a variety of **words or phrases**, such as:

God/work;
love relationship;
Involved with Him;
God speaks;
Crisis of belief;
adjustments;
Obey.

You may have asked **questions** like:

- What is involved in a love relationship with God?
- How can I know when God is speaking?
- How do I know where God is at work?
- What kinds of adjustments does God require me to make?
- What is the difference between adjustment and obedience?

Moses' Example (Read Ex. 2—4 as a background passage.)

Moses' call and ministry are good examples of how one comes to know and follow God's will. Using the **SEVEN REALITIES**, let's look at Moses' call and response.

1. God already was at work around Moses.

(Ex. 2:23-25) The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to God. **God heard their groaning and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** So God looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them.

2. God pursued a continuing love relationship with Moses that was real and personal.

God **took the initiative to come to Moses** and initiate a love relationship with him at the burning bush. God **told Moses that He would go with** Moses into Egypt. Many texts in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy illustrate how God pursued a love relationship with Moses. Here is one **example**:

(Ex.24:12, 15-16, 18) The Lord said to Moses, **“Come up to me on the mountain and stay here,** and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction”. . . . When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. . . . Moses entered the cloud as he went on up the mountain. And he stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights”.

3. God invited Moses to become involved with Him in His work.

(Ex. 3:8, 10) I have come down to rescue them [the Israelites] from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land. . . **So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.**

Answer the following questions about the three preceding statements.

1. Related to Israel, what was God already doing?
2. What evidence shows that God wanted a personal and real relationship with Moses?
3. How did God want to involve Moses in the work He was already doing?

(1) God had a purpose that He was working out in Moses' world.

Even while exiled in the desert, Moses was right on God's schedule, right in the fullness of God's timing, right in the middle of God's will. At the time God was about to deliver the children of Israel, the important factor was not what the will of God was for Moses. **The important factor was the will of God for Israel.**

(2) God's purpose was to deliver the children of Israel. Moses was the one through whom God wanted to work to accomplish that. Time and time again God invited Moses to talk with Him and to be with Him.

(3) God initiated and maintained a continuing relationship with Moses, based on love; and daily God fulfilled His purposes through His 'friend' Moses. (For other examples of the love relationship, please read Ex. 33:7--34:10; Num. 12:6-8.)

— **Amos 3:7** "Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets."

Whenever God gets ready to do something, He always reveals to a person or His people what He is going to do.

LESSON 5; UNIT 1

GOD WORKS THROUGH HIS SERVANTS

Now look at the **last four realities** of God's working with Moses.

God reveals what He is about to do. That revelation becomes an invitation to join Him.

4. God spoke to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.

(Ex. 3:2-8) "There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. . . God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."

"Do not come any closer," God said. **"Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."** Then he said, **"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob."**

The Lord said, **“I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land”**.

(Num. 12:6-8) “When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face”.

— **Amos 3:7** “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”

5. God’s invitation to Moses to work with Him led to a crisis of belief that required faith and action.

(Ex. 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13) Moses expressed this crisis of belief when he said to God: Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt? (3:11)

Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you,” and they ask me, “What is his name?” Then **what shall I tell them? (3:13)**

What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, “The Lord did not appear to you”? O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue. O Lord, please send someone else to do it. (4:1,10,13)

Moses’ crisis called for faith and action.

(Heb. 11:24-29) By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a short time. . . By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. By faith the people passed through the Red Sea as on dry land; but when the Egyptians tried to do so, they were drowned.

6. Moses had to make major adjustments in his life to join God in what He was doing.

(Ex. 4:19-20) The Lord had said to Moses in Midian, **“Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.” So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt.**

7. Moses came to know God by experience as he obeyed God, and God accomplished His work through Moses. Many texts in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

illustrate how God revealed Himself to Moses. **As Moses obeyed God, God accomplished through Moses what Moses could not do.**

Example: Moses and the people came to know God as their Deliverer.

(Ex. 14:15-17, 21-23, 26-27, 29-31) Then the Lord said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army....Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the Lord drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued them.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen.” Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place.

But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. **That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians,** and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And **when the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.**

Answer the following questions about the preceding four statements.

4. What did God reveal about Himself, His purposes, and His ways?
- 5a. What did Moses have trouble believing about God?
- 5b. How would you summarize Moses’ faith as it is described in Hebrews 11?
6. What adjustment(s) did Moses have to make?
7. How do you think Moses must have felt when God delivered the Israelites through him?

- (4) **God came and talked to Moses about His will.** God wanted Moses to go to Egypt so He could deliver the Israelites through him. God **revealed to Moses His holiness, His mercy, His power, His name, His purpose to keep His promise to Abraham** and give Israel the promised land, and many other things not described in the Scriptures above.

God reveals what He is about to do. That revelation becomes an invitation to join Him.

- (5a) **Moses offered many objections. He questioned whether God could do it through him (Ex. 3:11), “whether the Israelites would believe God had appeared to him (Ex. 4:1); and whether he was capable of speaking eloquently enough to get the job done (Ex. 4:10).** In each case Moses was **really doubting God more than himself.** He faced the crisis of

belief—**Is God really able to do what He says?**

- (5b) **His faith is described** (in Hebrews 11), however, **as a model of self-sacrifice and trust in an Almighty God**. Once God let Moses know what He was about to do, that revelation became Moses' invitation to join Him.
- (6) **Moses made the necessary adjustments to orient his life to God**. Moses had to come to the place where he believed God could do everything He said He would do. Then he had **to leave his job and in-laws, and move to Egypt**. After making these adjustments, he was **in a position where he could obey God**. That did not mean that he was going to do something all by himself for God. It meant that he was going **to be where God was working, so that God could do what He had purposed to do** in the first place. Moses was a servant who was moldable, and **he remained at God's disposal to be used as God chose**. God accomplished His purposes through him. When God does a God-sized work through your life, you will be humbled before Him.
- (7) **(Ex. 6:1-8)** Moses must have felt humility and unworthiness to be used in such a significant way. Moses obeyed and did everything God told him. Then **God accomplished through Moses all He intended**. Every step of **obedience brought Moses (and Israel) to a greater knowledge of God**.

What Can One “Ordinary” Person Do?

Remember: “Elijah was a man just like us.”

(Jas. 5:17-18) :He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops”. Elijah was an “ordinary” man just as we are ordinary. **He prayed and God responded**. (see Elijah vs. prophets of Baal—**1Kings 18**)

Peter and John were Uneducated but Mighty

When God healed the crippled beggar through Peter, he and John were called before the **Sanhedrin** to give an account of their actions. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke boldly to the religious leaders. Notice the response of the leaders: **“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).**

All of the persons that you see in the Scriptures were ordinary people. Their **relationship with God** and the **activity of God made them extraordinary**. Did you notice this statement—the leaders recognized that Peter and John “had been with Jesus”? Anyone who will take the time to enter into an intimate relationship with God can see God do extraordinary things through his or her life.

Dwight L. Moody was a poorly educated, un-ordained, shoe salesman

He felt the call of God to preach the gospel. Early one morning he and some friends gathered in a hay field for a season of prayer, confession, and consecration. Henry Varley said, **“The world has yet to see what God can do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.”**

Moody was deeply moved by those words. Later, while listening to the great preacher Charles Spurgeon, Moody thought:

“‘The **world had yet to see!** with and for and through and in! A man!’ Varley meant **any man!** Varley **didn’t say he had to be educated, or brilliant, or anything else! Just a man!** Well, by the Holy Spirit in him, he’d [Moody] be one of those men. And then suddenly, in that high gallery, **he saw something he’d never realized before,—it was not Mr. Spurgeon, after all, who was doing that work: it was God.** And if God could use Mr. Spurgeon, why should He not use the rest of us, and why should we not all just lay ourselves at the Master’s feet, and say to Him, ‘Send me! use me!’”

Dwight L. Moody was **an ordinary man who sought to be fully and wholly consecrated to Christ.** Through this one ordinary life, **God began to do the extraordinary.** Moody became **one of the greatest evangelists of modern times.** He preached in revival services across Britain and America where thousands and thousands came to Christ.

Could God work in extraordinary ways through your life to accomplish significant things for His kingdom?

When you believe that nothing significant can happen through you, you have said more about your belief in God than you have said about yourself.

You might say, “Well, I am not a D.L. Moody.” You don’t have to be a D.L. Moody. God doesn’t want you to be a D.L. Moody. **God wants you to be you and let Him do through you whatever He chooses.** When you believe that nothing significant can happen through you, you have said that God is not capable of doing anything significant through you. The truth is **He is able to do anything He pleases with one ordinary person fully consecrated to Him.**

God’s Standards Are Different from Man’s

Don’t be surprised that God’s standards of excellence are different from man’s.

How long was the public ministry of John the Baptist? Perhaps **six months.**

What was Jesus’ estimate of John’s life?

(Luke 7:28) “I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John”. None greater! He had six months wholly yielded to God, and the Son of God put that stamp of approval on his life.

Don't measure your life by the world's standards. Don't do it. Many are doing it. Many pastors and staff leaders are doing it. Many churches are doing it. Think about it. By the world's standards, a person or church may look pretty good, yet in God's sight be utterly detestable. Similarly, a person or church may be wholly yielded to Him and very pleasing to Him and in the world's eyes be insignificant. Could a pastor who faithfully serves where God put him in a small rural community be pleasing to the Lord? Sure, if that is where God put him. God will look for and reward faithfulness whether the person has been given responsibility for little or much.

If you feel weak, limited, ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work.

An ordinary person is who God most likes to use.

(1 Cor. 1:26-31) ²⁶Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

Paul said “**God deliberately seeks out the weak things and the despised things because it is from them that He can receive the greatest glory**”. Then everyone will know that only God could have done it. If you feel weak, limited, ordinary, you are the best material through which God can work.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God reveals what He is about to do.**
- **The revelation becomes an invitation to join Him.**
- **I can't stay the way I am and go with God.**
- **He is able to do anything He pleases with one ordinary person fully consecrated to Him .**
- **God's standards of excellence are different from man's.**

UNIT 2

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse: Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. —PSALM 20:7

In your own words write a definition of the following:

Self - centered _____
God - centered _____

Answer the following questions. Look up and read the Scriptures listed if you do not already know the answer.

1. What was God about to do when He came to Noah and asked him to build an ark?
Gen. 6:5-14 _____
2. What was God about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah when He came to Abraham?
Gen. 18:16-21; 19:13 _____
3. What was God about to do when He came to Gideon? **Judg. 6:11-16** _____
4. What was God about to do when He came to Saul (who was later called Paul) on the road to Damascus? **Acts 9:1-16** _____
5. At each of these moments, what was the most important factor? **Check one.**
____ What the individual wanted to do for God
____ What God was about to do

Read the following Scripture and look for God's response to those who will not follow His ways.

“ ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.’ ”
(Ps. 81:10-12).

Now read the next two verses to see what could have been true for Israel.

“ ‘If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!’ ” **(Ps. 81:13-14).**

Read Hebrews 3:7-19.

Why were the children of Israel denied entrance to the promised land?

Lesson 4 Activities

Read the following Scriptures, Hebrews 1:1; John 14:26; 16:13-14; 8:47

Write a summary of what these Scriptures say about God's speaking.

Lesson 5 Activities

Reflect over these matters of Lordship and God's developing your character for the assignment. Answer the following questions:

1. What kind of assignments have you wanted the Lord to give you? Have you been frustrated or disappointed in this area of your life? _____
2. Can you think of a time when God probably wanted to use you in an assignment and you chose not to follow His leading? If so, briefly describe the situation. _____
3. Is the Holy Spirit saying anything to you right now about your character? If so, what is He saying? _____
4. Do your actions acknowledge Christ as Lord of your life? If not, what response do you want to make to His claims on your life right now? _____

LESSON 1; UNIT 2

LOOKING TO GOD

[Our Church began to sense God leading us to an outreach ministry to the college campus nearby. I had never worked among college students before, and neither had our church. Our denominational student ministries department recommended we begin with a Bible study where the students lived. For over a year we tried to start a Bible study in their housing facilities, but it did not work.

One Sunday I pulled our students together and said, “This week I want you to go to the campus

and watch to see where God is working and join Him.” They asked me to explain. God had impressed on my heart these two Scriptures.

- **Romans 3:10-11**—“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God” ;
- **John 6:44**—“No one can come to me [Jesus] unless the Father who sent me draws him.”

I went on to explain, “According to these passages, no one is going to seek God on his own initiative. No one will ask after spiritual matters unless God is at work in his life. When you see someone seeking God or asking about spiritual matters, you are seeing God at work.”

I told our students, “If someone starts asking you spiritual questions, whatever else you have planned, don’t do it. Cancel what you are doing. Go with that individual and look to see what God is doing there.” That week our students went out to see where God was at work and join Him.

On Wednesday one of the girls reported, “Oh, Pastor, a girl who has been in classes with me for two years came to me after class today. She said, ‘I think you might be a Christian. I need to talk to you.’ I remembered what you said. I had a class, but I missed it. We went to get something to eat and talk. She said, ‘Eleven of us girls have been studying the Bible, and none of us are Christians. Do you know somebody who can lead us in a Bible study?’ ”

As a result of that contact, we started three Bible study groups where the women lived, and two in the men’s housing. For two years we tried to do something for God and failed. For three days we looked to see where God was working and joined Him. What a difference that made!]

Memorize this verse:

Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. —PSALM 20:7

GOD - CENTERED LIVING

To know and do the will of God, you must deny self and return to a God-centered life. Part of the Book of Genesis is the record of God accomplishing His purposes through Abraham. It is not the record of Abraham’s walk with God. Can you see the difference of focus? The focus of the Bible is God. The essence of sin is a shift from a God-centeredness to a self-centeredness. The essence of **salvation is a denial of self**, not an affirming of self. We must come to a denial of self and a return to a God-centeredness with our lives. Then God has us where He can accomplish through us purposes He had before He created the world.

Self - centered :

- life focused on self
- proud of self and self's accomplishments
- self confidence
- depending on self and one's own abilities
- affirming self
- seeking to be acceptable to the world and its ways
- looking at circumstances from a human perspective
- selfish and ordinary living

[[God - centered :

- confidence in God
- dependence on God and His ability and provision
- life focused on God and His activity
- humble before God
- denying self
- seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness
- seeking God's perspective in every circumstance
- holy and godly living

In your own words give a definition of the following:

Self - centered _____

God - centered _____

Notice whether each of the following pairs of biblical examples, illustrates God-centeredness or self-centeredness.

___ **1 a.** God placed Adam and Eve in a beautiful and bountiful garden. He told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **Eve saw that the fruit was pleasing to the eye and desirable for gaining wisdom, so she ate it** (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-7).

___ **b.** Potiphar's wife daily begged Joseph to come to bed with her. He told her he could not do such a wicked thing and sin against God. When she tried to force him, he fled the room and went to prison rather than yield to temptation (**Gen. 39**).

God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Israel. Moses sent 12 men into the Promised Land to explore it and bring back a report. The land was bountiful, but the people living there were seen as giants (**Num. 13—14**).

___ **2 a.** Ten of the spies said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (**13:31**).

___ **b.** Joshua and Caleb said, "If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land . . . do not be afraid of the people of the land"(**14:8, 9**).

___ 3 a. King Asa (of Judah) was facing Zerah the Cushite's army in battle. He **said, "Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless** against the mighty. Help us, O Lord our God, for **we rely on you, and in your name** we have come against this vast army. O Lord, you are our God; do not let man prevail against you" (**2 Chron. 14:9-11**).

___ b. King Asa and Judah were being threatened by Baasha, king of Israel. **Asa sent gold and silver from the temple and his own palace to Ben-Hadad** king of Aram asking for his help in this conflict (**2 Chron. 16:1-3**).

"Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." --**John 12:23-25**

Self-centeredness is a subtle trap. It makes so much sense (humanly speaking). Like King Asa, you can avoid it at one time and fall right into the trap at another time. **God centeredness requires a daily death of self and submission to God** (**John 12:23-25**).

God's Purposes Not Our Plans

To live a God centered life, you must **focus your life on God's purposes not your own plans**. You must seek to see from God's perspective rather than from your own distorted human perspective. When God starts to do something in the world, He takes the initiative to come and talk to somebody; to involve His people in accomplishing His purposes.

Answer the following questions. Read the Scriptures listed if you do not already know the answer.

1. What was God about to do when He came to Noah and asked him to build an ark?

Gen. 6:5-14 _____

Gen. 6:5 through Gen. 6:14 ⁵And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

⁶And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. ⁷And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

⁸But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹These *are* the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man *and* perfect in his generations, *and* Noah walked with God. ¹⁰And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

^{b fr 13}And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

2. What was God about to do to Sodom and Gomorrah when He came to Abraham?

Gen. 18:16-21; 19:13 _____

3. What was God about to do when He came to Gideon? Judg. 6:11-16 _____

Judg. 6:11 through Judg. 6:16 ¹¹And there came an angel of the LORD, and sat under an oak which *was* in Ophrah, that *pertained* unto Joash the Abiezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide *it* from the Midianites. ¹²And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him, and said unto him, The LORD *is* with thee, thou mighty man of valour. ¹³And Gideon said unto him, Oh

my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where *be* all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites. ¹⁴And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? ¹⁵And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family *is* poor in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house. ¹⁶And the LORD said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.

4. What was God about to do when He came to Saul (who was later called Paul) on the road to Damascus? **Acts 9:1-16**

Acts 9:1 through Acts 9:16 ¹And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, ²And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. ³And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: ⁴And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?** ⁵And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, **I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.** ⁶And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, **Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.** ⁷And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man. ⁸And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. ⁹And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

¹⁰And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, **Ananias**. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord. ¹¹And the Lord *said* unto him, **Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,** ¹²And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. ¹³Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: ¹⁴And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. ¹⁵But the Lord said unto him, **Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:** ¹⁶For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

5. At each of these moments, what was the most important factor?

___ What the individual wanted to do for God?

___ What God was about to do?

God was about to destroy the world with a flood when He came to Noah. When God prepared to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He came to tell Abraham about it. God came to Gideon when He was about to deliver the Israelites from the oppression of Midian. God came to Saul when He was ready to carry the gospel message to the Gentiles around the known world. Without doubt, the most important factor in each situation was what God was about to do.

You never find God asking people to dream up what they want to do for Him.

Lets use Noah for an example. What about all the plans he had to serve God? They would not make much sense in light of the coming destruction, would they? Noah was not calling God in to help him accomplish what he was dreaming he was going to do for God. You never find God asking persons to dream up what they want to do for Him.

We are to submit, wait, watch, join

- We do not sit down and dream what we want to do for God and then call God in to help us accomplish it. The pattern in the Scripture is that we submit ourselves to God and:
- We wait until God shows us what He is about to do or
- We watch to see what God is doing around us and join Him.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **To know and do the will of God, I must deny self and return to a God-centered life.**
- **I must reorient my life to God.**
- **I must focus my life on God's purposes not my own plans.**
- **I must seek to see from God's perspective rather than from my own distorted human perspective.**
- **I must wait until God shows me what He is about to do through me.**
- **I will watch to see what God is doing around me and join Him.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 2

GOD'S PLANS VERSUS OUR PLANS

**Understanding what God is about to do where I am
is more important than telling God what I want to do for Him.**

Who delivered the children of Israel from Egypt? Moses or God? God did. God chose to bring Moses into a relationship with Himself so that He—God—could deliver Israel. **Did Moses ever try to take matters about the children of Israel into his own hands?** Yes.

“One day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. Glancing this way and that and seeing no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong, ‘Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?’

“The man said, ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?’ Then Moses was afraid and thought, ‘What I did must have become known.’

“When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, but Moses fled from Pharaoh and went to live in Midian.” —**Exodus 2:11-15**

In Exodus 2:11-15 Moses began to assert himself in behalf of his own people. **What might have happened if Moses had tried to deliver the children of Israel through a human approach?**

Thousands and thousands would have been slain. Moses tried to take Israelite matters into his own hands. That cost him 40 years of exile in Midian working as a shepherd (and reorienting his life to God-centered living).

When God delivered the children of Israel how many were lost? None. In the process God even led the Egyptians to give the Israelites their gold, silver, and clothes. Egypt was plundered, the Egyptian army was destroyed, and the Israelites did not lose a single person.

Why do we not realize that it is **always best to do things God's way**? We are responsible for much of the pain in our lives because we seek our plan rather than God's. When we try our plan, our way, we get out of it only what we can do. But God will accomplish more in six months through a people yielded to Him than we could do in 60 years without Him.

God's Ways

Read the following Scripture and look for God's response to those who will not follow His ways. Then answer the questions that follow.

“ ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.’ ” (Ps. 81:10-12).

1. What had God already done for Israel? _____
2. What did God promise to His people? _____
3. How did the people respond? _____
4. What did God do? _____

Now read the next two verses to see what could have been true for Israel. Then answer the question that follows.

“ ‘If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes!’ ” (Ps. 81:13-14).

5. What could have been true had Israel listened to and followed God? _____

Read in your Bible Hebrews 3:7-19. Then answer one more question.

Heb. 3:7 through Heb. 3:19 ⁷Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, ⁸Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: ⁹When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. ¹⁰Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. ¹¹So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) ¹²Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; ¹⁵While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. ¹⁶For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. ¹⁷But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

6. Why were the children of Israel denied entrance to the promised land? _____

We are His servants, and we adjust our lives to what He is about to do.

We adjust our lives to God so He can do through us what He wants to do. **God is not our servant** to make adjustment to our plans. We are His servants, and we adjust our lives to what He is about to do. If we will not submit, God will let us follow our own devices. In following them, however, we will never experience what God is waiting and wanting to do in our behalf or through us for others.

Israel was brought out of Egypt with many miraculous signs and wonders. Wouldn't you think they could trust God to do just about anything? When they got to the promised land they could not trust Him to deliver the promised land to them. For that reason, they spent the next 40 years wandering in the wilderness. In Psalm 81, God reminded Israel that He would have conquered the enemies quickly if they had only followed His plans rather than their own devices.

You Need to Know What God Is About to Do

[One year our church leaders came together to discuss long range plans for an emphasis which we had scheduled in the city area. Top people from several agencies were going to work with us to accomplish many wonderful things. Yet, in my mind I was asking, “But what if God has called our nation to judgment before that time?” I realized how much I needed to know what God had in mind for our city. Planning what I wanted to do in the future could have been totally fruitless if it were not what God willed.]

God always tells someone what He is about to do:

[(Num. 12:6-8) “When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face”.

— **Amos 3:7** “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.”

When God called the prophets, He often had a two-fold message. The first desire of God was: “Call the people to return to Me.” If the people failed to respond, they needed to hear the second message: “Let them know that they are closer to the moment of judgment than they have ever been.” **God’s word to the prophet was, “Tell the people: This is what I have been doing. This is what I am doing right now. This is what I am about to do. Then call them to respond.”**

Do you suppose it was important that the prophets understand what God was about to do? When God was prepared to bring a terrible judgment to Jerusalem and destroy the entire city, was it important to know what God was about to do? Certainly!

How close do you think your country is to the judgment of God?

- ☐ 1. I do not believe God will bring judgment on my country.
- ☐ 2. I believe God’s judgment is a long way off.
- ☐ 3. I cannot understand why God has waited this long. I believe we are on the verge of a major judgment from God.
- ☐ 4. I believe we are already experiencing a disciplinary judgment like that described in Isaiah 5:1-7.
- ☐ 5. I believe we have already come through an experience of God’s judgment.

What evidence can you list to support your answer?_____

What effect does your belief have on the way you live your life?_____

Understanding what God is about to do where you are, is more important than telling

God what you want to do for Him.

What good would Abraham have done by telling God how he was planning to take a survey of Sodom and Gomorrah and go door-to-door witnessing the day before God was going to destroy the cities? What good would you do by making long-range plans in your church if, before you ever get to implement them, God brings judgment on your nation?

You need to know what God has on His agenda for your church, community, and nation at this time in history. Then **you and your church can adjust your lives to God, so that He can move you into the mainstream of His activity before it is too late.** Though God likely will not give you a detailed schedule, **He will let you know one step at a time how you and your church need to respond to what He is doing.**

Ask for God's guidance on how you should respond to Him...

- in your personal life
- in your family
- in your church
- in your work
- in your community
- in our nation

Martin Luther

What was God about to do when He started to tell Martin Luther that “the just shall live by faith”? He was going to bring people all over Europe to an understanding that salvation was a free gift and that each person had direct access to Him. He was bringing about a great Reformation. As you study great movements of God in church history, you will notice in every case that God came to someone and the person released his life to God. Then God began to accomplish His purposes through that individual.

John and Charles Wesley & George Whitefield

When God began to speak to John and Charles Wesley, He was preparing for a sweeping revival in England that saved England from a bloody revolution like France had experienced. There stood a couple of men, along with George Whitefield and some others, through whom God was able to do a mighty work and turn England completely around.

In your community there are some things that are about to happen in the lives of others. God wants to intercept those lives. Suppose He wants to do it through you. He comes to you and talks to you. But you are so self-centered, you respond, “I don’t think I am trained. I don’t think I am able to do it. And I . . . ”

Do you see what happens? The focus is on self. The moment you sense that God is moving in your life, you give Him a whole list of reasons why He has got the wrong person or why the time is not right (**Ex. 3:11; 4:1**). I wish you would seek God’s perspective. God knows that you can’t do it! But He wants to do it Himself through you.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Do things God's way.
- God will accomplish more in six months through a people yielded to Him than we could do in 60 years without Him.
- I am God's servant. I adjust my life to what He is about to do.
- Understanding what God is about to do where I am is more important than telling God what I want to do for Him.

LESSON 3; UNIT 2

GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE

God's revelation of His activity is an invitation for you to join Him.

God's Initiative, Not Yours

All the way through the Scripture, God takes the initiative. When He comes to a person, He always reveals Himself and His activity. That revelation is always an invitation for the individual to adjust his life to God. None of the people God ever encountered could remain the same after the encounter. They had to make major adjustments in their lives in order to walk obediently with God.

God is the Sovereign Lord. When you are God-centered, even the desires to do the things that please God come from God's initiative in your life (Phil. 2:13).

**"It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." —
Philippians 2:13**

We must learn to see things from His perspective. We must allow Him to develop His character in us. We must let Him reveal His thoughts to us. Only then can we get a proper perspective on life. If you keep your life God-centered, you will immediately put your life alongside His activity. When you see God at work around you, your heart will leap within you and say, "Thank You, Father, thank You for letting me be involved where You are." **When I am in the middle of the activity of God, and God opens my eyes to let me see where He is working, I always assume that God wants me to join Him.**

Answer the following questions.

1. Who takes the initiative in your knowing and doing the will of God?
 - ☐ a. I do. God waits on me until I decide what I want to do for Him.
 - ☐ b. God does. He invites me to join Him in what He is about to do.

2. Which of the following are ways God may reveal His plan or purpose to you?
- a. He lets me see where He is already working around me.
 - b. He speaks to me through Scripture and impresses me with a practical application of the truth to my life.
 - c. He gives me an earnest desire that only grows stronger as I pray.
 - d. He creates circumstances around me that open a door of opportunity.

God always takes the initiative (1b). He does not wait to see what we want to do for Him. After He has taken the initiative to come to us, He does wait until we respond to Him by adjusting ourselves to Him and making ourselves available to Him. Circumstances cannot always be a clear direction for God's leadership either. "Open" and "closed doors" are not always indications of God's directions. In seeking God's direction, check to see that prayer, the Scripture, and circumstances agree in the direction you sense God leading you.

George Mueller's Walk of Faith

George Mueller was a pastor in England during the nineteenth century. He was concerned that God's people had become very discouraged. They no longer looked for God to do anything unusual. They no longer trusted God to answer prayers. They had so little faith.

God began to lead George to pray. George's prayers were for God to lead him to a work that could only be explained by the people as an act of God. George wanted the people to learn that their God was a faithful, prayer-answering God. He came upon the verse in **Psalm 81:10** that you read in yesterday's lesson—"Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." God began to lead him in a walk of faith that became an outstanding testimony to all who hear his story.

When George felt led of God to do some work, he prayed for resources needed and **told no one of the need**. He wanted all to know that God had provided for the need only in answer to prayer and faith. During his ministry in Bristol, George started the Scriptural Knowledge Institute for distribution of Scripture and for religious education. He also began an orphanage. By the time of his death, George Mueller had been used by God to build four orphan houses that cared for 2,000 children at a time. Over 10,000 children had been provided for through the orphanages. He distributed over eight million dollars that had been given to him in answer to prayer. When he died at 93, his worldly possessions were valued at \$800.

How did he know and do the will of God?

Read the following statement and list the things he did that helped him know what to do. Then list the things that led him to make mistakes in knowing God's will.

"I never remember . . . a period . . . that I ever SINCERELY AND PATIENTLY sought to know the will of God by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of **the Word of God**, but I have been ALWAYS directed rightly. But if honesty of heart and uprightness

before God were lacking, or if I did not patiently wait upon God for instruction, or if I preferred the counsel of my fellow men to the declarations of the Word of the living God, I made great mistakes.”

What helped George Mueller know God’s will? _____

What led to mistakes in knowing God’s will: _____

George Mueller mentioned these things that helped him:

- ☐ He sincerely sought God’s direction.
- He waited patiently on God until he had a word from God.
- He looked to the Holy Spirit (Ghost) to teach him through the word.

He knew the following things led to his making mistakes:

- Lacking honesty of heart
- Lacking uprightness before God
- Impatience to wait for God
- Preferred the counsel of men over the declarations of Scripture

Here is how he summed up **the way he entered into a “heart” relationship with God and learned to discern God’s voice:**

1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the trouble with people generally is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the knowledge of what His will is.

2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

3. I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God. The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God’s Will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His Will to me aright.

6. Thus, (1) through prayer to God, (2) the study of the Word, and (3) reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- God's revelation of His activity is an invitation for me to adjust my life to Him and join in His work.
- ☐ "I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter."
- ☐ "I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression."
- ☐ "I seek the Will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God."

LESSON 4; UNIT 2

GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE

God has not changed. He still speaks to His people.

[Years ago I spoke to a group of young pastors. When I finished the first session, a pastor took me aside and said, "I vowed to God I would never, ever again listen to a man like you. You talk as though God is personal and real and talks to you. I just despise that."

I asked him, "Are you having difficulty having God speak to you?" He and I took time to talk. Before long, we were on our knees. He was weeping and thanking God that God had spoken to him. Oh, don't let anyone intimidate you about hearing from God.]

Read the following Scriptures, answer the questions that follow.

Hebrews 1:1—"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

John 14:26—"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

John 16:13-14—"When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you."

John 8:47—"He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."

1. In the Old Testament ("times past") how did God speak, and through whom? _____
2. In New Testament times ("these last days") how did God speak? _____
3. In John 14:26 whom did Jesus promise the Father would send in His name? _____

4. What is the work of the Holy Spirit described in John 14:26 and 16:13-14? _____
5. Who is the one who hears what God says? _____
6. What does John 8:47 have to say about a person who does not hear what God says? _____

Give a summary of what these Scriptures say about God's speaking.

In the Old Testament God spoke at many times and in a variety of ways. Through Jesus, God Himself spoke to His people during His lifetime. Now God speaks through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will teach you all things, will call to your memory the things Jesus said, will guide you into all truth, will speak what He hears from the Father, will tell you what is yet to come, and glorify Christ as He reveals Christ to you.

Does God really speak to His people in our day? Will He reveal to you where He is working when He wants to use you? Yes! God has not changed. He still speaks to His people.

If you have trouble hearing God speak, you are in trouble at the very heart of your Christian experience.

How Can I Know When God Speaks?

Sin has so affected us (**Rom. 3:10-11**) that you and I cannot understand the truth of God unless the Holy Spirit of God reveals it. He is the Teacher. When He teaches you the Word of God, sit before Him and respond to Him. As you pray, watch to see how He uses the Word of God to confirm in your heart a word from God. Watch what He is doing around you in circumstances.

The fourth of the seven spiritual realities that we have been studying says, **“God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.”** Answer the following questions:

1. When Jesus returned to heaven, which Person of the trinity was sent to speak to God's people? Check one.
 - ☐ a. God the Father
 - ☐ b. Jesus
 - ☐ c. The Holy Spirit
2. What are four ways through which He speaks? _____
3. When He speaks, what does He reveal? _____

God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. Later in the course, we will spend several units studying these ways God speaks.

In John 10:2-4 and 14 Jesus said:

- ☐ “ ‘The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep.
- The sheep listen to his voice.
- His sheep follow him because they know his voice.
- I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.’ ”

The key to knowing God’s voice is **not a formula**. It is **not a method** you can follow. Knowing God’s voice comes from an intimate love relationship with God. That is why those who do not have the relationship (“do not belong to God”) do not hear what God is saying (John 8:47). You are going to have to watch to see how God uniquely communicates with you. You will not have any other crutch. You will have to depend on God alone. Your relationship to Him is of utmost importance.

Which of the following best describes the way you will know the voice of God when He speaks?

- ☐ a. God will give me a miraculous sign. Then I will know God has spoken to me.
- ☐ b. Out of an intimate relationship with God, I will come to recognize God’s voice.
- ☐ c. When I learn and follow the correct formula, I will hear God speaking.
- ☐ d. I can open the Bible, pick out a verse that I want to use, and claim that I have a word from God for my circumstance.

What is the key to knowing God’s voice? _____

The relationship is the key to knowing God’s voice, to hearing when God speaks. B is the correct answer to the preceding question. What about a, c, and d? Sometimes in Scripture God did give a miraculous sign to assure the person that the word was from Him. Gideon is one example (**Judg. 6**). Asking God for a sign is often an indication of unbelief. When the scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus for a miraculous sign, Jesus condemned them as a “wicked and adulterous generation” (**Matt. 12:38-39**). They were so self-centered and sinful, they could not even recognize that God was there in their midst. (See **Luke 19:41-44**.)

(see Gen.15:8..Abraham asked for sign and got covenant)

A “correct formula” is not the way either. How many other burning bushes like Moses experienced were there? None. God does not want you to become an expert at using a formula. He wants an intimate love relationship with you. He wants you to depend on Him alone.

Hearing God does not depend on a method or formula but a relationship.

Some may wonder why answer d is not acceptable. They may ask, “Can’t I get a word from God from the Bible?” Yes you can! But only the Holy Spirit of God can reveal to you which truth of Scripture is a word from God in a particular circumstance. (Notice how self-centered answer d is? “I open . . . I pick . . . I claim . . .”) Even if the circumstance is similar to yours, only God can reveal His word for your circumstance.

You also need to **be very careful about claiming you have a word from God. Claiming to have a word from God is serious business.** If you have been given a word from God, you must continue in that direction until it comes to pass (even 25 years like Abram). If you have not been given a word from God yet you say you have, you stand in judgment as a false prophet:

“You may say to yourselves, ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously” (**Deut. 18:21-22**).

In the Old Testament law, the penalty for a false prophet was death (**Deut. 18:20**). That certainly is a very serious charge. Do not take a word from God lightly.

God loves you. He wants to have an intimate relationship with you. He wants you to depend only on Him when you are seeking a word from Him. He wants you to learn to hear His voice and know His will. Your relationship to Him is the key to hearing when God speaks to you.

Consider praying the following prayer: “God, I pray that I will come to such a relationship with You that when you speak, I will hear and respond.”

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God has not changed. He still speaks to His people.**
 - **If I have trouble hearing God speak, I am in trouble at the very heart of my Christian experience.**
 - **God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.**
- ☐ **Knowing God’s voice comes from an intimate love relationship with God.**

LESSON 5; UNIT 2

GOD SPEAKS WITH A PURPOSE

God develops character to match the assignment.

We usually want God to speak to us so He can give us a devotional thought to make us feel good all day. **If you want the God of the universe to speak to you, you need to be ready for Him to reveal to you what He is doing where you are.** In the Scripture, God is not often seen coming and speaking to people just for conversation’s sake. He was always up to something.

When God speaks to you through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, the church, or in some other way, **He has a purpose in mind for your life.**

When God spoke to Abram (Gen. 12), what was God about to do? He was about to begin to build a nation. Notice the timing of God. **Why did God speak to Abram when He did?** Because it was then that God wanted to start to build a nation. The moment Abram knew what God was about to do, he had to make an adjustment in his life to God. He had to immediately follow what God said.

The moment God speaks to you is the very moment God wants you to respond to Him. Some of us assume that we have the next three to four months to think about it and to try to decide whether this is really God's timing. The moment God speaks to you is God's timing. That is why He chooses to speak when He does. He speaks to His servant when He is ready to move. Otherwise He wouldn't speak to you. As God comes into the mainstream of your life, the timing of your response is crucial. When God speaks to you, you need to believe and trust God.

The moment God speaks to you is God's timing.

How long was it from the time that He spoke to Abram (later named Abraham) that Isaac, the child of promise, was born? Twenty-five years! (See **Gen. 12:4** and **21:5**.) **Why did God wait twenty-five years?** Because it took God twenty-five years to make a father suitable for Isaac. God was concerned, not so much about Abram, but about a nation. The quality of the father will affect the quality of all the generations that follow. As goes the father, so goes the next several generations. **God took time to build Abram into a man of character.** Abram had to begin to **adjust his life to God's ways immediately.** He could not wait until Isaac was born and then try to become the father God wanted him to be.

God Develops Character to Match the Assignment

When God called Abram, He said, **"I will make your name great"** (Gen. 12:2). That **means: "I will develop your character to match your assignment."** Nothing is more pathetic than having a small character in a big assignment. Many of us don't want to give attention to our character, we just want the big assignment from God.

Suppose a man is waiting for a big church to call him to be their pastor. Then a small church calls and says, "Will you come and help us? Our city is small, and we cannot afford to pay you a full salary. Therefore, you will need to work another job as well, but we desperately need someone to teach us God's Word. Will you please come?"

"Well, no," the prospective pastor responds. He thinks, "I am here waiting for God to give me an assignment. I have done so much training, I can't waste my life by working a secular job

when I can serve a church full-time. I think that I deserve something much more significant than that.”

How would you classify that response?

- ☐ That is a God-centered response.
- ☐ That is a self-centered response.

Do you see how self-centered that viewpoint is? Human reasoning will not give you God’s perspective. If you can’t be faithful in a little, God will not give you the larger assignment. He may want to adjust your life and character in smaller assignments in order to prepare you for the larger ones. That is where God starts to work. **When you make the adjustments and start to obey Him, you come to know Him by experience.** This is **the goal** of God’s activity in your life—that you come to **KNOW Him**. Do you want to experience God mightily working in your life and through your life? Then adjust your life to God in the kind of relationship where you follow Him wherever He leads you—even if the assignment seems to be small or insignificant. Wouldn’t you rather hear: **“Well done, good and faithful servant!” (Matt. 25:21).**

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” —**Matthew 25:21**

You will know through the relationship.

Now, you may ask, **“Do I automatically assume that a request like the pastor received to the small city is from God because it is a small assignment?”** No. Whether the assignment is large or small in your eyes, you will still have to find out whether it is from God or not. However, you always need to let God tell you that. Do not rule out an assignment, large or small, on the basis of your own preconceived ideas. Remember—you will know through the relationship with God. Don’t try to bypass the relationship.

If you are God-centered, you will adjust your circumstances to what God wants to do.

He has a right to interrupt your life. He is Lord. When you accepted Him as Lord, you gave Him the right to help Himself to your life anytime He wants.

If you are not willing to be faithful in a little, God cannot give you a larger assignment. The smaller assignments of God are always used of God to develop character. God always develops character to match His assignment. If God has a great assignment for you, He has to develop a great character to match that assignment before He can give you the assignment.

Reflect over these matters of Lordship and God’s developing character for the assignment. Answer the following questions:

1. What kind of assignments have you wanted the Lord to give you? Have you been

- frustrated or disappointed in this area of your life?_____
2. Can you think of a time when God probably wanted to use you in an assignment and you chose not to follow His leading? If so, briefly describe the situation._____
 3. Is the Holy Spirit saying anything to you right now about your character? If so, what is He saying?_____
 4. Do your actions acknowledge Christ as Lord of your life? If not, what response do you want to make to His claims on your life right now?_____

God needs TIME to prepare you for an assignment.

When God tells you a direction, you accept it, and understand it clearly, then give God all the time He needs to make you the kind of person that He could trust with that assignment. Do not assume that the moment He calls you, you are ready for the assignment.

**** How long was it after God (through Samuel) anointed David king, that David mounted the throne?** Maybe ten or twelve years. **What was God doing in the meantime?** He was building David's relationship with Himself. As goes the king, so goes the nation. You cannot bypass character.

**** How long was it after the living Lord called the Apostle Paul that Paul went on his first missionary journey?** Maybe ten or eleven years. The focus is not on Paul; the focus is on God. God wanted to redeem a lost world, and He wanted to begin to redeem the Gentiles through Paul. God needed that much time to prepare Paul for the assignment.

Is it for your sake that God takes time to prepare you? No, not for you alone, but also for the sake of those He wants to reach through you. For their sake, give yourself to the kind of relationship to God we are discussing. Then, when He puts you in an assignment, He will achieve everything He wants in the lives of those you touch.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **The moment God speaks to me is the very moment God wants me to respond to H i m .**
- ☐ **The moment God speaks to me is God's timing.**
- **God develops my character to match the assignment He has for me.**
- **He has a right to interrupt my life. He is Lord. When I accepted Him as Lord, I gave Him the right to help Himself to my life anytime He wants.**

UNIT 3

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and With all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” **Matthew 22:37-38**

By way of review, see if you can fill in the blanks in the seven realities below with the correct words. If you need help, you may look back to LESSON 4 UNIT 1.

1. _____ is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love _____ with you that is real and _____ .
3. God invites you to become _____ with Him in His _____.
4. God speaks by the _____ through the Bible, _____, circumstances, and the _____ to reveal Himself, His _____, and His ways.
5. God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of _____ that requires _____ and action.
6. You must make major _____ in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by _____ as you _____ Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

This unit will focus on the second reality. Write the second reality but replace the word “you” with “me”._____

Read the following Scriptures that speak of a love relationship. As you read, emphasize the word love (or any form of it, such as “loves”) by circling it each time it appears.

Deuteronomy 30:19-20; John 3:16; 14:21; Romans 8:35, 37, 39; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10, 19

Using the preceding Scriptures, answer the following questions:

1. Who is your “life”? _____
2. In what ways has God demonstrated His love for us? _____
3. How can we show our love for Him? _____
4. What does God promise to do in response to our loving Him? _____
5. Who loved first—we or God? _____

Lesson 2 Activities

Do you think you are primarily being shaped by your past or by your future? Why?

In what are you investing your life, your time, and your resources? Make two lists below. On the left list things that will pass away. On the right list things that have eternal value.

Think and pray about any adjustments you may need to make in the way you invest your life. Ask God for His perspective on your life. Below write any adjustments you sense God wants you to make._____

Lesson 3 Activities

Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. I want you to set aside at least 30 minutes for a time to “walk with God.” If your location, physical condition, and weather permit, find a place outside to walk. Use this time to get out of your routine. You may even want to plan a special trip for part of a day just to be alone with God. The place could be:

- your neighborhood —a wooded area in the country
- a city park —a sandy beach
- a garden —a mountain road
- a lakeshore — anywhere you can be alone with God

Spend the time walking and talking with God. If the location permits, you may even want to talk out loud. Focus your thoughts on the love of your heavenly Father. Praise Him for His love and mercy. Thank Him for expressions of His love to you. Be specific. Express to God your love for Him. Take time to worship Him and adore Him.

After your walk, use the space below to write about your feelings. If they apply, answer some of the following:

- How did you feel as you walked and talked with God?
- What aspect of your love relationship with God did you become aware of?

- If this was a difficult or an emotionally uneasy time, why do you think it was?
- What happened that was especially meaningful or joyful?

Practice quoting your Scripture memory verses aloud or write them on separate paper.

Lesson 4 Activities

Read Romans 3:10-12; John 6:44, 45, 65; Jeremiah 31:3; Hosea 11:4

How do you know God loves you? What are some reasons you can give that convince you that God loves you? _____

The following Scriptures speak of God's initiative in the love relationship. **Read each passage. Then write a brief summary statement about how God acts (acted) or what He does (did) to take the initiative.**

Deuteronomy 30:6; Luke 10:22; John 15:16; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 3:16; Revelation 3:20

Lesson 5 Activities

Read the first Scripture passage below. Then describe at least one fact that indicates that the relationship the person(s) had with God was real, personal, and/or practical. If you are already familiar with the story, you may answer from your present knowledge of the passage.
Then do the same for the next passage. I have completed the first as an example.

Adam and Eve after they sinned—Genesis 3:20-21 **They were naked. God made garments of skin for them.**

Hagar when she fled from Sarai—Genesis 16:1-13 _____

Solomon and his request for discernment—1 Kings 3:5-13; 4:29-30 _____

The Twelve that Jesus sent out to preach—Mark 6:7-13 _____

Peter in prison awaiting trial—Acts 12:1-17 _____

John on the island of Patmos—Revelation 1:9-20 _____

LESSON 1; UNIT 3

GOD PURSUES A LOVE RELATIONSHIP

[Carrie's Cancer

[When one of my children could not get his own way, he used to say, "You don't love me." Was that true? No, it wasn't true. My love had not changed. At that moment, however, my love was expressing itself differently than he wanted it.

When our only daughter Carrie was sixteen, the doctors told us she had cancer. We had to take her through chemotherapy and radiation. We suffered along with Carrie as we watched her experience the sickness that goes along with the treatments. Some people face such an experience by blaming God and questioning why He doesn't love them any more. Carrie's cancer treatments could have been a very devastating experience for us. Was God loving us still? Yes. Had His love changed? No, His love had not changed.

When you face circumstances like this, you can question and ask Him to show you what is going on. We did that. We had to ask Him what we should do. We asked all those questions;

but I never said, “Lord, I guess you don’t love me.”

At times I went before the Heavenly Father, and I saw behind my daughter the cross of Jesus Christ. I said, “Father, don’t ever let me look at circumstances and question your love for me. Your love for me was settled on the cross. That has never changed and will never change for me.” Our love relationship with the Heavenly Father sustained us through a very difficult time.

No matter what the circumstances are, His love never changes. Long before this experience with Carrie, I had made a determination: no matter what the circumstances, I would never look at those circumstances except against the backdrop of the cross. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God forever convinced me that He loved me. The cross, the death of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection are God’s final, total, and complete expression that He loves us. Never allow your heart to question the love of God. Settle it on the front end of your desiring to know Him and experience Him, that He loves you. He created you for that love relationship. He has been pursuing you in that love relationship. Every dealing He has with you is an expression of His love for you. God would cease to be God if He expressed Himself in any way other than perfect love!

- As of April 1992, Carrie has finished her university degree and is doing very well. God is so good to us.]

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[I love to spend time on college campuses. I try to be available several times throughout the year.

On one Christian campus where I was leading their Spiritual Focus Week, I was met by a female student. She stopped me abruptly, looked into my eyes, and began to cry. She said, “Thank you! Thank you for saving my life!” I was taken back, and deeply interested in her story. She added, “If it were not for you and Experiencing God,” she pointed to the ground and continued, “I would be six feet underground instead of standing here!”]

Memorize this verse:

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and With all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.” **Matthew 22:37-38**

[She said she had lost all hope for her life and was going across campus one day determined and ready to commit suicide. As she was walking toward taking her own life, a friend—not knowing what she was about to do—grabbed her arm and insisted she go with her to a Bible study called Experiencing God that was radically changing her life and the lives of others in the study. She would not take no for an answer. This girl then said to me, “I did go, and I was saved! My life was changed. I now want to live for my Lord! Thank you for saving my life by writing Experiencing God! ”

I assured her God not only loved her, but pursued her through her friend, and loved her to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.]

CREATED FOR A LOVE RELATIONSHIP

A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in your life.

In the first two units you learned some basic principles for knowing and doing the will of God. The seven realities you have examined summarize the kind of **relationship** through which God works to accomplish His purposes.

By way of review, see if you complete the seven realities below with the correct words. If you need help, you may look back to LESSON 4 UNIT 1.

1. _____ is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love _____ with you that is real and _____ .
3. God invites you to become _____ with Him in His _____.
4. God speaks by the _____ through the Bible, _____, circumstances, and the _____ to reveal Himself, His _____, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of _____ that requires _____ and action.
6. You must make major _____ in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by _____ as you _____ Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

This unit will focus on the second reality:

God pursues a Love Relationship with you.

God Himself pursues a love relationship with you. He is the One who takes the initiative to bring you into this kind of relationship because He created you for a love relationship with Himself. That is the very purpose of your life. This love relationship can and should be real and personal to you.

If you were standing before God, could you describe your relationship to Him by saying, "I love You with all my heart and all my soul and all my mind and all my strength"?

[One of our church members always was having difficulty in his personal life, his family, at work, and in the church. One day I went to him and asked, "Can you describe your relationship with God by sincerely saying, 'I love You with all of my heart'?"

The strangest look came over his face. He said, "Nobody has ever asked me that. No, I could not describe my relationship with God that way. I could say I obey Him, I serve Him, I worship Him, and I fear Him. But I cannot say that I love Him with all my heart."

I realized that everything in his life was out of order, because God's basic purpose for his life was out of order. God created us for a love relationship with Him. If you cannot describe your relationship with God by saying that you love Him with all your being, then you need to ask the Holy Spirit to bring you into that kind of a relationship.]

If you need to and are willing, pause right now and ask the Holy Spirit to bring you into a whole-hearted love relationship with God.

If I were to try **to summarize the entire Old Testament**, it would be expressed in this verse:

**** “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (**Deut. 6:4-5**).

This heart-cry of God is expressed throughout the Old Testament. The **essence of the New Testament is the same**. Quoting from Deuteronomy, Jesus said the greatest commandment in the law is: **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30)**. Everything depends on this! **Everything in your Christian life**, everything about **knowing Him** and **experiencing Him**, everything about **knowing His will**, **depends on the quality of your love relationship to God**. If that is not right, nothing in your life will be right.

Read the following Scriptures that speak of a love relationship. As you read, emphasize the word love (or any form of it, such as “loves”).

Deuteronomy 30:19-20—“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life.”

John 3:16—“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 14:21—“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

Romans 8:35, 37, 39—“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. . . . [Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1 John 3:16—“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ”

1 John 4:9-10, 19—“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. . . . We love because he first loved us.”

Using the preceding Scriptures, answer the following questions:

1. Who is your “life”? _____
2. In what ways has God demonstrated His love for us? _____
3. How can we show our love for Him? _____
4. What does God promise to do in response to our loving Him? _____
5. Who loved first—we or God? _____

Answers: (1) The Lord is your life. (2) He has drawn us to Himself. He sent His only Son to provide eternal life for us. Jesus laid down His life for us. (3) Choose life; listen to His voice; hold fast to Him; believe in His only Son; obey His commands and teachings; be willing to lay down our lives for our brothers. (4) We and our children will live under His blessings. By believing in Jesus, we have eternal life. The Father will love us. God will come to make His home with us. He will make us more than conquerors over all difficulties. We never will be separated from His love. (5) God loved us first. “God is love” (1 John 4:16). His very nature is love.

What is the one thing God wants from you? He wants you to love Him with all your being. Your experiencing God depends on your having this relationship of love. **A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in your life.**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **My Christian life depends on the quality of my love relationship to God.**
- **God created me for a love relationship with Him.**
- **Everything God says and does is an expression of love.**
- **A love relationship with God is more important than any other single factor in my life.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 3

A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

To be loved by God is the highest relationship, the highest achievement, and the highest position in life.

Picture in your mind a tall ladder leaning against a wall. Now think about your life as a process of climbing that ladder. Wouldn't it be a tragedy to get to the top of the ladder and find you placed it against the wrong wall? One life to live and you missed it!

Earlier in the course we talked about your life **being God-centered**. That means your life must be properly related to God. This is the love relationship for which you were created—a God-centered love relationship to God (Father, Son, and Spirit): the single most important aspect of your life. If it is not right, nothing else is important.

If you knew that all you had was a relationship with Him, would you be totally and completely satisfied? Many people would say, “Well, I would like to have that relationship, but I sure would like to do something” or “I sure would like for Him to give me a ministry or give me something to do.” We are a “doing” people. We feel worthless or useless if we are not busy doing something. The Scripture leads us to understand that God is saying, “I want you to love me above everything else. When you are in a relationship of love with Me, you have everything there is: the highest relationship, the highest achievement, and the highest position in life.”

That does not mean you will never do anything as an expression of your love for Him. God will call you to obey Him and do whatever He asks of you. However, you do not need to be doing something to feel fulfilled. You are fulfilled completely in a relationship with God. When you are filled with Him, what else do you need?

You may want to read the following hymn by Rhea F. Miller. Circle all things that may compete with Jesus for a person's love and attention.

I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold,
I'd rather be His than have riches untold;
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands,
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause,
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame,
I'd rather be true to His holy name.

He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom,
He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs,
I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

REFRAIN

Than to be the king of a vast domain

Or be held in sin's dread sway;
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.

Do you really want to love the Lord your God with all of your heart? He will allow no competitors.

He says:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You can not serve both God and Money (Matt. 6:24).

“When you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord. . . . the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God.”

When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then **when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the Lord your God, who is among you, is a jealous God. (Deut. 6:10-15).**

Out of His love for you, He will provide all else that you need—when you love Him and Him alone. (See Matt. 6:31-33.)

Created Not for Time, but Eternity

“Do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.**” —Matthew 6:31-33

God did not create you for time; **He created you for eternity.** Time (**your lifetime on earth**) **provides the opportunity to get acquainted with Him.** It is an opportunity **for Him to develop your character** in His likeness. Then eternity will have its fullest dimensions for you.

If you just live for time (the here and now), you will miss the ultimate purpose of creation. **If you live for time, you will allow your past to mold and shape your life today.** Your life as a child of God ought to be shaped by the future (what you will be one day). **God uses your present time to mold and shape your future usefulness here on earth and in eternity.**

What are some of the things in your past that are having a strong limiting influence on your life today? (These may include “negative” things such as handicaps, a troubled family

back-ground, failures, shame over some personal or family “secret,” or “**positive**” things such as strong family attachments, pride, success, fame, recognition, excessive wealth, and so forth.)

“I challenge you to **see these as enemies of your soul**. Declare them now that you can begin to see them for what they are, and pray for the working of the Holy Spirit to help you rid them from your life.” (RevC)_____

Do you think you are primarily being shaped by your past or by your future? Why?

Paul struggled with this problem. Here was his approach to dealing with his past and present:
(Philippians 3:4-14) If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless .

But whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Answer the following questions based on Paul’s statement in Philippians 3:4-14.

1. What are some of the things in Paul’s past that could have influenced his present? _____
2. How did Paul value these things? (v. 8) _____
3. Why did Paul discredit his past this way? (vv. 8-11) _____
4. What did Paul do to prepare for a future prize? (vv. 13-14)

Forget _____
Strain toward _____
Press on toward _____

Answers: (1) He was a true and faithful Jew from the royal tribe of Benjamin. He was faultless in keeping the laws of the Pharisees. He was zealous for God. (2) He considered them as rubbish and loss. (3) Paul wanted to know Christ, be found in Him, and become like Him to

attain a future blessing (resurrection from the dead). (4) He forgets the past. He strains toward the future. He presses toward the future goal of a heavenly prize.

Paul's real desire was to know Christ and become like Him. You, too, can so order your life under God's direction that you come to know Him, love Him only, and become like Christ. Let your present be molded and shaped by what you are to become in Christ. You were created for eternity!

Investing in the Future

You need to begin orienting your life to the purposes of God. His purposes go far beyond time and into eternity. **Make sure you are investing your life, time, and resources in things that are lasting and not things that will pass away.** If you don't recognize that God created you for eternity, you will invest in the wrong direction. You need to **store up treasures in heaven.** (See **Matt. 6:19-21, 33** below.)

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.... But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,** and all these things will be given to you as well.”

—**Matthew 6:19-21, 33**

This is why a love relationship with God is so important. He loves you. He knows what is best for you. **Only He can guide you to invest your life in worthwhile ways.** This guidance will come as you “walk” with Him and listen to Him.

In what are you investing your life, your time, and your resources? Make two lists below. On the left list things that will pass away. On the right list things that have eternal value.

Think and pray about any adjustments you may need to make in the way you invest your life. Ask God for His perspective on your life. Write any adjustments you sense God wants you to make._____

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **To be loved by God is the highest relationship, the highest achievement, and the highest position in life.**
 - **God did not create me for time; He created me for eternity.**
 - **I will let my present be molded and shaped by what I am to become in Christ.**
- ☐ **“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness.”**

- I will make sure I am investing in things that are lasting.
- Only He can guide me to invest my life in worthwhile ways.

LESSON 3; UNIT 3

WALKING WITH GOD

God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, for a love relationship with Himself. After **Adam and Eve** had sinned, they heard God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. **They hid from Him because of their fear and shame.** Try to sense the heart of a loving Father when He asked that wonderful love question, “Where are you?” (**Gen. 3:9**). God **knew that something had happened to the love relationship.**

When your relationship is as it ought to be, you will always be in fellowship with the Father. You will be there in His presence expecting and anticipating the relationship of love. When Adam and Eve were not there, something had gone wrong.

Quiet Time with God

Early each day, **have an appointment with God**, not in order to have a relationship, but because I have a relationship. I want to spend the time there. Time with Him enriches and deepens the relationship I have with Him.

Many persons say, “I really struggle trying to have that time alone with God.” If that is a problem you face, let me suggest something to you. **Make the priority in your life** to come to love Him with all your heart. That will solve most of your problem with your quiet time. **Your quiet time is because you know Him and, therefore, love Him**, not only in order **to learn about Him.** The Apostle Paul said it was “Christ’s love” that compelled or constrained him (**2 Cor. 5:14**).

Suppose you were dating a person you loved and intended to marry. What is the primary reason you date (spend time with) that person? **only ONE response:**

- ☐ 1. Because I would want to find out about his likes and dislikes.
- ☐ 2. Because I would want to find out about her family background.
- ☐ 3. Because I would want to find out about his knowledge and education.
- ☐ 4. Because I love her and enjoy being with her.

When two people love each other and plan to marry, they are concerned about finding out information about each other. That is not, however, the primary reason why they date. They spend time together because they love each other and enjoy being together.

Similarly, you will **learn much about God, His Word, His purposes, and His ways as you spend time with Him.** You will come to know Him during the day as you experience Him working in and through your life. The more you know Him and experience His unrelenting love, the more you will love Him and will want time alone with Him because you enjoy His fellowship.

(Students can be challenged to commit to schedule time with God everyday, if they don't already have that practice. It is also helpful to "walk with God" while praying.)

Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the day. I want you to set aside at least 30 minutes for a time to "walk with God." If your location, physical condition, and weather permit, find a place outside to walk. Use this time to get out of your routine. You may even want to plan a special trip for part of a day just to be alone with God. The place could be:

- your neighborhood —a wooded area in the country
- a city park —a sandy beach
- a garden —a mountain road
- a lakeshore — anywhere you can be alone with God

Spend the time walking and talking with God. If the location permits, you may even want to talk out loud. Focus your thoughts on the love of your heavenly Father. Praise Him for His love and mercy. Thank Him for expressions of His love to you. Be specific. Express to God your love for Him. Take time to worship Him and adore Him.

After your walk, write about your feelings. If they apply, answer some of the following:

- How did you feel as you walked and talked with God?
- What aspect of your love relationship with God did you become aware of?
- If this was a difficult or an emotionally uneasy time, why do you think it was?
- What happened that was especially meaningful or joyful?

Practice quoting your Scripture memory verses aloud, or write them on separate paper.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **When my relationship is as it ought to be, I will always be in fellowship with the Father.**
- **I will make the priority in my life to come to love Him with all my heart.**
- **I will have my quiet time because I know Him and love Him, not in order to learn about Him.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 3

GOD PURSUES A LOVE RELATIONSHIP

God takes the initiative. He chooses us, loves us, and reveals His eternal purposes for our lives.

God always takes the initiative in this love relationship. **God must take the initiative and come to us if we are to experience Him.** This is the witness of the entire Bible. He came to Adam and Eve in the garden. In love He fellowshiped with them, and they with Him. He came to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and the prophets. God took the initiative for **each person in the Old Testament** to experience Him in a personal fellowship of love. This is true of the **New Testament** as well. **Jesus came to the disciples, and chose them** to be with Him and experience His Love. He came to Paul on the Damascus Road. In our natural human state, **we do not seek God on our own initiative.**

No One Seeks God on His Own Initiative

Read Romans 3:10-12 and answer the following questions.

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” —**Romans 3:10-12**

1. How many people are righteous on their own? _____
2. How many people understand spiritual things on their own? _____
3. How many people seek after God on their own? _____
4. How many people do good on their own? _____

No one; not even one! Sin has affected us so deeply that no one seeks after God on his own initiative. Therefore, if we are to have any relationship with Him or His Son, God will have to take the initiative. This is exactly what He does.

God Draws Us to Himself

Read the Scripture below and answer the following questions:

“No one can come to me [Jesus] unless the Father who sent me draws him. . . . Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. . . . This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.” —**John 6:44, 45, 65**

1. Who can come to Jesus **without** being drawn by the Father? _____
2. What does a person do who listens to the Father and learns from Him? _____

3. What is the only way a person can come to Jesus? _____

Jeremiah 31:3—“The Lord appeared to us in the past saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.’ ”

Hosea 11:4—“I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them.”

He has drawn you with cords of love when you were not His friend, when you were His enemy. He gave His own Son to die for you. To firmly anchor the experiencing of God and knowing His will, you must be absolutely convinced of God’s love for you.

How do you know God loves you? What are some reasons you can give that convince you that God loves you?_____

God came to Saul, known later as Paul (**Acts 9:1-19**). Saul was actually opposing God and His activities, and fighting against God’s Son Jesus. Jesus came to Paul and revealed the Father’s purposes of love for him. This also is true in our lives. We do not choose Him. He chooses us, loves us, and reveals His eternal purposes for our lives.

Jesus said to those who were His disciples:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you. . . . As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world” (**John 15:16, 19**).

Didn’t Peter choose to follow Jesus? No. Jesus chose Peter. Peter responded to the invitation of God. God took the initiative.

Jesus said that Peter was responding to God’s initiative in his life (**Matt. 16:13-17**). Jesus asked the disciples who men said He was. Then He asked them who they said He was. Peter answered correctly, “You are the Christ.” Then Jesus made a very significant statement to Peter, “This was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.”

Who had revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah?_____

In essence Jesus was saying, “Peter, you could never have known and confessed that I am the Christ unless My Father had been at work in you. He caused you to know who I am. You are responding to the Father’s activity in your life. Good!”

Do you realize that God determined to love you? Apart from that you never would have become a Christian. He had something in mind when He called you. He began to work in your life. He drew you to Himself.

When you responded to His invitation, He brought you into a **love relationship (covenant)** with Himself.

You cannot know the activity of God unless He takes the initiative to reveal it to you.

The order in the development of a love relationship with God.

God chooses me because of His love.

God shows me His love and reveals Himself to me.

I respond to God's activity in my life and invite Him to do in my life what He pleases.

God comes into my life and fellowships with me.

The following Scriptures speak of God's initiative in the love relationship. **Read each passage. Then give a brief summary statement about how God acts (acted) or what He does (did) to take the initiative.**

Deuteronomy 30:6—"The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live." _____

Luke 10:22—"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." _____

John 15:16—"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last." _____

Philippians 2:13—"It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." _____

1 John 3:16—"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us." _____

Revelation 3:20—"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me." _____

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **In this love relationship, God always takes the initiative.**
- **I do not choose Him. He chooses me, loves me, and reveals His eternal purposes for my life.**

- I cannot know the activity of God unless He takes the initiative to let me know.

LESSON 5; UNIT 3

A REAL, PERSONAL, PRACTICAL RELATIONSHIP

God's plan for the advancement of His kingdom depends on His relationship to His people.

“Can a person actually have a real, personal, and practical relationship with God?”

Read the first Scripture passage below. Then describe at least one fact that indicates that the relationship the person(s) had with God was real, personal, and/or practical. If you are already familiar with the story, you may answer from your present knowledge of the passage. **Then do the same for the next passage. I have completed the first as an example.**

Adam and Eve after they sinned—Genesis 3:20-21 **They were naked. God made garments of skin for them.**

Hagar when she fled from Sarai—Genesis 16:1-13 _____

Solomon and his request for discernment—1 Kings 3:5-13; 4:29-30 _____

The Twelve that Jesus sent out to preach—Mark 6:7-13 _____

Peter in prison awaiting trial—Acts 12:1-17 _____

John on the island of Patmos—Revelation 1:9-20 _____

From Genesis to Revelation, we see God relating to people in real, personal, intimate, and practical ways. God had intimate fellowship with (Adam and Eve, walking in the garden with them in the cool of the day. When they sinned, God came after them to restore the love relationship. He met a very practical need by providing clothing to cover their nakedness.)

(Hagar had been used, mistreated, and abused by Sarai. She fled for her life. When she reached the end of her own resources, when she had no where else to turn, when all hope was gone, God came to her. In her relationship to God, she learned that God saw her, knew her needs, and would lovingly provide for her. God is very personal.)

(Solomon's father David had been a man who sought the Lord with his whole heart. Solomon had a heritage of faith and obedience to follow. He had the opportunity to ask and receive anything he wanted from God. Solomon demonstrated his love for God's people by asking for a discerning heart. God granted his request and gave him wealth and fame as well. Solomon found his relationship with God to be very practical.)

(The disciples also had a real, personal, and practical relationship with Jesus—the Son of

God. Jesus had chosen them to be with Him. What a pleasure it must have been to have such an intimate relationship with Jesus! When they were given a very difficult assignment, Jesus did not send them out helpless. He gave them authority they had never known before over evil spirits.)

In some places of the world obedience to the Lord results in imprisonment. This was Peter's experience. In answer to prayer, the Lord miraculously delivered him. This was so dramatic and practical, Peter first thought it was a dream. The praying Christians thought he was an angel. Soon, they all discovered that the Lord's deliverance was real. That deliverance probably saved Peter's life.

In exile on the island of Patmos, John was spending the Lord's Day in fellowship with God. During this time of fellowship in the Spirit, the revelation of Jesus Christ came to John to "show his servants what must soon take place" (**Rev. 1:1**). This message has been a genuine challenge and encouragement to the churches from John's day to this.

Do you sense, as you read the Scripture, that God became real and personal to people? Do you sense that their relationship with God was practical? Was He also real and personal to Noah? to Abraham? to Moses? to Isaiah? Yes! Yes! Yes! When He provided manna, quail, and water for the children of Israel, He was being practical. When Jesus fed five thousand He was being practical. **Has God changed?** No! This was true in the Old Testament. It was true during the time of Jesus' life and ministry. It was true after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Your life also can reflect that kind of real, personal, and practical relationship as you respond to God's working in your life.

Briefly describe an experience in your own life when God was real, personal, and/or practical in His relationship to you._____

Love must be real and personal. It takes place between two real beings. God is a Person pouring His life into yours.

If, for some reason, you cannot think of a time when your relationship to God has been real, personal, and practical, you need to spend some time evaluating your relationship to Him. Go before the Lord in prayer and ask Him to reveal the true nature of your relationship to Him. Ask Him to bring you into that kind of relationship.

God's Presence and Work in Your Life Is Practical

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **The relationship God wants to have with me will be real and personal.**
- ☐ **God's whole plan for the advance of the Kingdom depends on His working in real and**

practical ways through His personal relationship with His people.

UNIT 4

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.—**JOHN 14:21**

read **Genesis 22:1-18** and answer the following:

1. What did God ask Abraham to do? (v. 2)_____
2. What do you think verse 8 indicates about Abraham?_____
3. What did God do for Abraham? (v. 13)_____
4. What name did Abraham give the place? (v. 14)_____
5. Why did God promise to bless Abraham? (vv. 15-18)_____

Look again at the seven realities in LESSON 4 UNIT 1. How does Abraham's experience of God follow that sequence?_____

Describe an event through which you know you experienced God at work in your life._____

Lesson 3 Activities

Read **Deuteronomy 32:46-47**. How important are God's words to you?_____

Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25, then describe the purpose of the commandments, decrees, stipulations, and laws of God.

LESSON 1; UNIT 4

LOVE AND GOD'S INVITATION

[Jack Conner: Mission Pastor]

When our Church started its first mission, we asked Jack Conner to become our mission pastor; but we had no money for moving expenses and no money for a salary. Jack had three children in school, so we felt that we ought to pay him at least \$850 a month. We began to pray that God would provide for his move and his needs. I had never guided a church to do that before. We had now stepped out in faith, believing that God wanted him to pastor our mission located in Prince Albert. Except for a few people in California, I didn't know anybody who could help us financially. I began to ask myself, "How in the world will God make this provision?" Then it dawned on me that as long as God knew where I was, He could cause anybody in the world to know where I was. As long as He knew my need, He could place that need on the heart of anybody He chose.

Jack passed immigration and started his move of faith, convinced that God had called him.

I then received a letter from a church in Arkansas. They said, “God has laid it on their heart to send one percent of their mission giving to Saskatchewan missions. We are sending a check to use however you choose.” I did not know how in the world they got involved with us at that time, but a check came for \$1,100.

One day I received a phone call at home. The person calling pledged enough money to complete the \$850 a month we needed to provide Jack’s salary for one year. Just as I got off the phone, Jack drove into our driveway.

I asked, “Jack, what did it cost to move you?”

He said, “Well, Henry, as best I can tell it cost me \$1,100.”

We began that first step of faith by believing that the God who knows where we are is the God who can touch anybody, anywhere and cause him/her to know where we are. We made the adjustments and were obedient. We believed that the God who called Jack also said, “I AM Provider.” When we were obedient, God demonstrated Himself to be our Provider. That experience led us to a deeper love relationship with an all-sufficient God.]

Memorize this verse:

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.—JOHN 14:21

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[One of the most exciting invitations God has presented to my wife, Marilyn, and me was the opportunity to lead a weekend time called Experiencing God as Couples. These conferences began on a Friday evening and went through Sunday noon. They concluded with a renewal of wedding vows. God has guided and blessed our marriage and our children., so we felt maybe we could be an encouragement to other couples in their marriages. Thousands have come to these weekends, from couples on their honeymoon to couples married well over 50 years. Lives were changed as we taught and applied the truths of Experiencing God.

One aspect of these weekends always overwhelmed us: the number of couples who “settled with God” His call in their lives to missions or ministry. As each faced the truth in Scripture that God pursues a love relationship and has a purpose in their lives, for the first time—together—they realized God was “calling” them to serve Him in a special way, full time. Tears of joy were always common as was a great relief that they could talk about it together, often for the first time. Later we would meet them in seminary preparing their lives, or on a mission field serving joyfully. What freedom comes when God calls and a couple says, “Yes, Lord”!]

KNOW GOD

I know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him.

This unit continues our focus on the love relationship with God. You will find that **the call to relationship is also a call to be on mission with Him**. If you want to know God's will, you must respond to His invitation to love Him wholeheartedly. God works through those He loves to carry out His kingdom purposes in the world. During this unit, we will begin to look at how God invites you to become involved with Him in His work.

Knowing God by Experience

You will never be satisfied to just know about God. **Knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to you**. When Moses was at the burning bush, he asked God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (**Ex. 3:13**).

God responded, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you' " (**Ex. 3:14**). When God said, "I AM WHO I AM," He was saying, "I AM the Eternal One. I will be what I will be." He was saying "I am everything you will need." During the next 40 years, Moses came to know God **experientially** as Jehovah or Yahweh, the Great I AM.

Names of God

In the Bible God took the initiative to reveal Himself to people by experience. Frequently when God revealed Himself to a person, the **person gave God a new name or described Him in a new way**. For the Hebrew, a person's **name represented his character or described his nature**. This is why we frequently see new names or titles for God following an event where a Bible character experienced God. **To know God by name required a personal experience of His presence**.

Biblical names, titles, and descriptions of God identify how Bible characters personally came to know God. The Scripture is a record of God's revelation of Himself to man. **Each name for God is a part of that revelation**.

For example: Joshua and the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites. Moses was overseeing the battle from a nearby mountain. While he held his hands up to God, the Israelites were victorious. When he let his hands down they began to lose. God defeated the Amalekites through Israel that day. Moses built an altar and gave it the name "The Lord is my Banner." A banner is the standard that goes out in front of an army to indicate who it represents. "The Lord is my Banner" says we are God's people; He is our God. Moses' uplifted hands gave constant glory to God indicating that the battle was His and Israel was His. Israel came to know God in a better way as they realized anew—We are God's people; the Lord is our Banner.

(See Ex. 17:8-15).

For another example read **Genesis 22:1-18** and answer the following:

1. What did God ask Abraham to do? (v. 2)_____
2. What do you think verse 8 indicates about Abraham?_____
3. What did God do for Abraham? (v. 13)_____
4. What name did Abraham give the place? (v. 14)_____
5. Why did God promise to bless Abraham? (vv. 15-18)_____

Gen. 22:1 through Gen. 22:20 ¹And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am*. ²And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

³And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. ⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. ⁵And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you. ⁶And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together. ⁷And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering? ⁸And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. ⁹And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I. ¹²And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me. ¹³And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

¹⁵And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, ¹⁶And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son*: ¹⁷That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

God was in the process of developing Abraham's character to be the father of a nation. He put Abraham's faith and obedience to the test. This brought Abraham to a crisis of belief. Abraham had faith that the Lord would provide (v. 8). He made the adjustment of his life to act on his belief that God was Provider. He obeyed God. When God provided a ram, Abraham came to an intimate knowledge of God through the experience of God as his Provider.

Look again at the seven realities in LESSON 4 UNIT 1. How does Abraham's experience of God follow that sequence?_____

[At the beginning of this unit you read how Faith Baptist Church and Jack Conner came to know God as Provider. God reveals Himself to us through our experience of Him at work in our lives.

As a pastor of college students, I called the students in and talked with them regularly. I knew they were in a period of rapid change. I wanted to help them as they made major decisions in their lives. A wonderful girl who was studying nursing came to my office. I had been

praying for Sherri and what God might be doing in her life. We talked about her alcoholic father. We talked about her decision of whether or not to continue in nursing. Then I looked at Sherri and said, “Sherri, I want you to know that God has laid on my heart that I need to pray for a husband for you.”

She asked, “Are you serious?”

I said, “Sherri, I want you to know I am serious. Because you have had an alcoholic father and have experienced all the turmoil and heartache that you have, I believe God wants to give you a wonderful man to love you for who you are. I want you to know that, beginning today, I am praying that God will give you a wonderful, loving husband.”

She wept. She and I began to pray that God would provide her a partner. About three months later, God brought into our church a wonderful young man who was an engineering student. They fell in love, and I performed their wedding ceremony. They now have at least two children and are serving the Lord very faithfully. The last I heard, Sherri was as happy as could be.

How did Sherri know that God was the God who could provide a husband? She claimed who God was and then proceeded to watch and pray. She was open to receive the one God would give her. She had to obey and receive when God revealed His choice to her. Then she came to know God as the Provider of Partners.]

Is there a special “name of God” that became significant as you experienced God at work in your life?

What name could you use to describe the God you experienced?

Read the following list of names, titles, and descriptions of God. Note those that describe God in ways you have personally experienced Him.

my advocate (Job 16:19)	bread of life (John 6:35)
Comforter in sorrow (Jer. 8:18)	my confidence (Ps. 71:5)
Wonderful Counselor (Isa. 9:6)	defender of widows (Ps. 68:5)
my strong deliverer (Ps. 140:7)	Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)
our Father (Isa. 64:8)	a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24)
a sure foundation (Isa. 28:16)	my friend (Job 16:20)
God Almighty (Gen. 17:1)	God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3)
God who avenges me (Ps. 18:47)	God who saves me (Ps. 51:14)
our guide (Ps. 48:14)	head of the church (Eph. 5:23)
our Help (Ps. 33:20)	my hiding place (Ps. 32:7)
a great high priest (Heb. 4:14)	Holy One among you (Hos. 11:9)

my hope (Ps. 71:5)
righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8)
our leader (2 Chron. 13:12)
light of life (John 8:12)
Lord of the harvest (Matt. 9:38)
the most holy (Dan. 9:24)
Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6)
refuge and strength (Ps. 46:1)
my Savior (Ps. 42:5)
Sovereign Lord (Luke 2:29)
my support (2 Sam. 22:19)

Jealous (Ex. 34:14)
King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15)
your life (Col. 3:4)
Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15)
mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)
our peace (Eph. 2:14)
my Redeemer (Ps. 19:14)
my salvation (Ex. 15:2)
the good shepherd (John 10:11)
my stronghold (Ps. 18:2)
good teacher (Mark 10:17)

Consider the ways you have come to know God through His creation, and experiences you encounter. Do you see that you have come to know God through experience? Do any of the names make you think of an experience where God acted in that way? For instance, you could not have known God as the “Comforter in sorrow” unless you had experienced His comfort during a time of sorrow. **You come to know God when He reveals Himself to you. You come to know Him as you experience Him.** That is why we have titled this course Experiencing God.

How do you come to know God personally and intimately? _____

(You come to know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to you through your experiences with Him.)

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Knowing God only comes through experience as He reveals Himself to me.**
- **I know God more intimately as He reveals Himself to me through my experiences with Him.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 4

WORSHIP GOD

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (Ps. 8:1).

To call on one’s name was to seek his presence. God’s name is majestic and worthy of our praise. Acknowledging God’s name amounts to recognizing God for who He is. **Calling on His name indicates you are seeking His presence.** Praising His name is praising Him. God’s names in Scripture can become a call to worship for you.

To focus your attention on His name is to focus attention on the God of the name. His name represents His presence. **To worship is to reverence and honor God, to acknowledge Him as worthy of your praise.** The Psalms are rich in their instructions to direct your worship toward God through His name.

Read the following Scriptures and note the word or phrase that describes ways you can direct your worship toward God through His names. The first two are done for you.

- “Sing unto the Lord, bless his name” (Ps. 96:2, KJV).
“Revive us, and we will call on your name” (Ps. 80:18).
“I will declare your name to my brothers” (Ps. 22:22).
“Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name” (Ps. 86:11).
“Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise” (Ps. 106:47).
“All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name” (Ps. 86:9).
“Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice (Ps. 105:3).
“I will praise you forever for what you have done; in your name I will hope, for your name is good” (Ps. 52:9).
“Those who know your name will trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you” (Ps. 9:10).
“Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name” (Ps. 63:4, KJV).
“But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you” (Ps. 5:11).
“In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever” (Ps. 44:8).
“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they exult in your righteousness” (Ps. 89:15-16).
“In the night I remember your name, O Lord, and I will keep your law” (Ps. 119:55).
“Cover their faces with shame so that men will seek your name, O Lord” (Ps. 83:16).
“I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High” (Ps. 7:17).
“All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name” (Ps. 66:4).
“In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name” (Ps. 33:21).

WAYS TO WORSHIP GOD

bless His name **gl**ory in His name **re**joice in His name
call upon His name **hope in** His name **remember** the name
declare His name **know** His name **seek** His name
fear His name **lift up hands in** His name **sing praise to** His name
give thanks to His name **love** His name **sing to** His name

glorify His name **praise** His name **trust in** His name

Use these ways to worship God. Turn to “**Names, Titles, and Descriptions of God**” (found at the end of our study material). The names direct your attention to Him, who He is, and what He does. Praise Him for who He is. Thank Him for what He has done. Glorify Him. Love and adore Him. Seek Him. Trust Him. Sing to Him.

LESSON 3; UNIT 4

LOVE GOD

If I love Him, I will obey Him!

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” —**John 14:21**

God takes the initiative to pursue a love relationship with you. This love relationship, however, is not a one-sided affair. He wants you to know Him and worship Him. Most of all, He wants you to love Him.

According to this unit’s memory verse (Jn.14:21 above):

1. Who is the one who loves Jesus? What does he have and do? _____
2. How does the Father respond to the one who loves Jesus? _____
3. What two things will Jesus do for the one who loves Him? _____

What is the **Biblical definition of “love”; Agape Love???**

“A decision (or choice) to do what is best for someone else, at your own expense.”

Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I **command**” (**John 14:15**).

What does Jesus command??

(see James 1:25 “perfect law of liberty” and **James 2:8** ⁸ If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:)

When you obey Jesus, you show that you love Him and trust Him. The Father loves those who love His Son. For those who love Him (shown by obedience), Jesus said He would love them and show Himself to them. **Obedience is the outward expression of your love of God.**

The **reward for obedience and love is that He will show Himself to you.** Jesus set an example for you in His life. He said, “The world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (**John 14:31**). Jesus was obedient to every command of the Father. He demonstrated His love for the Father by obedience.

A love relationship with God requires that you demonstrate your love by obedience. This is not just a following of the “letter” of the law, but it is a **following of the “spirit” of the command as well.** If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem. Focus your attention on God’s love.

God’s Nature: love, omniscience, omnipotence

God’s nature is love “God is love” (**1 John 4:16**). God can never function contrary to His own nature. Never in your life will God ever express His will toward you except that it is an expression of His perfect love. He can’t! He can never give you second best. His nature will not let Him. He will bring discipline, judgment, and wrath on those who continue in sin and rebellion. His disciplines, however, always are based on love (Heb. 12:6). Because His nature is love, I am always confident that however He expresses Himself to me is always best. Two verses describe His love toward us:

- **John 3:16**—“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son.”
- **1 John 3:16**—“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.”

“God is love” (**1 John 4:16**). Your trust in the love nature of God is crucial. This has been a powerful influence in my own life. I never look on circumstances without seeing them on the backdrop of the cross. My relationship to God determines everything I do.

It is spiritually impossible for you to believe one way and practice another. If you **really believe** that God is love, you will also accept the fact that His will is always best.

By nature God is omniscient—all-knowing. He has all knowledge—past, present, and future. Nothing is outside the knowledge of God. Whenever God expresses Himself to you, therefore, His directions are always right.

Whenever God gives you a directive, it is always right. You never have to question whether His will is best or right. This is true because He loves you and knows all. Because He loves you perfectly, you can trust Him and obey Him completely.

God is omnipotent—all-powerful. He was able to create the world out of nothing. He can accomplish anything He purposes to do. If He ever asks you to do something, He Himself will enable you to do it. We will look at this fact more closely very soon.

When your life is in the middle of God's activity, He will start rearranging a lot of your thinking. God's ways and thoughts are so different from yours and mine they will often sound wrong or crazy. **You need a readiness to believe God and trust Him completely.**

God will start to make Himself known to you very simply as He would to a child. As you respond to Him in a simple child-like trust, you will find a whole new way of looking at life begin to unfold for you. Your life will be fulfilling. You will never have to sense an emptiness or lack of purpose. He always fills your life with Himself. When you have Him, you have everything there is.

When you hear words like commands, judgments, statutes, or laws, is your first impression negative or positive?

God's Commands

God's commands are expressions of His nature of love. He says:

“What does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?” **(Deuteronomy 10:12-13)**

Read Deuteronomy 32:46-47 below. How important are God's words to you ? _____

“He said to them, ‘Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.’” —**Deuteronomy 32:46-47**

“This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” **(1 John 5:3).**

God loves you deeply and profoundly. Because He loves you, He has given you guidelines for living lest you miss the full dimensions of the love relationship. Life also has some land mines that can destroy you or wreck your life. God does not want to see you miss out on His best, and He does not want to see your life wrecked.

Suppose you had to cross a field full of land mines. A person who knew exactly where every one of them was buried offered to take you through it. Would you say to him, “I don't want you to tell me what to do. I don't want you to impose your ways on me”?

You would want to stay as close to that person as you could, and not go wandering off. His directions to you would be to preserve your life. He would say, “Don't go that way, because that way will kill you. Go this way and you will live.”

That is **the purpose of God's commands**. He wants you **to have life and have it abundantly**.

When the Lord gives you a command, He is trying **to protect and preserve the best He has for you**. He does not want you to lose it. When God gives a commandment, **He is not restricting you. He is freeing you**.

Read Deuteronomy 6:20-25 below, then describe the purpose of the commandments, decrees, stipulations, and laws of God.

“In the future, when your son asks you, ‘What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you?’ tell him: . . . ‘The Lord commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the Lord our God, **so that we might always prosper and be kept alive**, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us, **that will be our righteousness.**’ ” —
Deuteronomy 6:20-25

He has given His commands so you may prosper and live life to its fullest measure. Suppose the Lord says, “Let me tell you where a beautiful, wonderful expression of love is. I will provide you with a spouse—a husband or a wife. Your relationship with this person will bring out the very best in you. It will give you an opportunity to experience some of the deepest and most meaningful expressions of human love. That individual will release in you some wonderful things, affirm some things in you, and will be there to strengthen you when you lose heart. In that relationship that person will love you, believe in you, and trust you. Out of that relationship I will give you some children, and those children will sit on your knee and say, “Daddy, I love you.”

But, He says, “Do not commit adultery” (**Matt. 5:27**). **Is that command to limit or restrict you?** No! It is to protect and free you to experience love at its human best. What happens if you break the command and commit adultery? The love relationship is ruptured between husband and wife. Trust is gone. Hurt sets in. Guilt and bitterness creep in. Even the children begin to respond differently. Scars may severely limit the future dimensions of love you could have experienced together.

God’s commands are designed to guide you to life’s very best. **You will not obey Him, however, if you do not believe Him and trust Him**. If, however, you really come to know Him as He reveals Himself to you, you will love Him, and then you will obey Him. (John 14:24).

believe/trust → love → obey → know → revelation → reward →

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Obedience is the outward expression of my love of God.**
- **If I have an obedience problem, I have a love problem.**
- **God is love. His will is always best.**
- **God is all-knowing. His directions are always right.**

- **God is all-powerful. He can enable me to do His will.**
- **All of God's commands are expressions of His nature of love.**
- **When God gives a commandment, He is not restricting me. He is freeing me.**
- **If I love Him, I will obey Him!**

LESSON 4; UNIT 4

GOD INVITES YOU TO JOIN HIM

When you see the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and join Him in that work.

The Bible is the record of God's activity in the world. In it He reveals Himself (His nature), His purposes and plans, and His ways. The Bible is not primarily a book about individual persons and their relationship with God (Abraham, Moses, or Paul), but rather the activity of God and His relationship with individuals. The focus is on God and His activity.

Review the first four realities

God Works Through People

The Bible reveals that God always has been involved in the world. He has never been absent from it or what is taking place in history. When we read the Bible, we are reading the redemptive activity of God in our world. We see that He chooses to take the initiative and involve His people with Him. He chooses to work through them to accomplish His purposes.

- **When God was ready to judge the world,** He came to Noah. He was about to do something, and He was going to do it through Noah.
- **When God was ready to build a nation for Himself,** He came to Abraham. God was going to accomplish His will through Abraham.
- **When God heard the cry of the children of Israel and decided to deliver them,** He appeared to Moses. God came to Moses because of His purpose. He planned to deliver Israel through Moses.

This is true all through the Old Testament and New Testament. **When God's fullness of time had come to redeem a lost world through His Son,** He gave 12 men to His Son to prepare them to accomplish His purposes.

When He is about to do something, He takes the initiative and comes to one or more of His servants. He lets them know what He is about to do. He invites them to adjust their lives to Him, so He can accomplish His work through them. The prophet Amos indicated that,

“The Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7).

God’s Revelation Is Your Invitation

You may be asking, **“How does God invite me to be involved with Him?”** Let’s **review Jesus’ example from John 5:17, 19-20.** (See Unit 1)

“My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working. . . . I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does.” —**John 5:17, 19-20**

Jesus’ Example

1. The Father has been working right up until now.
2. Now God has Me working.
3. I do nothing on My own initiative.
4. I **watch** to see what the Father is doing.
5. I do what I see the Father is already doing.
6. You see, the Father loves Me.
7. He shows Me everything that He, Himself, is doing.

How did Jesus know what to do in His Father’s work? _____

How did Jesus respond? _____

To experience God personally, remember God has been at work in our world from the very beginning, and He still is at work. Jesus indicated this in His life. He announced that He had come, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father who had sent Him (**John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 17:4**). To know the Father’s will, Jesus said He watched to see what the Father was doing. Then Jesus joined Him in that work.

In the preceding exercise “Jesus’ Example”, note the key word in statement #4 that tells what Jesus did to know the Father’s invitation to join Him.

Because He loves you and wants to involve you in His work, He will show you where He is working so you can join Him. The key word in statement #4 is **watch**. Jesus watched to see where the Father was at work. When He saw, He did what He saw the Father doing. For Jesus the revelation of where the Father was working was His invitation to join in the work. **When you see** the Father at work around you, that is your invitation to adjust your life to Him and **join Him** in that work .

God’s revelation is your invitation to join Him.

Is it possible for God to be working around you and you not see it? Yes. Elisha and his servant

were in the city of Dothan surrounded by an army. The servant was terrified, but Elisha was calm. “Elisha prayed, ‘O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17). Only when the Lord opened the servant’s eyes did he see God’s activity all around him.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem and its leaders as He prophesied the destruction that would take place in A.D. 70. He said,

“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes” (**Luke 19:42**). Here was God in their midst performing wonderful signs and miracles, and they did not recognize Him.

Two factors are important for you to recognize the activity of God around you.

- 1 . You must be living in an intimate love relationship with God.
- 2 . God must take the initiative to open your spiritual eyes, so you can see what He is doing.

Unless God allows you to see where He is working, you will not see it. When God reveals to you what He is doing around you, that is your invitation to join Him. Recognizing God’s activity is dependent on your love relationship with Him and His taking the initiative to open your spiritual eyes to see it.

Working Where God Is at Work

[Our church sensed that God wanted us to help start new churches all across Central and Western Canada. We had hundreds of towns and villages that had no evangelical church.

If you were in that situation, how would you decide which towns to choose?_____

Some churches would start with a population study or survey. Then they would apply human logic to decide where the most promising and productive places might be. By now you know that we would take a different approach. We tried to find out what God already was doing around us. We believed that He would show us where He was at work, and that revelation would be our invitation to join Him. We began praying and watching to see what God would do next in answer to our prayers.

Allan was a small town 40 miles from Saskatoon. It had never had a Protestant church. One of our members felt led to conduct a Vacation Bible School for the children in Allan. We said, “Let’s find out if God is at work here.”

So we conducted the Vacation Bible School. At the end of the week, we held a parents’ night. We said to the group, “We believe God may want us to establish a church in this town. If any of you would like to begin a regular Bible study group and maybe be a part of a new church, would you just come forward.”

From the back of the hall came a lady. She was weeping. She said, “I have prayed for 30 years that there would be a church in this town, and you are the first people to respond.”

Right behind her came an elderly man. He too was deeply moved and weeping. He said, “For years I was active in a church. Then I went into alcohol. Four and a half years ago I came back to the Lord. I promised God then that I would pray four to five hours every day until God brought us a church in our town. You are the first people to respond.”

We didn’t have to take a survey. God had just shown us where He was at work! That was our invitation to join Him. We went back and joyfully shared with our church what God was doing. The church immediately voted to start a new church in Allan. As of today, that church in Allan has started one church and two mission churches.

God hasn’t told us to go away and do some work for Him. He has told us that He is already at work trying to bring a lost world to Himself. If we will adjust our lives to Him in a love relationship, He will show us where He is at work. That revelation is His invitation to us to get involved in His work. Then, when we join Him, He completes His work through us.]

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God is at work in the world.**
- **God takes the initiative to involve me in His work.**
- **God must take the initiative to open my spiritual eyes, so I can see what He is doing .**
- **When I see the Father at work around me, that is my invitation to adjust my life to Him and join Him in that work.**
- **God’s revelation is my invitation to join Him.**

LESSON 5; UNIT 4

KNOWING WHERE GOD IS AT WORK

God has tried, at times, to get our attention by revealing where He is at work. We see it, but we do not immediately identify it as God’s work. We say to ourselves, Well, I don’t know if God wants me to get involved here, or not. I had better pray about it. By the time we leave that situation and pray, the opportunity to join God is gone. A tender and sensitive heart will be ready to respond to God at the slightest prompting. God makes your heart tender and sensitive in the love relationship we already have talked about.

If you are going to join God in His work, you need to know where God is working. The **Scriptures tell us of some things only God can do. You need to learn to identify these.**

Then, **when something happens around you that only God can do, you can know it is God's activity.** This does not deny God's initiative. Unless God opens your spiritual eyes, you will not know it is Him at work.

Things Only God Can Do

The Scriptures say that no one can come to Christ except the Father draws him (**John 6:44**). No one will seek God or pursue spiritual things unless the Spirit of God is at work in his life. Suppose a neighbor, a friend, or one of your children begins to inquire after spiritual things. You do not have to question whether that is God drawing him or her. He is the only one who can do that. No one will ever seek after God unless God is at work in his life.

For example, **as Jesus passed through a crowd, He was always looking for where the Father was at work.** The crowd was not the harvest field. The harvest field was within that crowd. Jesus saw **Zacchaeus in a tree**. Jesus may have said to Himself, "Nobody can seek after Me with that kind of earnestness unless My Father is at work in his heart." So Jesus pulled away from the crowd and said, "Zacchaeus come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (**Luke 19:5**). What happened? Salvation came to that household that night. Jesus always looked for the activity of the Father and joined Him. Salvation came as a result of Jesus' joining His life to the activity of God.

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions that follow.

John 14:15-17—"If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. . . . You know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

1. If you love and obey Christ, whom will the Father give you? List two of His names.

2. Where will this Person live? -----

John 14:26—"The Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

3. What are two things the Holy Spirit will do for Jesus' disciples? _____

John 16:8—"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment."

4. What are three more things the Holy Spirit does? _____

When you are saved, you enter a love relationship with Jesus Christ—God Himself. At that

point the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, comes to take up residence in your life. He is ever present to **teach, convict people of guilt** regarding sin, and **convict the world of righteousness and judgment**. Here are some things only God can do:

Things Only God Can Do

1. God draws people to Himself.
2. God causes people to seek after Him.
3. God reveals spiritual truth.
4. God convicts the world of guilt regarding sin.
5. God convicts the world of righteousness.
6. God convicts the world of judgment.

When you see one of these things happening you can know God is at work. God is at work when you see someone coming to Christ, asking about spiritual matters, coming to understand spiritual truth, experiencing conviction of sin, being convinced of the righteousness of Christ, being convinced of judgment. They experience a heart for God's desires.

(example)

[When I was speaking in a series of meetings, Bill, a plant manager, said, "You know, I have not been looking on the job to see the activity of God." He mentioned Christian people in key positions in his plant. He wondered if God had not placed them in those positions for a purpose. He decided to get these co-workers together and say, "Let's see if God wants us to take this entire plant for Jesus Christ." Does that sound like something God might want to do? Yes!]

Suppose you were in Bill's place. You plan to bring these Christians together. How would you find out what to do next?_____

You start by praying. Only the Father knows what He has purposed. He knows the best way to get it done. He even knows why He brought these individuals together in this plant and why He gave Bill the burden to bring them together. **After you pray**, get up off your knees and **watch to see what God does next**. Watch to see what people are saying when they come to you. Suppose someone in the plant comes to Bill and says, "My family is really having a tough time financially". Or, "I am having an especially tough time with my teenager."

Bill had just prayed, "Oh, God, show me where You are at work." He needs to make the connection between his prayers and what happens next. **If you do not connect what happens next, you may miss God's answer to your prayer. Always connect what happens next.** Then what should Bill do?

Ask the kind of questions that will reveal what is happening in that person's life. Learn to

ask questions of people who cross your path to find out what God is doing in their lives.

For instance:

- How can I pray for you?
- What can I pray for you?
- Do you want to talk?
- What do you see as the greatest challenge in your life?
- What is the most significant thing happening in your life right now?
- Would you tell me what God is doing in your life?
- What is God bringing to the surface in your life?
- What particular burden has God given you?

The person responds, “I really don’t have a relationship with God. But in the last little while with this problem with my teenager, I sure have been thinking about it.” Or “When I was a kid I used to go to Sunday School. My mother and dad made me go. I got away from it, but the financial problems we are under has really caused me to think about this.” Those statements sound like God is at work in the person’s life. He may be drawing the person to Himself, causing the person to seek after God, or bringing conviction of sin.

Answer the following questions:

- A. What are some actions described in the previous paragraphs that will help you see if God is at work in a situation? _____
- B. Look back at the box listing “Things Only God Can Do.” What would you watch for as you look for the activity of God in the lives of people around you? List at least three. I would watch for someone who . . .
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
- C. List the names of people around you who are experiencing any of these activities of God in their lives.

When you want to know what God is doing around you, pray. Watch to see what happens next. Make the connection between your prayer and what happens. Find out what God is doing by asking probing questions. Then listen. Be ready to make whatever adjustments are required to join God in what He is doing.

A Visitor Came by “Accident”

[We had a man visit our church by accident. He saw on the bottom of the bulletin, “Pray for our mission in Kyle; pray for our mission in Prince Albert; pray for our mission in Love; pray for our mission in Regina; pray for our mission in Blaine Lake” and others. He asked what it meant.

“I explained that our church had made a commitment. If God ever shows us where someone

desires a Bible study or a church, we will respond. He asked, “You mean to say, that if I were to ask you to come and help us start a church in our town, you would respond?” I told him that we would, and he started to cry. He was a construction worker in Leroy, 75 miles east of us. He said that he had been pleading with people to start a church in Leroy for 24 years. Nobody had wanted to help. He asked if we would come.

We established a church in Leroy. We bought two lots on the main street. This man was so excited he bought a school building and moved it to the site. He is now functioning as a lay pastor in a work beyond Leroy. Both of his sons have responded to the call to the gospel ministry .

As a church, we were already conditioned to seeing things that only God can do. When He let us see where He was working, we immediately saw that as our invitation to join Him. Frequently, the reason we do not join Him is we are not committed to join Him. We are wanting God to bless us, not to work through us. As a church, **do not look for how God is going to bless you. Look for how God is going to reveal Himself by working through you and out beyond you to accomplish His purposes. The working of God in you will bring a blessing. The blessing is a by-product of your obedience and experience of God at work in your midst.]**

Who can tell what a solitary visit by a stranger can mean in your church? Ask some questions about what God is doing where that person is. **Has this illustration given you any ideas about how you can begin to watch for the activity of God around you? in your family? in your work? in your church?**

Two More Points

We have spent two days focusing on the fact that God invites you to become involved in His work. You need to connect the following two points to this fact.

1. God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes. When God reveals to you what He is doing is when you need to respond. He speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes. That is true throughout Scripture. Now, keep in mind, the final completion may be a long time off. Abram’s son was born 25 years after the promise from God. **The time God comes to you, however, is the time for your response.** You need to begin adjusting your life to Him. You may need to make some preparations for what He is about to do through you.

2. What God initiates, He completes. Isaiah confirmed this when God said through him, “What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do” (**Isa. 46:11**). Earlier he warned God’s people, saying, “The Lord Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand. . . . For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?’ ” (**Isa. 14:24, 27**). God says that if He ever lets His people know what He is about to do, it is as good as done—He Himself will bring it to pass. (**See 1 Kings 8:56 and Phil.1:6**).

What God speaks, He stands to guarantee that it will come to pass. This holds enormous implications to individual believers, churches, and denominations. When we come to God to know what He is about to do where we are, we also come with the assurance that what God indicates He is about to do is certain to come to pass.

(**A strong word of caution** to spiritual leaders: If you ever indicate to God's people that you "have a word from the Lord," you are obligated to stay at it until God brings it to pass. For God said that anyone who says, "I have a word from the Lord!", and it does not come to pass, that one is a false prophet (**Deut. 18:18-22; Jer. 28:9; Ezek. 12:24, 25**). The true prophet of God is one who has a word from the Lord, and it comes to pass. God's nature demands it! What God says comes to pass.)

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **A tender and sensitive heart will be ready to respond to God at the slightest prompting .**
- **Pray and watch to see what God does next.**
- **Make the connection. Ask probing questions. Listen.**
- **God speaks when He is about to accomplish His purposes.**
- **What God initiates, He completes.**

UNIT 5

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.—**JOHN 8:47**

Lesson 3 Activities: Read these Scriptures. After each one, write what God revealed about Himself.

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty" (**Gen. 17:1**)._____

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" ' ' ' (**Lev. 19:1-2**)._____

" 'I the Lord do not change. . . . Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,' says the Lord Almighty." (**Mal. 3:6-7**)._____

Jesus said to the Jews, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever" (**John 6:51**)._____

Stop for a minute and meditate on why God revealed Himself as He did to each of the people in the Scriptures above.

Read Proverbs 19:21 and Psalm 33:10-11. Why does God reveal His purposes?_____

Based on Psalm 33:10-11, answer the following questions.

1. What does the Lord do to the plans of the nations?_____
2. What does the Lord do to the purposes of the peoples?_____
3. What happens to the plans and purposes of the Lord?_____

LESSON 1; UNIT 5

GOD SPEAKS, PART 1

Starting A Church In Prince Albert

[When I accepted the call to go to the Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, few church people were left there—about 10. They recently had held a meeting to decide whether to disband as a church. What could God do here? What did He want to do? We had a heart to wait before Him, and look around us to see what He was doing.

When I arrived on a cold Saturday morning in 1970, a car with five men pulled up to join us for lunch. They came from Prince Albert, a city of 30,000 people 90 miles to the north. They had heard I was coming to Saskatoon. They began to pray, and they became convinced that I was to be their pastor, too. They had come to share their “word from the Lord .”

Little did they know that almost 20 years earlier, as a teenager I had told the Lord, “If you ever call me into the ministry, and if there is ever a people anywhere within driving distance who want a Bible study or a church, I will go.” When these people asked me to come, I could not say “no.”

Faith Church had never sponsored a mission. I had never pastored a church that had sponsored a mission. We could not proceed on our own skill or experience. We had to depend entirely on the Lord’s guidance. We were assured that the yearning in the hearts of God’s people in Prince Albert was the activity of God. Since they were led to come to us, we realized that was God’s way of indicating where we should serve Him.

God began to reveal His larger purposes for Prince Albert. God developed this church. They called a pastor, obtained property and a building. Then they began to multiply. They started new churches in 5 other cities. They began an Indian mission in Prince Albert and churches at three Native Indian Reserves. They started significant ministries in several other surrounding communities. They began an annual Indian Conference for Chiefs, Band Councils, and other Indian people from across the northern part of Saskatchewan. Truly, God did far more than we could have even asked for or imagined (**Eph. 3:20-21**).]

Memorize this verse:

He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.—**JOHN 8:47**

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[I was scheduled to lead a state-wide conference on prayer in Little Rock, Arkansas. To my surprise and joy, the Governor invited me to have supper at the Governor's house with some of his friends. Toward the end of the wonderful meal with about 19 of his friends, he said, "Let me tell you one of the reasons I invited you here. I wanted you to know that while my wife and I were 'struggling' with the decision about whether to run for governor, we were studying Experiencing God. During our study of the Scriptures, God gave us the clear direction that we should proceed. We are here, in part, because Experiencing God helped us clarify God's will in our lives, and God spoke to us and we obeyed."]

GOD SPEAKS IN DIFFERENT WAYS

God speaks through the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways. We will examine ways God speaks through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church or other believers.

Many Different Ways

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways" (Heb. 1:1).

One truth that is evident throughout the Bible is that God speaks to His people. In the Old Testament, some of the ways God spoke were through:

- angels (Gen. 16)
- visions (Gen. 15)
- dreams (Gen. 28:10-19)
- the use of the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:30)
- symbolic actions (Jer. 18:1-10)
- a gentle whisper (1 Kings 19:12)
- miraculous signs (Ex. 8:20-25)

Four Important Factors

That God spoke to people is far more important than how He spoke. When He spoke, the person knew God was speaking, and he knew what God was saying. You can see four important factors each time God spoke in the Old Testament. The burning bush experience of Moses in **Exodus 3** is an example.

1. When God spoke, it was usually unique to that individual. For instance, Moses had no precedent for a burning bush experience. He could not say, "Oh, this is my burning bush experience. My fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had theirs, and this is mine." There were

no other experiences of God speaking this way. It was unique, because God wants our experience with Him, and His voice, to be personal to us. He wants us to look to Him in a relationship rather than depend on some method or technique. If Moses had been around today, he would have been tempted to write a book about My Burning Bush Experience. Then people all over our land would be out trying to find their burning bush. The key is not how God spoke, but that He spoke. That has not changed. He will speak to His people today.

What is the first important factor in the way God spoke to individuals in the Old Testament ?

2. When God spoke, the person was sure God was speaking. Because God spoke to Moses in a unique way, Moses had to be certain it was God. The Scripture testifies that Moses had no question that his encounter was with God—The “I AM THAT I AM” (**Ex. 3:14**). He trusted God, obeyed Him, and experienced God responding just as He said He would. Could Moses logically prove to someone else that he had heard from God? No, all Moses could do was testify to his encounter with God. Only God could cause His people to know that the word He gave Moses was a word from the God of their fathers.

When someone like Gideon lacked assurance, God was very gracious to reveal Himself even more clearly. When Gideon first asked for a sign, he prepared a sacrifice. Then “the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, ‘Ah, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!’ ” (**Judg. 6:21-22**). Gideon was sure that God had spoken.

What is the second important factor in the way God spoke in the Old Testament?

3. When God spoke, the person knew what God said. Moses knew what God was telling him to do. He knew how God wanted to work through him. That is why Moses raised so many objections. He knew exactly what God was expecting. This was true for Moses; and it was true for Noah, Abraham, Joseph, David, Daniel, and others.

What is the third important factor in the way God spoke in the Old Testament?

4. When God spoke, that was the encounter with God. Moses would have been foolish to say, “This has been a wonderful experience with this burning bush. I hope this leads me to an encounter with God!” That was the encounter with God! When God reveals truth to you, by whatever means, that is an encounter with God. That is an experience of His presence in your life. God is the only One who can cause you to experience His presence.

What is the fourth important factor in the way God spoke in the Old Testament?

Using the “hint” below, review the four factors you just read about.

1. Unique — _____
2. Sure — _____
3. What — _____
4. Encounter — _____

Check your answers.

This pattern of God speaking is found throughout the Old Testament. The **method** He used to speak was different from person to person. What is important is:

- God uniquely spoke to His people.
- They knew it was God.
- They knew what He said.
- They knew it was an encounter with God.

When God speaks to you by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church, you will come to know it is God; and you will know what He is saying. When God speaks to you, that is an encounter with God.

A Wrong Pattern

Many people say something like this: “Lord, I really want to know your will. Stop me if I am wrong and bless me if I am right.” Another version of this is: “Lord, I will proceed in this direction. Close the door if it is not your will.” This is not a pattern anywhere in the Scripture.

You cannot allow yourself to be guided by experience alone. You cannot allow yourself to be guided **by tradition, a method, or a formula.** Often people trust in these ways because they are easy, and they can put the whole burden of responsibility on God. If they are wrong, He must intervene and stop them. If they make a mistake, they blame Him.

If you want to know the will and voice of God, you must give the time and effort to cultivate a love relationship with Him. That is what He wants!

Which of the following is the scriptural pattern for knowing God’s will?

- ☐ Look for open and closed doors.
- ☐ Ask God to stop you if you are wrong.
- ☐ Wait until you hear a clear word from God.

The **Word of God is our guide.** The pattern in Scripture is that God always gives a direction on the front end. He may not tell you all you want to know at the beginning, but He will tell you what you need to know to make necessary adjustments and to take the first step of obedience. Your task is to **wait until the Master gives you instructions.** If you start “doing” before you have a direction from God, more than likely you will be wrong.

Specific Directions

A popular teaching says God does not give you clear directives. It says He just sets your life

in motion. Then you try to figure out the directions using your God-given mind. This implies that a Christian always thinks correctly and according to God's will. This does not take into account that the old nature is constantly battling with the spiritual nature (**Rom. 7**). Our ways are not God's ways (**Isa. 55:8**). **Only God can give you the kind of specific directions to accomplish His purposes in His ways.**

After God spoke to Noah about building an ark, Noah knew the size, the type of materials, and how to put it together. When God spoke to Moses about building the tabernacle He was very specific about the details. When God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ, He gave specific directions to His disciples—where to go, what to do, how to respond.

What about when God called Abraham (Abram) and said, "Go to the land I will show you" (**Gen. 12:1**)? That was not very specific. That required faith. But God did say, "I will show you." God always will give you enough specific directions to do now what He wants you to do. When you need more directions, He gives you more in His timing. In Abraham's case, God later told him about the son to be born to him, the number of his descendants, the territory they would inhabit, that they would go into bondage and be brought out.

The **Holy Spirit gives clear directives today**. God is personal. He wants to be intimately involved in your life. He will give you clear guidance for living. You may say, "That has not been my experience." You need to:

Base your understanding of God on Scripture not on experience.

Note the suggestions in the following paragraph that will help you as you look to God for direction in your life.

If you do not have clear instructions from God in a matter, pray and wait. Learn patience. Depend on God's timing. His timing is always right and best. Don't get in a hurry. He may be withholding directions to cause you to seek Him more intently. **Don't try to skip over the relationship to get on with doing. God is more interested in a love relationship with you than He is in what you can do for Him.**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **If I do not know when God is speaking, I am in trouble at the heart of my Christian life!**
- **God speaks to His people.**
- **That God spoke to people is far more important than how He spoke.**
- **When God spoke, it was usually unique to that individual.**
- **When God spoke, the person was sure it was God.**
- **When God spoke, the person knew what God said.**
- **When God spoke, that was the encounter with God.**

- **If I do not have clear instructions from God in a matter, I will pray and wait. I will not try to bypass the love relationship.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 5

GOD SPEAKS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

When I understand spiritual truth, it is because the Holy Spirit is working in my life.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.”

In the Gospels . . .

In the Gospels God spoke through His Son—Jesus. The Gospel of John begins:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (**John 1:1, 14**).

God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. (**See also 1 John 1:1-4**.)

The disciples would have been foolish to say, “It’s wonderful knowing You, Jesus; but we really would like to know the Father.” Philip even said,

“Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (**John 14:8**).

Jesus responded,

“Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (**John 14:9-10**).

When Jesus spoke, the Father was speaking through Him. When Jesus did a miracle, the Father was doing His work through Jesus.

Write a summary statement of how God spoke during the life of Jesus. _ _ _ _ _

In the Gospel accounts God was in Christ Jesus. God spoke by Jesus. When the disciples heard Jesus, they heard God. When Jesus spoke, that was an encounter with God.

In Acts and to the Present . . .

When we move from the Gospels to Acts and to the present, we quite often change our whole mind-set. We live as if God quit speaking personally to His people. We fail to realize that an

encounter with the Holy Spirit is an encounter with God. God clearly spoke to His people in Acts, and He clearly speaks to us today by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit takes up residence in the life of a believer.

“You yourselves are God’s temple and . . . God’s Spirit lives in you” **(1 Cor. 3:16).**

“Your **body** is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God” **(1 Cor. 6:19).**

Because He is always present in a believer, **He can speak to you clearly and at any time.**

We have already studied about God’s speaking to His people. Here are some of the key ideas we examined:

- In the Old Testament God spoke in many different ways.
- In the Gospels God spoke through His Son.
- In Acts and to the present He speaks by the Holy Spirit.
- God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways.
- ☐ Knowing God’s voice comes from an intimate love relationship with God.
- God speaks when He has a purpose in mind for your life.
- The moment God speaks to you is the very moment He wants you to respond to Him.
- ☐ The moment God speaks to you is God’s timing.

Answer the following questions.

1. How did God speak in the Old Testament? _____
2. How did God speak in the Gospels? _____
3. How did God speak in Acts and to the present time? _____
4. How do you come to know God’s voice? _____
5. How do you know God’s timing? _____

Let’s pull together several other things you studied in earlier units:

- ☐ Because of sin, “There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one” **(Rom. 3:11, 12).**
- ☐ The Holy Spirit is called the “Spirit of truth” **(John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13).**
 - Spiritual truths can be revealed only by God: “ ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him’—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. . . . No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” **(1 Cor. 2:9-12).**
 - Jesus said the Holy Spirit would “Teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” **(John 14:26).**
 - The Holy Spirit will testify about Jesus **(John 15:26).**
- ☐ “He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only

what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (**John 16:13, 14**).

Encountering God

When God spoke to Moses and others in the Old Testament, those events were encounters with God. An encounter with Jesus was an encounter with God for the disciples. In the same way **an encounter with the Holy Spirit is an encounter with God for you.**

Now that the Holy Spirit is given, He is the one who guides you into all truth and teaches you all things. You understand spiritual truth because the Holy Spirit is working in your life. You cannot understand the Word of God unless the Spirit of God teaches you. When you come to the Word of God, the Author Himself is present to instruct you and reveal truth to you.

Immediately Respond

When God spoke to Moses, what Moses did next was crucial. After Jesus spoke to the disciples, what they did next was crucial. **What you do next after the Spirit of God speaks to you through His Word is crucial.** Our problem is that when the Spirit of God speaks to us, we go into a long discussion. Moses went into a long discussion with God (**Ex. 3:11—4:13**), and it limited him for the rest of his life. Moses had to speak to the people through his brother Aaron (**Ex. 4:14-16**).

Review what you sense God has been saying to you on a regular basis. If **God speaks and you hear but do not respond**, a time could come when you will not hear His voice. Disobedience can lead to a “famine of hearing the words of the Lord” (**Amos 8:11-12**).

When Samuel was a young boy, God began to speak to him. The Scriptures say,
“The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of his words fall to the ground” (**1 Sam. 3:19**).

Be like Samuel. **Don’t let a single word from the Lord fail to bring adjustments in your life. Then God will do in you and through you everything He says to you.**

In **Luke 8:5-15**, Jesus told the parable of the sower and the seeds. The **seed that fell on the good soil represented one who heard the word of God, retained it, and produced fruit.** Then Jesus said,

“Consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him” (**Luke 8:18**).

If you hear the Word of God and do not apply it to produce fruit in your life, even what you think you have will be taken away. Be careful how you listen to God! Make up your mind now that when the Spirit of God speaks to you, you are going to do what He says.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- An encounter with the Holy Spirit is an encounter with God.
- I understand spiritual truth because the Holy Spirit is working in my life.
- When I come to the Word of God, the Author Himself is present to instruct me.
- I never discover truth; truth is revealed .

LESSON 3; UNIT 5

GOD REVEALS

God Reveals Himself

When God speaks by the Holy Spirit to you, **He often reveals to you something about Himself.** He reveals **His name.** He reveals **His nature and character.**

Read these Scriptures. Tell what God revealed about Himself.

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty” (Gen. 17:1)._____

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: “Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy” ’ ” (Lev. 19:1-2)._____

“ ‘I the Lord do not change. . . . Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (Mal. 3:6-7)._____

Jesus said to the Jews, “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:51)._____

God revealed Himself to Abram by His name—God Almighty. To Moses He revealed His holy nature. God spoke through Malachi to Israel and revealed that He is unchanging and forgiving. Jesus revealed Himself as “living bread” and the source of eternal life.

God speaks when He wants to involve a person in His work.

Think about why God revealed Himself as He did to each of the people in the Scriptures above. When you think you have an idea of why each revelation was given, read on.

- Ninety-nine-year-old Abram needed to know God was almighty (all powerful—able to do anything) so He could believe that God could give Him a son in his old age.

- Through Moses, God said He was holy. His people had to believe He was holy, so they would respond by being holy themselves.
- Through Malachi, God revealed His forgiving nature so the people could believe that they would be forgiven if they would return to God.
- Jesus revealed that He was the source of eternal life so the Jews could believe and respond to Him and receive life.

Why does God reveal Himself (His name, His nature, His character)?

God reveals Himself to increase faith that leads to action. You will need to listen attentively to what God reveals to you about Himself. This will be critical when you come to the crisis of belief.

- You will have to **believe** God is who He says He is.
- You will have to **believe** God can do what He says He will do.
- You will have to **adjust** your thinking in light of this belief.
- **Trusting** that God will demonstrate Himself to be who He says He is, you then **obey** Him.
- When you **obey**, God does His work through you and demonstrates that He is who He says He is.
- **Then you will know God by experience.**
- You will **know** He is who He says He is.

For example, when did Abram know God was almighty? He knew it in his mind as soon as God said it. But, he came to know God by experience as God Almighty when God did something in his life that only God could do. When God gave Abraham (100 years old) and Sarah (90 years old) a son, Abraham knew God was God Almighty.

When God speaks by the Holy Spirit, what is one thing He reveals?

God speaks by the Holy Spirit to reveal _____, His purposes, and His ways.

God Reveals His Purposes

God reveals His purposes so you will know what He plans to do. What you plan to do for God is not important. What He plans to do where you are is very important. God speaks with a purpose in mind.

When God came to Noah He did not ask, “What do you want to do for me?” He came to reveal what He was about to do. It was far more important to know what God was about to do. It really did not matter what Noah had planned to do for God. God was about to destroy the world. He wanted to work through Noah to accomplish His purposes of saving a remnant of people and animals to repopulate the earth.

Similarly, God came to Abram and spoke to him because He had a purpose in mind. He was

preparing to build a nation for Himself. God was about to accomplish His purposes through Abram.

When God prepared to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He did not ask Abraham what he wanted to do, or was planning to do for Him. It was crucial for Abraham to know what God was about to do. God revealed His purposes.

This sequence is seen throughout the entire Bible: the Judges, David, the prophets, the disciples, and Paul. When God was about to do something, He took the initiative to come to His servants (Amos 3:7). He spoke to reveal His purposes and plans. Then He could involve them and accomplish His purposes through them.

“Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.” —**Amos 3:7**

In contrast, we set about to dream our dreams of what WE want to do for God. Then we tend to make long-range plans based on priorities of our choosing. Look what the Psalmist had to say about our plans and purposes:

Read Proverbs 19:21 and 33:10-11. Why does God reveal His purposes?

The Lord foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.
—**Psalm 33:10-11**

“Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”—**Proverbs 19:21**

Based on Psalm 33:10-11, answer the following questions.

1. What does the Lord do to the plans of the nations?_____
2. What does the Lord do to the purposes of the peoples?_____
3. What happens to the plans and purposes of the Lord?_____

Your plans and purposes must be God’s plans and purposes or you will not experience God working through you. His plans and purposes will stand. They will be accomplished. The Lord foils and thwarts the plans of the nations and the purposes of the peoples.

Planning is a tool God may cause you to use, but it never can become a substitute for God. Your relationship with God is far more important to Him than any planning you will ever do. Our biggest problem with planning is that we plan and carry out things in our own wisdom that only God has a right to determine. We cannot know the when, or where, or how of God’s will until He tells us.

God wants us to follow Him daily, not just follow a “plan”. If we try to spell out all the details of His will in a planning session, we have a tendency to think: “Now that we know where we are going and how to get there, we can get the job done.” Then we forget about the need for the daily, intimate relationship with God. We may set about to accomplish our plans and forget the relationship. God created us for an eternal love relationship. Life is our opportunity to experience Him at work.

Planning is not all wrong. Just **be very careful not to plan more than God intends** for you to plan. Let God interrupt or redirect your plans any time He wants. Remain in a close relationship with Him so you can always hear His voice when He wants to speak to you.

God Reveals His Ways

God uses Kingdom principles to accomplish Kingdom purposes. God reveals His ways to us because they are the only way to accomplish His purposes.

His goal always is to reveal Himself to people to draw them into a love relationship with Himself. His ways are redemptive. He acts in such a way to reveal Himself and His Love. He does not simply wait around in order to help us achieve our goals for Him! He comes to accomplish His own goals through us—and in His own way.

God said,

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways” (**Isa. 55:8**).

God does not work in man’s ways. We will not accomplish God’s work in our own ways.

This is one of the basic sin problems people face:

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (**Isa. 53:6**).

Our ways may seem good to us. We may accomplish some moderate successes. When we try to do the work of God in our own ways, however, we will never see the mighty power of God in what we do. God reveals His ways because that is the only way to accomplish His purposes. When God accomplishes His purposes in His ways through us, people will come to know God. They will recognize that what has happened can only be explained by God. He will get glory to Himself!

Using Kingdom ways, Jesus fed 5,000. (Matt. 14:13-21)

Using Kingdom ways is seen in the life of the disciples. Jesus asked them to feed the multitudes. Their response was, “Send them home!” Jesus, using Kingdom principles, sat them down, fed them, and had baskets full of leftovers. They saw the Father work a miracle. What a contrast! The disciples would have sent the people home empty and hungry. God displayed to a watching world His love, His nature, and His power. This kind of display would draw people to Himself through His Son Jesus. This kind of mighty display happened many times in the lives of the disciples. They had to learn to function according to Kingdom principles to do Kingdom work.

God's purposes accomplished in His ways bring glory to Him. You must learn to do Kingdom work in Kingdom ways.

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths” (**Mic. 4:2**).

When God speaks by the Holy Spirit, what are three things He reveals?

God speaks by the Holy Spirit to reveal _____, His _____, and His_____.

[When I was first learning how to walk with God, I depended too much on other people. I would run to other people and say, “Do you think this is really God? Here is what I think. What do you think?” I would unconsciously, or consciously, depend on them rather than on the relationship I had with God.

Finally I had to say, “I am going to go to the Lord and clarify what I am absolutely convinced He is saying to me. Then, I am going to proceed and watch to see how God affirms it.” I began that process over a period of time in many areas of my life. My love relationship with God became all important. I began to discover a clear personal way in which God was making known His ways to me. God revealed His ways to me through His Word.]

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- ☐ **God's revelations are designed to bring me into a love relationship with Him.**
- **God reveals Himself to increase my faith.**
- **God reveals His purposes so I will do His w o r k .**
- **God reveals His ways so I can accomplish His purposes.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 5

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE BIBLE

When the Spirit directs your attention to a truth, write it down, meditate on it, and adjust your life to it. Then alert yourself to watch for ways God may speak to you that way during the day.

God speaks uniquely to individuals, and He can do it in any way He pleases. As you walk in an intimate love relationship with God, you will come to recognize His voice.

Jesus compared the relationship He has with His followers to the relationship a shepherd has with his sheep. He said,

“The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep...The sheep listen to his voice... His sheep follow him because they know his voice” (**John 10:2-4**).

In just this way, when God speaks to you, you will recognize His voice and follow Him.

God speaks through a variety of means. In the present, **God primarily speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church.** These four means are difficult to separate. God uses prayer and the Bible together. Often circumstances and the church, or other believers, will help confirm what God is saying to you. Frequently, God uses circumstances and the church to help you know His timing.

The Spirit of Truth

The Bible is God's Word. It **describes God's complete revelation of Himself to humanity.** A person cannot understand spiritual truth unless the Spirit of God reveals it. The Holy Spirit is "the spirit of truth" (**John 14:17**).

When the Holy Spirit reveals a spiritual truth from the Word of God, He is personally relating to your life. That is an encounter with God.

The sequence is this:

1. You read the Word of God—the Bible.
2. The Spirit of Truth takes the Word of God and reveals truth.
3. You adjust your life to the truth of God.
4. You obey Him.
5. God works in and through you to accomplish His purposes.

The Spirit uses the Word of God (the sword of the Spirit—**Eph. 6:17**) to reveal God and His purposes. The Spirit uses the Word of God to instruct us in the ways of God. On our own we cannot understand the truths of God. Unaided by the Spirit of God, it will be foolishness to us (**1 Cor. 2:14**). Aided by the Spirit, we can understand all things (**1 Cor. 2:15**).

"The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things."

—**1 Corinthians 2:14-15**

Is there a particular verse of Scripture God has used to speak to you at some time during this course?

1. What does that verse reveal to you about God, His purposes, or His ways? _____
2. Meditate on this verse and pray. Ask God to continue speaking to you about the truth in this passage. Keep in mind that He is more interested in what you become than what you do.
3. What does God want to do or be in and through your life? _____
4. What adjustments would you have to make to align your life with this truth in your personal life? _____
your family life? _____
your church life? _____

your work life? _____

Responding to Truth

[Reading the Scripture is an exciting time of anticipation. The Spirit of God knows the mind of God. He knows what God is ready to do in my life. The Spirit of God then begins to open my understanding about God and His purposes and His ways. I take that very seriously. Here is how I respond when God reveals truth to me in His Word.

I write down the passage of Scripture. Then I meditate on it. I try to immerse myself in the meaning of that verse or passage. I adjust my life to the truth and, thus, to God. I agree with God and take any actions necessary to allow God to work in the way He has revealed. Then I alert myself to watch for ways God may use that truth in my life during the day.]

When God leads you to a fresh understanding of Himself or His ways through Scripture:

- Write down the verse(s) in a spiritual journal or diary.
- Meditate on the verse.
- Study it to immerse yourself in the meaning of the verse. What is God revealing about Himself, His purpose, or His ways?
- Identify the adjustments you need to make in your personal life, your family, your church, and your work so God can work that way with you.
- Write a prayer response
- Make the necessary adjustments to God.
- Watch to see how God may use that truth about Himself in your life during the day.

Here is an illustration of the way God may use His Word to speak to you. Suppose you are reading your daily Bible reading from **Psalms 37**. You have read this Psalm many times before. You come to verse 21 and read: “The wicked borrow and do not repay.” You are “drawn” back to that verse. You read it again. Then you remember a debt you have failed to repay. You realize that this Scripture applies to you.

The Holy Spirit has just spoken to you through that verse. You have encountered truth. Now you understand that those who borrow and do not repay are sinning in God’s sight. The Holy Spirit has called your attention to a specific instance where this verse applies to you. He is convicting you of sin. He is the only One who can do that. God has just spoken to you by the working of the Holy Spirit and through His Word. God wants you to have no hindrances to a love relationship with Him in your life.

If you were in this situation, what should you do next? Following the sequence we looked at earlier (shown below), what do you do after the Holy Spirit reveals an understanding of truth to you? _____

The sequence is:

1. You read the Word of God—the Bible.

2. The Spirit of Truth takes the Word of God and reveals truth.
3. You adjust your life to the truth of God.
4. You obey Him.
5. God works in and through you to accomplish His purposes.

Once God has spoken to you through His Word, how you respond is crucial. You must adjust your life to the truth. In this case the adjustment is this:

- You must agree with the truth—those who borrow and do not repay are wicked in God's sight .
- You must agree that the truth applies to you in the particular instance brought to your memory. This is confession of sin. You agree with God about your sin.

To agree with God you must change your understanding to agree with His. This requires an adjustment. **Is that all you must do?** No! Agreeing with God is not enough. Until you repay the debt, you will continue to be seen as sinning in God's sight. This is where obedience comes in. You obey God's will by repaying the debt.

Now you are free to experience a more complete relationship with God. **Always tie a revealed truth to your understanding of God and your relationship with Him.**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God speaks uniquely to individuals, and He can do it in any way He pleases.**
- **When God speaks to me, I will recognize His voice and follow Him.**
- **I cannot understand spiritual truth unless the Spirit of God reveals it.**
- **He is more interested in what I become than what I do.**

LESSON 5; UNIT 5

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer is a relationship, not just a religious activity.

If you are not keeping a spiritual journal or diary, you need to. If the God of the universe tells you something, you should write it down. When God speaks to you in your quiet time, immediately write down what He said before you have time to forget. Then record your prayer response. Write down the verse of Scripture He uses and what God has said to you about Himself from that verse. Also write out what you need to do to adjust your life to God, so you can begin to experience Him relating to you in this way.

Truth Is a Person

Carefully read the following paragraphs and fill in the blanks in the key statements that follow.

The Holy Spirit reveals truth. Truth is not just some concept to be studied. Truth is a Person. Jesus did not say, “I will teach you the truth.” He said, “I am . . . the truth” (**John 14:6**).

When God gives you eternal life, He gives you Himself (**John 17:3**). When the Holy Spirit reveals Truth, He is not teaching you a concept to be thought about. He is leading you to a relationship with a Person. He is your life! When God gives you eternal life, He gives you a Person. When you became a Christian, Jesus didn’t give you some thing; He gave you Himself.

1. The Holy Spirit reveals _____.
2. Truth is not just some _____ to be studied.
3. Truth is a _____.
4. The Holy Spirit is leading you to a _____ with a Person.

The Spirit of God knows the mind of God. He will make the will of God known to you through the Word of God. You must then take that truth and immediately adjust your life to Him; not to a concept or a philosophy, but to a Person.

Prayer Is a Relationship

Prayer is two-way fellowship and communication with God. You speak to God and He speaks to you. It is not a one-way conversation. Your personal prayer life may primarily be one-way communication—you talking to God. Prayer is more than that. Prayer includes listening as well. In fact, what God says in prayer is far more important than what you say.

Prayer is a relationship, not just a religious activity. Prayer is designed more to adjust you to God than to adjust God to you. God doesn’t need your prayers, but He wants you to pray. You need to pray because of what God wants to do in and through your life during your praying. God speaks to His people by the Holy Spirit through prayer. .

Prayer

When the Holy Spirit reveals a spiritual truth to you in prayer, He is present and working actively in your life. Genuine prayer does not lead to an encounter with God. **It is an encounter with God.**

What happens as you seek God’s will in prayer? **The sequence is this:**

1. God takes the initiative by causing you to want to pray.
2. The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and reveals to you the will of God.
3. In the Spirit you pray in agreement with the will of God.
4. You adjust your life to the truth (to God).
5. You look and listen for confirmation or further direction from the Bible,

circumstances, and the church (other believers).

6. You obey.
7. God works in you and through you to accomplish His purposes.
8. You experience Him just as the Spirit revealed as you prayed.

[I believe the Spirit of God uses the Word of God when I pray. I find that when I pray about something, Scripture often comes to my mind. I don't see it as a distraction. I believe He is trying to guide me through the Scripture. I have found that, as I pray about a particular matter, the Spirit of God takes the Word of God and applies it to my heart and my mind to reveal the truth. I immediately stop my praying and open the Word of God to the passage I believe the Spirit of God brought to my mind.]

Praying in the Spirit

The Spirit of God will use the Word of God to guide you in the area of your praying.

Read the passage below and answer the following questions.

(26) "The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (27) And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." —**Romans 8:26-27**

1. Why do we need the help of the Holy Spirit when we pray? (v. 26) _____
2. What advantage does the Holy Spirit have that we do not have? (v. 27) _____
3. What does the Holy Spirit do for us? _____

We are weak and do not know how we ought to pray. The Holy Spirit has an advantage over us—He already knows the will of God. When He prays for us, He is praying absolutely in agreement with the will of God. He then helps us know the will of God as we pray.

[For his sixth birthday, my oldest son Richard was old enough to have a bicycle. I looked all around for a bicycle. I found a beautiful blue one. I bought it and hid it in the garage. Then I had a task—to convince Richard that he needed a blue bike. For the next little while, we began to work with Richard. Richard decided that what he really wanted for his birthday was a blue bike. Do you know what Richard got? Well, the blue bike was already in the garage. I just had to convince him to ask for it. He asked for it, and he got it!

What happens when you pray? The Holy Spirit knows what God has "in the garage." It is already there. The Holy Spirit's task is to get you to want it—to get you to ask for it. What will happen when you ask for things God already wants to give or do? You will always receive it. Why? Because you have asked according to the will of God. When God answers your prayer, He gets the glory and your faith is increased.]

Is it important to know when the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? Yes! How do you know

what the Holy Spirit is saying? I cannot give you a formula. I can tell you that you will know His voice when He speaks (**John 10:4**). You must decide, however, that you only want His will. You must dismiss any selfish or fleshly desires of your own. Then, as you start to pray, the Spirit of God starts to touch your heart and cause you to pray in the direction of God's will (**Phil. 2:13**).

“It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” —
Philippians 2:13

“He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” —**John 16:13**

When you pray, anticipate that the Holy Spirit already knows what God has ready for your life. He does not guide you on His own initiative; He tells you only what He hears from the Father. He guides you when you pray.

It is helpful to write down what God is saying to you when you pray and as you read His Word. Write down what you sense He is leading you to pray. As you begin to see what God is telling you about Himself, His purposes, and His ways, you will often see a pattern begin to develop. As you watch the direction the Spirit is leading you to pray, you begin to get a clear indication of what God is saying to you. This process calls for spiritual concentration!

You may be asking the question: But **how do I know that the directions I am praying are the Spirit's leading and not my own selfish desires?** Do you remember what George Mueller said he does first in seeking God's directions?

Look back if you don't remember. What did he do in the beginning?_____

Deny self first. In all honesty with yourself and before God, come to the place where you are sure that your only desire is to know God's will alone. Then check to see what the Holy Spirit is saying in other ways. Ask yourself:

- What is He saying to me in His Word?
- What is He saying to me in prayer?
- Is He confirming it through circumstances?
- Is He confirming it through the counsel of other believers?

God never will lead you in opposition to His written Word. If what you sense in prayer runs contrary to Scriptures, it is wrong. For instance, God will never, never lead you to commit adultery. He always is opposed to that. Watch for God to use the written Word to confirm what you are sensing in prayer. Don't play games with God, though. Don't just look for a Scripture that seems to say what you selfishly want to do, and then claim it is God's will. That is very dangerous. Don't do it.

Summarize how God speaks through prayer._____

**Has God spoken to you by the Holy Spirit through prayer during this course?
What do you sense He was saying in one of the times He has spoken. (If you do not think He has, ask Him to reveal to you the reason.)**

Has He given you any confirmation through the Bible, circumstances, or the church (other believers)?

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **When the God of the universe tells me something important, I should write it down.**
- **Truth is a Person.**
- **Prayer is two-way communication with God.**
- **Prayer is a relationship, not just a religious activity.**
- ☐ **I need to make sure that my only desire is to know God's will.**

UNIT 6

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." —**JOHN 5:19**

What are two possible reasons for the silence of God when you pray?_____

Lesson 2 Activities

Check your memory. Without looking, see if you can write the seven realities in your own words. Use the key words below as hints.

1. work _____
2. relationship _____
3. invitation _____
4. speaks _____
5. crisis _____
6. adjust _____
7. obey _____

Lesson 3 Activities

Read Luke 7:11-17 and answer the following questions.

1. Suppose you were attending this funeral. Before Jesus came, how do you think the widow of Nain would have responded to this question: "What is the truth of this situation? " _____
2. When Truth (Jesus) was present, what difference did He make? _____
3. When Truth (Jesus) revealed Himself to that crowd, how did they respond? _____

Read John 6:1-15 and answer the following questions.

1. Five thousand hungry people came to Jesus. He wanted to feed them. If you were to have

asked the disciples what the truth of the situation was, how do you think they would have responded?_____

2. Why did Jesus ask Philip where they could buy bread? (vv. 5-6)_____
3. When Truth (Jesus) was present what difference did it make?_____
4. When Truth (Jesus) revealed Himself to that crowd, how did they respond? (v. 14)_____

Lesson 4 Activities

Select ONE of the following persons. Check the box beside the person you choose to study. Read about his encounter with God. Then answer the questions that follow.

- ☐ **Noah** —Genesis 6—8
- ☐ **Moses** —Exodus 17:8-16 or 24:1-11
- ☐ **Abram** —Genesis 12:1-8 or 13:1-18
- ☐ **Joshua** —Joshua 3:5—4:9
- ☐ **Isaac** —Genesis 26:17-25
- ☐ **Gideon** —Judges 6:11-24
- ☐ **Jacob** —Genesis 28:10-22 and 35:1-7
- ☐ **Samuel** —1 Samuel 7:1-13

1. Briefly describe the encounter between this person and God. What did God do?_____
2. Why do you think the person built an altar or set up the stone marker?_____
3. What, if any, special names of God or of the stone/altar are given in the text?_____

Lesson 5 Activities

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-31.

Prepare a spiritual inventory of your life. Identify your own spiritual markers.

These may begin with your heritage, your salvation experience, times you made significant decisions regarding your future, and so forth. What are some of the times of transition, decision, or direction in your life when you knew clearly that God guided you? Using a separate sheet of paper or a notebook, start preparing a list. Start this list today, but don't feel like you have to have a comprehensive list. Add to it as you reflect and pray about God's activity in your life.

LESSON 1; UNIT 6

GOD SPEAKS, PART 2

Memorize this verse:

Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." —**JOHN 5:19**

Prayed for one thing...and Got another

Have you ever prayed for one thing and got another? You kept asking God in one direction, and kept getting something else.

In the second chapter of Mark is the story of the four men who brought their crippled friend to Jesus to be healed. Because of the crowd, they opened a hole in the roof and let the man down in front of Jesus. Jesus said, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (**Mark 2:5**).

The four men were asking Jesus to heal the man, but Jesus forgave the man's sins. Why? They asked for one thing, and Jesus gave another! This man and his friends asked for a particular gift, but Jesus wanted to make the man a child of God so he could inherit everything!

WHAT IS HAPPENING WHEN YOU PRAY?

Only the Spirit of God knows what God is doing or purposing in my life.

If you start asking God for one thing and something different happens, always respond to what begins happening. God always has far more to give you than you can even ask or think. Paul said,

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!” (Eph. 3:20-21).

You can't even think a prayer that comes close to what God wants to give you. Only the Spirit of God knows what God is doing or purposing in your life. Let God give you all that He wants to give.

“The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.” —1 Corinthians 2:10-12

If God wants to give you more than you are asking, would you rather have what you are asking or what God wants to give?_____

[We started a special emphasis to reach university students in Vancouver. We began with 30 students in the fall. By the end of the spring semester, we had about 250 attending. Two-thirds of these were international students. We could have said, “We didn't plan for a ministry to internationals. Please go somewhere else, and may God bless you.” Of course we didn't do that. We adjusted our plans to what God began to do around us.]

Spiritual Concentration

Our problem is that we pray and then never relate anything that happens to our praying. After you pray, the greatest single thing you need to do is turn on your spiritual concentration. When you pray in a direction, immediately anticipate the activity of God in answer to your prayer.

Here's what happens if you pray and then forget about what you have prayed. Things start to happen during the day that are not normal for your day. You see them all as distractions, and try to get rid of them. You fail to connect them with what you have just prayed.

When you pray, immediately begin to watch for what happens next. Prepare to make adjustments to what begins to happen. Expect God to answer your prayers, but stick around for the answer. His timing is always right and best.

Respond to the following:

Have you ever prayed persistently for something and not received it or gotten something different?

The Silences of God

[I went through a lengthy time when God was silent. You probably have had that experience, too. I had been praying over many days, and there seemed to be total silence from God. I sensed that heaven was shut up. I didn't understand what was happening. Some folk have told me that if God does not hear my prayer, I have sin in my life. They gave me a "sin checklist" to work through. I prayed through the sin checklist on this occasion. As far as I could tell, I was okay. I could not understand the silence of God.

Do you remember a biblical person who had a problem like this? Job did. His counselors told him that all his problems were because of sin. Job kept saying, "As best I know, God and I are on the right terms." Job did not know all that God was doing during that time, but his counselors were wrong. There was another reason for what God was doing.

The only thing I knew to do was go back to God. So I prayed, "Heavenly Father, I don't understand this silence. You are going to have to tell me what You are doing in my life." He did! —from His Word. This became one of the most meaningful experiences in my life.

One morning I was reading the story of the death of Lazarus (**John 11:1-45**). Let me go through the sequence of what happened as I read. John reported that Jesus loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Having received word that Lazarus was sick unto death, Jesus delayed going until Lazarus died. In other words, Mary and Martha asked Jesus to come help their brother, and there was silence. All the way through the final sickness and death of Lazarus, Jesus did not respond. They received no response from the One who said He loved Lazarus. Jesus even said He loved Mary and Martha. Yet, there was still no response.

Lazarus died. They went through the entire funeral process. They fixed his body, put him in the grave, and covered it with a stone. Still they experienced silence from God. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Let's go."

When Jesus arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" (v. 32).

Then the Spirit of God began to help me understand something. It seemed to me as if Jesus had said to Mary and Martha:

“You are exactly right. If I had come, your brother would not have died. You know that I could have healed him, because you have seen me heal many, many times. If I had come when you asked me to, I would have healed him. But, you would have never known any more about Me than you already know. I knew that you were ready for a greater revelation of Me than you have ever known in your life. I wanted you to come to know that I am the resurrection and the life. My refusal and My silence were not rejection. It was an opportunity for Me to disclose to you more of Me than you have ever known.”

When that began to dawn on me, I almost jumped straight out of my chair. I said, “That’s what’s happening in my life! That’s what’s happening! **The silence of God means that He is ready to bring into my life a greater revelation of Himself than I have ever known.**” I immediately changed the whole attitude of my life toward God. With great anticipation, I began to watch for what God was going to teach me about Himself. I then had some things happen in my life that I might never have responded to without that kind of readiness and anticipation.

What are two possible reasons for the silence of God when you pray?

Now, when I pray and there is a silence from God, I still pray through my sin checklist. Sometimes God’s silences are due to sin in my life. If there is un-confessed sin in my life, I confess it and make it right. If, after that, there is still a silence with God, **I get ready for a new experience with God that I have never known before.** Sometimes God is silent as He prepares to bring you into a deeper understanding of Himself. **Whenever a silence comes, continue doing the last thing God told you and watch and wait for a fresh encounter with Him.]**

You can respond to the silence of God in two ways. One response is for you to go into depression, a sense of guilt, and self-condemnation. The other response is for you to have an expectation that God is about to bring you to a deeper knowledge of Himself. These responses are as different as night and day.

What sets you free is Truth. And, Truth is a Person who is actively involved in your life. The moment that you understand what God might have been doing, make an adjustment of your life to God. Put away the attitude of depression and guilt. Quit feeling that maybe you are of no use to God and that He wouldn’t hear you anymore. Make the major adjustment in your life to an attitude of expectation, faith, and trust. The moment you do that, God begins to show you how you could respond to Him in such a way that you would know Him in a greater way.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Oh, God, if I ever give You a request and You have more to give me than I am asking, cancel my request.**

- Only the Spirit of God knows what God is doing or purposing in my life.
- God will let me know what He is doing in my life when and if I need to know.
- ☐ Sometimes God's silences are due to sin.
- Sometimes God is silent as He prepares to bring me into a deeper understanding of Himself.

LESSON 2; UNIT 6

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES

To understand your bad or difficult circumstances, God's perspective is vital.

The Holy Spirit uses circumstances to speak to us, or show us the Father's will. This is how Jesus knew the Father's will for His life and daily activity. Jesus described the process in **John 5:17, 19-20**.

Jesus said that He did not take the initiative in what to do for the Father (v. 19). Only the Father has the right to take the initiative. The Father had been working right up until Jesus' earthly time, and He was still working (v. 17). The Father would let the Son know what He was doing (v. 20). When the Son saw the Father's activity, that was the Father's invitation for the Son to join Him.

"Jesus said to them,

'My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.'"- **John 5:17**

We have looked at Jesus' example twice already. By way of review, see if you can fill in the blanks in the following sequence using the key words below.

[working, everything, watch, Father, doing, initiative, loves, nothing]

1. The _____ has been working right up until now.
2. Now God has Me _____.
3. I do nothing on My own _____.
4. I _____ to see what the Father is doing.
5. I do what I see the Father is already _____.
6. You see, the Father _____ Me.
7. He shows Me _____ that He, Himself, is doing.

God used circumstances to reveal to Jesus what He was to do. **The circumstances were the things Jesus saw the Father doing.** There are some things that only the Father can do.

Jesus always was looking for where the Father was at work, and joined Him. The Father loved the Son, and showed Him everything He was doing. Jesus did not have to guess what

to do, or to dream up what He could do for the Father. He watched to see what the Father was doing around His life, and Jesus put His life there. The Father then could accomplish His purposes through Jesus.

This is exactly what Jesus wants us to do with His lordship in our lives. We see what He is doing, and adjust our lives, our plans, and our goals to Him. We are to place our lives at His disposal—where He is working—so He can accomplish His purposes through us.

Review the seven realities in your own words. Use the key words below as hints.

1. work_____
2. relationship_____
3. invitation_____
4. speaks_____
5. crisis_____
6. adjust_____
7. obey_____

The example of Jesus is a positive way God speaks through circumstances. Sometimes circumstances appear to be “bad.” Maybe you have **found yourself in the middle of a “bad” circumstance** and you wanted to ask **God, “Why is this happening to me?”** You are not alone.

God’s Perspective Is Vital

Job had a bad experience like that. He did not know what was happening when everything he owned was destroyed, when his children were killed, and when he developed sores all over his body (**Job 1—2**). **Job wrestled with understanding his circumstances.** He did not know what was happening from God’s perspective (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7). Neither did He know the last chapter (**Job 42:12-17**) where God would restore his property, his family, and his health.

Job’s friends thought they had God’s perspective and told Job to confess his sin. Job could not find any unrighteousness in his life to confess. If you didn’t have that last chapter and didn’t know God’s perspective, whose side do you think you would be on? God’s or Job’s? You probably would be with Job, saying, “I want to ask God what is going on. Why is He allowing this to happen?” You would think God was being cruel to Job.

To understand your bad or difficult circumstances, God’s perspective is vital. When you face difficult or confusing circumstances, they can overwhelm you. If you put yourself in the middle of the circumstances and try to look at God, you will always have a distorted understanding of God. For instance you might say, “God doesn’t love me” or “God is not fair.” Both of those statements about God are false.

Have you ever been in the middle of a tragic or confusing circumstance where, in your prayers, you began to accuse God of some things that you know are not really

true of God?

Perhaps you began to question God's love or His wisdom. Maybe you were afraid to say that He was wrong, but you sort of said, "God you deceived me in letting me believe that this was the right thing to do. Why didn't you stop me?" A whole lot of wrong things can happen if you try to look at God from the middle of circumstances.

What do you do? First, go to God and **ask Him to show you His perspective on your circumstance.** Look back at your circumstances from the heart of God. When you face difficult or confusing circumstances, the **Spirit of God** again will take the Word of God and help you understand your circumstances from God's perspective. He will reveal to you the truth of the circumstance.

Carrie's Cancer

[I told you at the beginning of unit 3 about our daughter Carrie's bout with cancer. That was a difficult circumstance for our whole family. The doctors prepared us for six or eight months of chemotherapy plus radiation. We knew God loved us, so we went to Him in prayer and asked for understanding about what He was doing or going to do in our lives. We wanted to be rightly adjusted to Him through this time. We prayed, "What are you purposing to do in this experience that we need to adjust ourselves to?"

As we prayed, a Scripture promise came that we believed was from God. Not only did we receive the promise, but we received letters and calls from many people who quoted this same Scripture promise to us. They also sensed this verse was from God for our circumstance. The verse reads, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it" (**John 11:4**). Our sense that God was speaking to us grew stronger as the Bible, prayer, and the testimony of other believers began to line up and say the same thing. We then adjusted our lives to the truth and began to watch for ways God would use this situation for His glory.

During this time, people from many places in Canada, Europe, and the United States began praying for Carrie. Individuals, college student groups, and churches called to tell us of their prayers. One thing surfaced in conversations with many of these people. Many said something like this: "Our prayer life (prayer ministry) has become so dry and cold. We haven't seen any special answers to prayer in a long time. But, when we heard about Carrie, we put her on our prayer list."

After three months of treatments, the doctors ran more tests. They said, "We don't understand this, but all the tests are negative. We cannot find any trace of the cancer." I immediately began to communicate this answer to prayer with those who had committed to pray for Carrie. In instance after instance people said that this answer to prayer was what God used to totally renew their prayer life. Church prayer ministries were revitalized. Student prayer groups found new life.

Then I began to see what God had in mind for this circumstance. Through this experience God was glorified in the eyes of His people. Many, many people sensed a fresh call to prayer. They personally began to experience anew the presence of Truth—and Truth as a Person. Some of Carrie’s closest friends began to pray fervently at this time. Some students even came to know the Lord after observing what God had done in and through Carrie. God did bring glory to Himself through this sickness.

Do you see what happened? We faced a trying situation. We could have looked back at God from the middle of that and gotten a very distorted understanding of God. Instead we went to Him. We sought His perspective. The Holy Spirit took the Word of God and revealed to us God’s perspective on the end result of that circumstance. We believed God and adjusted our lives to Him and to what He was doing. We then went through the circumstance looking for ways His purposes would be accomplished in ways that would bring Him glory. So, when the answer to prayer came, I knew immediately my job was to “declare the wonderful works of the Lord” to His people. In the process we came to know God in a new way because of the compassion He showed us by revealing His perspective on our situation.]

Let me summarize how you can respond when circumstances are difficult or confusing:

When Circumstances Are Confusing

1. Settle in your own mind that God has forever demonstrated His absolute love for You on the cross. That love will never change.
2. Do not try to understand what God is like from the middle of your circumstances.
3. Go to God and ask Him to help you see His perspective on your situation.
4. Wait on the Holy Spirit. He may take the Word of God and help you understand your circumstances.
5. Adjust your life to God and what you see Him doing in your circumstances.
6. Do all He tells you to do.
7. Experience God working in and through you to accomplish His purposes.

Note a key word or phrase in each statement. In your own words, summarize what you need to do when you find yourself in circumstances that are confusing.

You do need to **remember that God is sovereign**. You may face a situation like Job experienced where God does not tell you what He is doing. In those instances acknowledge God’s love and sovereignty and depend on His sustaining grace to see you through the situation.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God used circumstances to reveal to Jesus what He was to do.**
- **Jesus watched circumstances to know where the Father wanted to involve Him in His work.**

☐ **To understand my bad or difficult circumstances, God’s perspective is vital.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 6

THE TRUTH OF YOUR CIRCUMSTANCE

You cannot know the truth of your circumstance, until you have heard from God. In Exodus 5—6 Moses did as he was told and asked Pharaoh to let Israel go. Pharaoh refused and multiplied the hardship on the Israelites. The Israelites turned to Moses and criticized him for causing so much trouble.

What would you have done if you had been in Moses’ place?

- ☐ 1. I would have gotten mad at Israel and gone back to tending sheep.
- ☐ 2. I would have gotten mad at God and told Him to get somebody else.
- ☐ 3. I would have decided that I misunderstood God’s will.
- ☐ 4. I would have patiently gone back to God and asked Him to give me His perspective on this “bad” circumstance.

If you haven’t read Exodus 5—6, you may have the idea that **Moses** would have picked response #4. He didn’t! He **blamed God and accused Him of failing to do what He promised**. Moses said, “O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all” (**Ex.5:22-23**). Moses was so discouraged he was ready to quit (**Ex. 6:12**).

Thankfully, God is patient with us, too! God took time to explain to Moses His perspective. God explained that He wanted Pharaoh to resist so the people could see God’s mighty hand of deliverance. He wanted the people to come to know Him (by experience) as the great “I AM.” Learn from Moses’ example. **When you face confusing circumstances, don’t start blaming God. Don’t just give up following Him. Go to God. Ask Him to reveal the truth of your circumstances. Ask Him to show you His perspective. Then wait on the Lord.**

You need to have your life radically oriented to God. The **most difficult thing you will ever have to do is deny self, take up the will of God, and follow after Him**. The most difficult part of your relationship to God is being God-centered. If you were to record a whole day in your life you might find that your prayers, your attitudes, your thoughts, everything about that day is radically self-centered. You may not be seeing things from God’s perspective. You may try to explain to God what your perspective is. When He becomes the Lord of your life, He alone has the right to be...

- the Focus in your life
- the Initiator in your life
- the Director of your life.

That is what it means for Him to be Lord.

Hearing from Truth

When the Holy Spirit talks to you, He is going to reveal Truth to you. He is going to talk to you about a Person. He is going to talk to you about Jesus. Truth is a Person! (See **John 14:6**.)

The **disciples were in a boat in a storm**. Jesus was asleep in the back of the boat. If you were to have gone to those disciples in the middle of that storm, and said to them, “What is the **truth of this situation?**” what would they have said? “We perish!” Was that the truth? No, Truth was asleep at the back of the boat. Truth is a person. In just a moment Truth Himself would stand up, and He **would still the storm**. Then they knew the Truth of their circumstance. **Truth is a person who is always present in your life**. You cannot know the truth of your circumstance until you have heard from God. He is the Truth! And the Truth is present and active in your life!

Read Luke 7:11-17 and answer the following questions.

“Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.” —**Luke 7:11-17**

1. Suppose you were attending this funeral. Before Jesus came, how do you think the widow of Nain would have responded to this question: “What is the truth of this situation?”
2. When Truth (Jesus) was present, what difference did He make?
3. When Truth (Jesus) revealed Himself to that crowd, how did they respond?

If you had asked the widow who was in the funeral procession of her only son, “What’s the truth of this situation?” she might have replied, “My husband died at a young age. I had one son, and I had anticipated that we would spend wonderful days together. He would care for me, and we would have fellowship together. Now my son is dead, and I must live the rest of my life alone.” **Was that the truth?**

No, Truth was standing there! When Truth reached out and touched her son and restored him, all was changed. You never know the truth of any situation until you have heard from Jesus. When Jesus was allowed to reveal Himself in this circumstance, the people “were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God

has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country” (Luke 7:16-17). **Never, ever determine the truth of a situation by looking at the circumstances.** Don’t evaluate your situation **until you have heard from Jesus.** He is the Truth.

Read John 6:1-15 and answer the following questions.

1. Five thousand hungry people came to Jesus. He wanted to feed them. If you were to have asked the disciples what the truth of the situation was, how do you think they would have responded?
2. Why did Jesus ask Philip where they could buy bread? (vv. 5-6)
3. When Truth (Jesus) was present what difference did it make?
4. When Truth (Jesus) revealed Himself to that crowd, how did they respond? (v. 14)

Do you suppose God ever tests our faith like He did Philip’s. Does He say, “Feed the multitudes” and our church responds, “Our budget couldn’t do it”? If you had asked the disciples at that moment about the truth of the situation, they may have said, “We can’t do it. Lord, the truth of the situation is that it is impossible.” Was that true? No. We know the other half of the story. Wouldn’t we be better off if we trusted God with the other half of the story in our lives? **Truth Himself fed 5,000 men plus** their families, and had 12 baskets full of leftovers!

Suppose God says to your church, “Take the Gospel to the whole world!” and the group says, “We can’t.” Truth stands in the middle of that church, as the Head of that church to say, “Believe Me. I will never give you an order that I will not Myself release My power to enable it to happen. Trust Me and obey Me and it will happen.”

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Never, ever determine the truth of a situation by looking at the circumstances.**
- **I cannot know the truth of my circumstance until I have heard from God.**
- ☐ **The Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and reveals God’s perspective on the circumstance.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 6

SPIRITUAL MARKERS

When God gets ready for you to take a new step or direction in His activity, it will always be in sequence with what He has already been doing in your life.

Circumstance does not always equal a “bad” situation. Sometimes the circumstance is a

decision-making situation. In a decision-making time, your greatest difficulty may not be choosing between good and bad, but choosing between good and best. You often may have several options that all appear to be good. At a time like this, the place to start is to say with all of your heart:

“Lord, whatever I know to be Your will, I will do it. Regardless of the cost and regardless of the adjustment, as best I know my heart, I commit myself to follow Your will ahead of time. Lord, no matter what that will looks like, I will do it!”

You need to say that at the beginning of seeking God’s will. Otherwise you do not mean, “Thy will be done.” You would be saying, “Thy will be done as long as it does not conflict with my will.” Two words in the Christian’s language cannot go together: No, Lord. If you say, “No,” He is not Lord. If He really is your Lord, your answer must always be “Yes.” In decision making, always begin here. Do not proceed until you can honestly say, “Whatever you want of me, Lord, I will do it.”

Physical Markers of Spiritual Encounters

When Israel crossed the Jordan River into the promised land, God gave Joshua the following instructions:

“Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight” (**Josh. 4:2-3**).

These stones were to serve as a sign to the Israelites. Joshua explained,

“In the future, when your children ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever” (**Josh. 4:6-7**).

The stones were to be a reminder of a mighty act of God in behalf of His people. On many other occasions men built altars or set up stones as a reminder of a significant encounter with God.

Select ONE of the following persons to study. Read about his encounter with God. Then answer the questions that follow.

- ☐ **Noah** —Genesis 6—8
- ☐ **Moses** —Exodus 17:8-16 or 24:1-11
- ☐ **Abram** —Genesis 12:1-8 or 13:1-18
- ☐ **Joshua** —Joshua 3:5—4:9
- ☐ **Isaac** —Genesis 26:17-25
- ☐ **Gideon** —Judges 6:11-24
- ☐ **Jacob** —Genesis 28:10-22 and 35:1-7
- ☐ **Samuel** —1 Samuel 7:1-13

1. Briefly describe the encounter between this person and God. What did God do?
2. Why do you think the person built an altar or set up the stone marker?
3. What, if any, special names of God or of the stone/altar are given in the text?

These altars and stones became physical markers of great spiritual encounters with God. These stones will serve as a sign to you.

Often men in the Old Testament set up a stone marker or altar as a reminder of their encounters with God. Places like Bethel (“house of God”) and Rehoboth (“room”) became reminders of God’s great activity in the midst of His people. Moses named an altar “The Lord is my Banner” and Samuel named a stone “Ebenezer” saying, “Thus far has the Lord helped us” (**1 Sam. 7:12**). These altars and stones became physical markers of great spiritual encounters with God. They provided an opportunity for people to teach their children about the activity of God in behalf of His people.

Seeing God’s Perspective

God works in sequence to accomplish His divine purposes. What He did in the past was done with a Kingdom purpose in mind. What He is doing in the present is in sequence with the past and with the same Kingdom purpose in mind. Every act of God builds on the past with a view toward the future.

When God called Abraham (**Gen. 12**), He began to develop a people for Himself. When He came to Isaac, Isaac saw God’s perspective when God reminded Isaac of His relationship with Isaac’s father Abraham (**Gen. 26:24**). To Jacob God identified Himself as the God of Abraham and Isaac (**Gen. 28:13**). When God came to Moses, He helped Moses see His perspective of what He was doing through history. He said He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Ex. 3:6-10**). At each new step in His divine plan, God involved a person. Often in the call, God rehearsed His activity so the individual could see God’s perspective on what was happening.

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses reviewed all that God had done for Israel. God was getting ready to move the people into the promised land. God wanted the people to have the perspective of history as they took this new step. In Deuteronomy 29 Moses gave a brief summary of the nation’s history. At this time of covenant renewal, Moses wanted to remind the people to be faithful in following God. They were getting ready to change leaders (from Moses to Joshua) and move into the promised land. They needed to see this new direction from God’s perspective. Israel needed to see that the new direction was in line with all that God had been doing.

Look at the perspective God gave Moses when He called him into service at the burning bush in Exodus 3. In the lines that follow:

- Write **PAST** beside items that speak of God’s past activity with His people.

- Write **PRESENT** beside those items that speak of what God was doing at the time He spoke to Moses.
- Write **FUTURE** beside those items that speak of what God was going to do.

- 1. “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (v. 6).
- 2. “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers” (v. 7).
- 3. “I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians” (vv. 7-8).
- 4. “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (v. 10).
- 5. “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (v. 12).
- 6. “I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites . . . —a land flowing with milk and honey” (v. 17).
- 7. “I will make the Egyptians favorably disposed toward this people, so that when you leave you will not go empty-handed. . . . And so you will plunder the Egyptians” (vv. 21-22).

Do you see what God was doing with Moses? He was helping Moses see his call from God’s perspective.

- ☐ God had been working with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and even Moses’ father to build a nation.
- God had promised Abraham that He would bring the people out of bondage and give them the promised land.
- God had been watching over them in Egypt.
- Now He was ready to respond to their suffering.
- God had chosen to involve Moses in His divine purpose for Israel. He was going to use Moses to deliver the Israelites out of Egypt and plunder the Egyptians at the same time.
- After Moses obeyed, God would bring them to this very mountain to worship. This worship service on the mountain would be Moses’ sign that God had sent him.

Items 1, 2, and 6 are past. Items 3 and 4 are present. Items 5 and 7 are future.

God wants to involve you in His purposes. God has been working in the world all along (John 5:17). He has been working in your life since your birth. He was working out His purposes for your life prior to your birth. God said to Jeremiah the prophet, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (**Jer. 1:5**). When God gets ready for you to take a new step or direction in His activity, it will always be in sequence with what He already has been doing in

your life. He does not go off on tangents or take meaningless detours. He builds your character in an orderly fashion with a divine purpose in mind.

A Spiritual Inventory

Something which is helpful is to identify “spiritual markers” in your life. Each time you encounter God’s call or direction for your life, you can mentally build a spiritual marker at that point. A spiritual marker identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction when you clearly know that God has guided you. Over time you can look back at these spiritual markers and see how God has faithfully directed your life according to His divine purpose.

When you face a decision about God’s direction, rehearse those spiritual markers. Don’t take the next step without the context of the full activity of God in your life. This helps you see God’s perspective for your past and present. Then look at the options that are before you. Look to see which one of the options seems to be most consistent with what God has been doing in your life. Often one of these directions will be most consistent with what God already has been doing. If none of the directions seem consistent, continue to pray and wait on the Lord’s guidance. When circumstances do not align with what God is saying in the Bible and in prayer, assume that the timing may be wrong. Then wait for God to reveal His timing.

In your own words give a definition of “spiritual markers.”

Using the previous paragraph, describe in your own words how you could use spiritual markers to help you discern God’s direction at a time of decision.

Why do you think “spiritual markers” are helpful? What do they help you do?

[When I was approached about coming to the North American Mission Board (then the Home Mission Board) to direct the emphasis on prayer and spiritual awakening, I had never had such a job in my life. Only God could reveal whether this was part of His divine purpose. I recalled the spiritual markers in my life to see this decision from God’s perspective.

My heritage goes back to England where a number of my family were graduates of Spurgeon’s College at a time when Spurgeon was trying to win England to Christ. I grew up in a town in Canada where there was no evangelical witness to Christ. My father served as a lay pastor to help start a mission in that town. Way back in my teen years I began to sense a deep burden for communities all across Canada that did not have an evangelical church. In 1958 when I was in seminary, God assured me that He loved my nation enough to want to bring a great movement of His Spirit across our land. When I accepted God’s call to go to Saskatoon as a pastor, God used the prospect of a spiritual awakening there to affirm my call. As you will read in unit 11, a spiritual awakening that started there spread all across Canada in the early 1970’s.

In 1988 Bob Hamblin from the Home Mission Board called me. He said, “Henry, we have prayed much about filling a position in prayer for spiritual awakening. We have been seeking

a person for over two years to fill this position. Would you consider coming and directing Southern Baptists in the area of spiritual awakening?”

As I reviewed God’s activity in my life (my spiritual markers), I saw that an emphasis on spiritual awakening was an important element throughout my ministry. I said to Bob, “You could have asked me to do anything in the world, and I would not have even prayed about leaving Canada—except spiritual awakening. That has been a deep current that has run through my life since the time I was an older teenager, and more particularly since 1958.” After much prayer and confirmation in the Word and by other believers, I accepted the position at the Home Mission Board. God didn’t shift me, He focused me in something He had already been doing down the course of my life.]

Prepare a spiritual inventory of your life. Identify your own spiritual markers.

These may begin with your heritage, your salvation experience, times you made significant decisions regarding your future, and so forth. What are some of the times of transition, decision, or direction in your life when you knew clearly that God guided you? Using a separate sheet of paper or a notebook, start preparing a list. Start this list today, but don’t feel like you have to have a comprehensive list. Add to it as you reflect and pray about God’s activity in your life.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- In a decision-making time my greatest difficulty may not be choosing between good and bad, but choosing between good and best.
- Two words in the Christian’s language cannot go together: No, Lord.
- God works in sequence to accomplish His divine purposes.
- When God gets ready for me to take a new step or direction in His activity, it will be in sequence with what He has already been doing in my life.
- A spiritual marker identifies a time of transition, decision, or direction when I clearly know that God has guided me.

LESSON 5; UNIT 6

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE CHURCH

As I function in relationship to the church, I depend on others in the church to help me understand God’s will.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us through God’s people, the local church.

Review by answering the following questions.

1. How did God speak in the Old Testament? _____

2. How did God speak in the Gospels? _____
3. How does God speak from Acts through the present? _____
4. What are four ways through which the Holy Spirit speaks? _____

The Body of Christ

One of the problems many evangelical churches face today is that they have so emphasized the doctrine of the priesthood of believers they have lost their sense of corporate identity. What does that mean in simple words? Christians think they stand alone before God and that they are not accountable to the church. Christians do have direct access to God. They only need to go through Christ as their Mediator. God, however, created the church as His redemptive agent in the world. He has a purpose for the church. God places every member in a church to accomplish His redemptive purposes through that church.

A church is a body. It is the body of Christ (**1 Cor.12:27**)! Jesus Christ is present as Head of a local church (**Eph. 4:15**), and every member is placed in the body as it pleases God (**1 Cor. 12:18**). The Holy Spirit manifests Himself to every person for the common good

1 Cor. 12:7 ⁷Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

1 Cor. 12:12 ¹²The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

(**1 Cor. 12:7,12**). The whole body is fitted together by the Father. Members are enabled and equipped by the Holy Spirit to function where the Father has placed them in the body. The body then functions to build itself up into the Head, until every member comes to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (**Eph. 4:13**). God made us mutually interdependent. We need each other. What one lacks, others in the body can and will supply. What those “suppliers” lack, another member can supply.

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” —
Ephesians 4:15-16

Therefore, what God is doing in and through the body is essential to your knowing how to respond to Him. Where you see Him working in the body, adjust and put your life. In the church, let God use you in any way He chooses to complete His work in each member. This was Paul’s goal when he said, “We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (**Col. 1:28**). Paul was constantly requesting the believers to become vitally involved with his life and ministry. The effectiveness of Paul’s ministry rested on them (**Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1, 2; Eph. 6:19**).

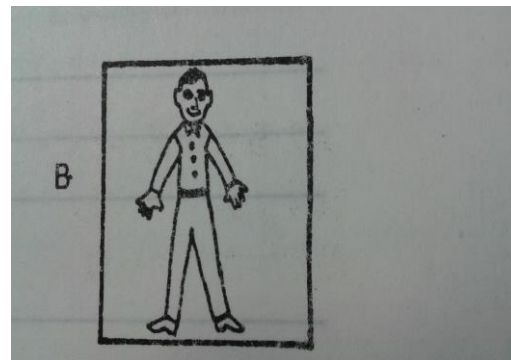
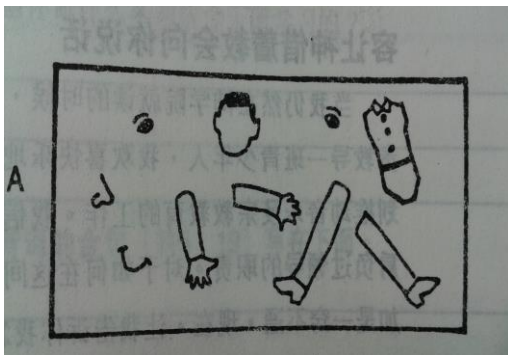
Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-31 and answer the following questions.

1. Paul was addressing the Christians of a local church, the church of Corinth. What is a “local church”? (v. 27)
2. What does verse 25 say should be true of the church? Is it true of your church?
3. Based on verses 14-24, are the following statements True (T) or False (F). For

the statements that are false, rewrite the statement so that it is stated correctly.

- _____ a. The body is made up of one part.
- _____ b. The foot is still a part of the body even though it is not a hand.
- _____ c. The ear is not part of the body because it is not an eye.
- _____ d. Members of the body decide how they should be arranged.
- _____ e. All the members need every other member of the body.

Answers: (1) A local church is the body of Christ. All believers worldwide are united in the kingdom of God under the rule of the King! But the local church is to function like a body. It is not part of a body. It is a body. **(2) Picture “A” (below) may better represent the way some churches function. However, God has always intended for the church to function as a unit (picture “B”), not just as individual parts.** (3) The church should have no division in the body. If your church does have division, it is a sick body of Christ. **The Great Physician, Christ Himself, can bring about healing of the body, if your church will let Him.** (4) Statements a, c, and d are false. The others are true.



Apart from the body, you cannot fully know God’s will for your relationship to the body. Without the eye the hand does not know where to touch. Without the ear the rest of the body may not know when or how to respond. Every member needs to be listening to what the other members are saying. If the members are not talking about what they sense God is doing, the whole body is in trouble.

As you function in relationship to the church, depend on others in the church to help you understand God’s will.

Allow God to Speak Through the Church

[While I was in seminary, I was involved in a local church. The first year I taught teenage boys. I did that with a willing heart. The next year I was asked to be music and education director. I had never done that in my life. I had sung in a choir, but I had never led a bit of music. I didn’t know anything about directing the educational program of this church. Here is how I approached this decision.

The people of God at this church had a need for a leader. As they prayed they sensed that God put me there purposely to meet that need. I, too, saw the need and realized God could use me there. As a servant of Jesus Christ, I did not have an option to say no. I believed that the Head—Jesus Christ—could speak through the rest of the body to guide me to know how I should function in the body. I said I would do the best I knew to do.

For two years I served as Music and Education Director. Then the church voted to call me to be their pastor. I hadn't preached three sermons in my life. I had not come to the seminary because I felt called to be a pastor. I did, however, go to the seminary because I felt called of God into a relationship with Him for whatever He had in mind. I sensed that I needed to put the seminary training in place so that I would have some tools for God to work with. I didn't say, "I am going into foreign missions or home missions." I didn't say music, or education, or preaching. I said, "Lord, whatever You direct me to do in relation to your body, that is what I will do. I am your servant for your purposes." So, I agreed to be their pastor.

In the church, the need does not constitute the call. The need, however, is not to be ignored. Don't ever be afraid to let the body of believers assist you in knowing God's will. Keep in mind, also, that one individual is not the church. In the final analysis, you are going to have to take all the counsel of people and go to God for the clear direction. What you will find is that a number of things begin to line up. What you are hearing from the Bible and prayer and circumstances and the church will begin to say the same thing. Then you can proceed with confidence.

You may say to me, "Henry, you don't know my church. I can't depend on them to help me know God's will." Be careful. When you say that, you have said more about what you believe about God than what you believe about your church. You are saying, "Henry, not even God can work through these people. He just is not powerful enough." You don't believe that in your mind, I don't think. But what you do says more about what you believe about God than what you say.]

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **A church is a body. It is the body of Christ!**
- **Jesus Christ is present as Head of a local church.**
- **Every member is placed in the body as it pleases God.**
- **God made us mutually interdependent. We need each other.**
- ☐ **Apart from the body, I cannot fully know God's will for my relationship to the body.**
- **Every member needs to be listening to what the other members are saying.**
- **As I function in relationship to the church, I depend on others in the church to help me understand God's will.**

Part II, Discipleship II

UNIT 7

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. —**HEBREWS 11:6**

Read each of the following passages of Scripture:

Joshua 6:1-5; Judges 6:33; 7:1-8; 1 Chronicles 14:8-16; Matthew 17:24-27

Lesson 2 Activities

Read the following Scriptures and respond to the questions.

1. (Heb. 11:1). What is faith? _____
2. (2 Cor. 5:7). What is an opposite of faith? _____
3. (Deut. 18:20, 22). How important is it for your faith to be in God and what He says rather than what you or someone else decides would be a nice thing to have happen? _____
4. (John 14:12). What is the potential of faith? _____
5. (Matt. 17:20-21). How much faith is required for God to do through you what is humanly impossible? _____
6. (1 Cor. 2:4-5). On what should we base our faith? On what should we NOT base our faith?
Base our faith on... _____
Not ... _____
7. (Isa. 7:9). What is one danger of lack of faith? _____

Lesson 4 Activities

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions.

Matthew 8:5-13. What did the centurion do to demonstrate his faith? _____

What do you think the centurion believed about Jesus' authority and healing power?

Matthew 8:23-27. What did the disciples do to demonstrate their "little faith" in the middle of this storm? _____

Matthew 9:20-22. What did the woman do to demonstrate her faith? _____

What do you think the woman believed about Jesus' power to heal? _____

Matthew 9:27-31. What trait of God (Jesus) were these two blind men appealing to?

(v. 27) _____

On what basis did Jesus heal these two men? (v. 29) _____

Lesson 5 Activities

Read Hebrews 11.

From Hebrews 11:32-38. List the “good” outcomes of a faithful life on the left and the “bad” outcomes on the right.

“Good” Outcomes

Routed Enemies

“Bad” Outcomes

Stoned To Death

LESSON 1; UNIT 7

THE CRISIS OF BELIEF

Memorize this verse:

Without **faith** it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

—**HEBREWS 11:6**

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[We were leading a weekend conference for couples in North Carolina. Many individuals wanted to speak with me, for God had touched their lives with truth. One man shared, “Henry, when you were speaking God reminded me of a time when I was a boy. He asked me to get a medical degree, go to some part of the world that needed medical care, and share the gospel as I practiced medicine. I did get my medical degree. I went on to do postdoctoral work in the immune system and later further specialization in AIDS. I am now a research professor at Vanderbilt Medical Center. What should I do?” I replied, “Since God reminded you of a vow you made to Him, I have only two words for you—OBEY IMMEDIATELY!” He replied, “I thought you would say this.” We talked and prayed together, and I did not hear from him for a year. Then someone said, “At a recent International Mission Board commissioning service, a wonderful couple was appointed as career missionaries. The husband has been a research professor at Vanderbilt Medical Center, where all the national AIDS research is housed. They’ve been appointed to Uganda!” I knew who it was. This doctor had faced a “crisis of belief” and said, “Yes, Lord!” and was on the way to doing God’s will. He has a wonderful and expanding ministry in East Africa.]

A TURNING POINT

When God tells me what He wants to do through me, I will face a crisis of belief.

There will be a turning point in your following God’s will. When God invites you to join Him in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for you. You will realize that you cannot do it on your own. If God doesn’t help you, you will fail. This is the crisis point where many decide not to follow what they sense God is leading them to do.

Crisis

How I live my life is a testimony of what I believe about God.

The word “**crisis**” comes from a word that means “**decision.**” The same Greek word is often translated “judgment”. The **crisis of belief is a turning point where you must make a decision. You must decide what you believe about God.** How you respond at this turning point will determine whether you go on to be involved with God in something God-sized that only He can do, or whether you will continue to go your own way and miss what God has purposed for your life. This is not a one-time experience. It is a daily experience. How you live your life is a testimony of what you believe about God.

Read each of the following passages of Scripture and describe the crisis of belief you see in each case.

Josh. 6:1 through Josh. 6:5 ¹Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. ²Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. ³**March around the city** once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. ⁴Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams’ horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. ⁵When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, **have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse** and the people will go up, every man straight in.”

Judg. 6:33 ³³Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.

Judg. 7:1 through Judg. 7:8 ¹Early in the morning, Jerub-Baal (that is, Gideon) and all his men camped at the spring of Harod. The camp of Midian was north of them in the valley near the hill of Moreh. ²**The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many men for me to deliver Midian into their hands.** In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, ³announce now to the people, ‘**Anyone who trembles with fear may turn back** and leave Mount Gilead.’” So twenty-two thousand men left, while ten thousand remained.

⁴But the LORD said to Gideon, “There are still too many men. Take them down to the water, and I will sift them for you there. If I say, ‘This one shall go with you,’ he shall go; but if I say, ‘This one shall not go with you,’ he shall not go.”

⁵So Gideon took the men down to the water. There the LORD told him, “Separate those who lap the water with their tongues like a dog from those who kneel down to drink.” ⁶Three hundred men lapped with their hands to their mouths. All the rest got down on their knees to drink.

⁷The LORD said to Gideon, “**With the three hundred men that lapped I will save you** and give the Midianites into your hands. **Let all the other men go, each to his own place.**” ⁸So Gideon sent the rest of the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred, who took over the provisions and trumpets of the others.

1 Chr. 14:8 through 1 Chr. 14:16 ⁸When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, they went up in full force to search for him, but David heard about it and went out to meet them. ⁹Now the Philistines had come and raided the Valley of Rephaim; ¹⁰so **David inquired of God: “Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?”**

The LORD answered him, “**Go, I will hand them over to you.**”

¹¹So David and his men went up to Baal Perazim, and there he defeated them. He said, “As waters break out, God has broken out against my enemies by my hand.” So that place was called Baal Perazim. ¹²The Philistines had abandoned their gods there, and David gave orders to burn them in the fire.

¹³Once more the Philistines raided the valley; ¹⁴so **David inquired of God again**, and God answered him, “Do not go straight up, **but circle around them and attack them in front of the balsam trees.** ¹⁵**As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees**, move out to battle, because that will mean God has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army.” ¹⁶So David did as God commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army, all the way from Gibeon to Gezer.

Matt. 17:24 through Matt. 17:27 ²⁴After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn’t your teacher pay the temple tax?”

²⁵“Yes, he does,” he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon?” he asked. “From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own sons or from others?”

²⁶“From others,” Peter answered.

“Then the sons are exempt,” Jesus said to him. ²⁷“But so that we may not offend them, **go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.**”

Have you or your church ever sensed that God wanted you to do something big and you faced a crisis of belief?

Did your response demonstrate faith or lack of faith?

Four principles about **The Crisis of Belief:**

1. An encounter with God requires faith.
2. Encounters with God are God-sized.
3. What you do in response to God’s revelation (invitation) reveals what you believe about God.
4. True faith requires action.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- When God invites me to join Him in His work, He has a God-sized assignment for me.
- How I live my life is a testimony of what I believe about God.
- When God tells me what He wants to do through me, I will face a crisis of belief.

LESSON 2; UNIT 7

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD REQUIRE FAITH

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass.

All through Scripture, when God revealed Himself, His purposes, and His ways, the response to Him required faith.

Read the following Scriptures and respond to the questions.

1. Heb. 11:1 “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”.
What is “faith”?

2. 2 Cor. 5:7 “We live by faith, not by sight”. **What is an opposite of faith?** (sight)

3. Deut.18:20, 22 “A prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to

say... must be put to death. . . . If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place

or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously”.

How important is it for your faith to be in God and what He says rather than what you or someone else decides would be a nice thing to have happen?

4. John 14:12 Jesus said, “Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even

greater things than these, because I am going to the Father”. **What is the potential of faith?**

5. **Matt. 17:20-21** “ ‘I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this

mountain, “Move from here to there” and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you’ ”. **How**

much faith is required for God to do through you what is humanly impossible?

6. **1 Cor. 2:4-5** Paul said, “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but

with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might **not** rest on men’s wisdom, **but on**

God’s power”. **On what should we base our faith? On what should we NOT base our faith?**

7. **Isa. 7:9** “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all”. **What is one danger of lack of faith?**

8. **HEBREWS 11:6** Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him

must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass.

Faith was believing that the God who called us to the assignments was the One who would provide for their accomplishment.

Your faith does not rest in a concept or an idea. Faith must be in a PERSON—God Himself. If you or someone else decides something would be nice to have happen and then leads people to “believe” or “have faith,” you are in a dangerous position. Faith is only valid in God and what He says He is purposing to do. If the thing you expect to happen is from you and not God, then you must depend on what you can do. Before you call yourself, your family, or your church to exercise faith, be sure you have heard a word from God.

Something Only God Can Do

Moses could not deliver the children of Israel from Pharaoh’s army, cross the Red Sea on dry land, provide water from a rock, or provide bread and meat for food. Moses had to have faith that the God who called him would do the things He said He would do. Joshua could not take the Israelites across the Jordan River on dry land, bring down walled cities, defeat enemies, or make the sun stand still. Only God could have done these things. Joshua had to have faith in God.

In the New Testament this also was true for the disciples. On their own, they could not feed the multitudes, heal the sick, still a storm, or raise the dead. Only God could do these things. But God called servants to let Him do these things through them.

What God wants to do through you, will be something only God can do.

What you believe about Him will determine what you do.

If you have faith in the God who called you, you will obey Him; and He will bring to pass what He has purposed to do.

Jesus frequently rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith and unbelief. “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Their unbelief revealed that they really had not come to know who He was, or what He could do.

Can you think of other Bible characters that had to act by faith to do only what God himself could do?

(story of Nora Lam [Neng Yee] from book “China Cry”)

We face the same crisis Bible characters faced. When God speaks, what He asks of us requires faith. Our major problem, however, is our self-centeredness. We think we have to accomplish the assignment on our own power and with our current resources. We think, “I can’t do that. That is not possible.”

We forget that when God speaks, He always reveals what He is going to do—not what He wants us to do for Him. () We **join Him** so He can do **His** work through us. We don’t have to be able to accomplish the task within our limited ability or resources. With faith, we can proceed confidently to obey Him; because we know that **He is going to bring to pass what He purposes.**

“Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With **man this is impossible, but not with God; **all things are possible with God.**’ ” —Mark 10:27**

-
- “It is POSSIBLE”... not “It will happen.”

Faith required

Describe a time in your life that required faith in God, and you did (or did not) respond in faith.

(a time when you could see no way to accomplish the task unless God did it through you)

Is there anything God is wanting you to do, that you are not doing?

Why do you think you are hesitating?

Have you prayed like the disciples when they asked the Lord, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5)?

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **When God speaks, my response requires faith.**
- **Faith is confidence that what God has promised or said will come to pass.**
- **Sight is an opposite of faith.**
- **Faith must be in a Person.**
- **Before I call myself, my family, or my church to exercise faith, I must be sure I have heard a word from God.**
- **When God lets me know what He wants to do through me, it will be something only God can do.**
- **What I believe about Him will determine what I do.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 7

WHAT YOU DO DECLARES WHAT YOU BELIEVE

What you do reveals what you believe about God, regardless of what you say.

What you believe about God will determine what you do and how you live.

God and the world can tell from your response what you really believe about God.

David's Faith Demonstrated

In the following paragraphs, note what David seems to have believed about God based on what he said.

In 1 Samuel 16:12-13 God chose David and had Samuel anoint him to become the next king over Israel. In 1 Samuel 17 God brought David into the middle of His activity. While Saul was still king, the Israelites were at war with the Philistines. Still a young boy, David was sent by his father to visit his brothers in the army. When David arrived, Goliath (a giant soldier nine feet tall) challenged Israel to send one man to fight him. The losing nation would become the slaves of the winner. Israel's army was terrified. David asked in amazement, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" (v.26). David faced a crisis of belief. He may have realized that God had brought him to the battlefield and had prepared him for this assignment.

David said he would fight this giant. He stated his belief, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine" (v. 37). David refused to take the normal weapons of war. Instead he took a sling and five smooth stones. He said to Goliath, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me . . . and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands" (vv. 45-47). David killed Goliath, and Israel went on to victory.

What did David say he believed about God?

How did David's actions show what he believed about God?

Sarai's Lack of Faith

God called Abram and promised to make his offspring as numerous as the stars....Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness" (**Gen. 15:4, 6**).

Abram's wife Sarai (in her mid 70s) knew she was past childbearing years, so she decided she would have to "build a family" in a different way. She gave her maid to Abram as a wife and asked for a child through her. Ishmael was born to Hagar a year later. Sarai's actions indicated what she believed about God. And this act of unbelief was very costly. Ishmael caused Abram and Sarai much grief in their old age. Ishmael and his descendants have lived in hostility toward Isaac and the Jews from that time until today.

Read the following case studies. Evaluate the response of the individuals and churches to determine what they really believe about God.

1. **John and Mary** have just heard a missionary speaker. They believe God wants them to go as missionaries to Africa. Mary reminds John that her parents would never agree to let them move so

far away with her parents' only grandchildren. They decide not to pursue that sense of calling to be missionaries. What do John and Mary really believe about God?

2. **Anna** privately has been praying that God would lead her to a place of service in the church. The Sunday School Director believes that God is leading him to ask Anna to serve in that position. Anna responds, "I cannot accept that job. I don't have the abilities required. Besides, I have never done that before." What do you think Anna believes about God?

3. **A group of adults** has been meeting together for six months and praying that God would provide

a church for their town. There are no evangelical churches in the town. As they pray, they sense that

God wants them to approach Calvary Church with an urgent plea to come and start the new church. **Calvary's members** say, "We are still paying off a debt on our building. We can't afford to sponsor a new church right now. Why don't you try First Church downtown." What do you think Calvary believes about God?

4. **First Church's** budget committee prayed together for a month prior to talking with leaders about next year's budget. They had asked the leaders to pray as well. They develop a challenging budget based on what they believe God wants their church to do next year. The church prayerfully considered the budget and voted unanimously to adopt it. The deacons led a pledge campaign that came up with 10% less than the adopted budget. The church required the budget committee to trim the budget by 10% so they would not overspend their income. What do you think First Church believes about God?

Actions Speak

When God invites you to join Him, and you face a crisis of belief, **what you do next tells what you believe about God.** Your actions speak louder than words.

Read the following Scriptures and answer the questions.

Matt. 8:5 through Matt. 8:13 ⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "**my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.**"

⁷Jesus said to him, "**I will go and heal him.**"

⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But **just say the word, and my servant will be healed.** ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

¹⁰**When Jesus heard this, he was astonished** and said to those following him, "**I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.** ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "**Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.**" And his servant was healed at that very hour.

What did the centurion **do** to demonstrate his faith?

What do you think the centurion **believed** about Jesus' authority and healing power?
(notice that Jesus was "astonished" by the man's faith!!!!!!)

Matt. 8:23 through Matt. 8:27 ²³Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. ²⁴Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. ²⁵The disciples went and woke him, saying, "**Lord, save us! We're going to drown!**"

²⁶He replied, "**You of little faith, why are you so afraid?**" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

²⁷The **men were amazed** and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

What did the disciples do to demonstrate their "little faith" in the middle of this storm?

Matt. 9:20 through Matt. 9:22 ²⁰Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years came up behind him and **touched the edge of his cloak.** ²¹She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, **I will be healed.**"

²²Jesus turned and saw her. "**Take heart, daughter,**" he said, "**your faith has healed you.**" And the woman was healed from that moment.

What did the woman do to demonstrate her faith? What did she believe about Jesus' power to heal?

Matt. 9:27 through Matt. 9:31 ²⁷As Jesus went on from there, two **blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"**

²⁸**When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him,** and he asked them, "**Do you believe that I am able to do this?**"

"Yes, Lord," they replied.

²⁹Then he touched their eyes and said, "**According to your faith will it be done to you**"; ³⁰and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, "**See that no one knows about this.**" ³¹But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.

What did the blind men believe about Jesus, and what did they **DO** to demonstrate their belief? How was Jesus going to heal them?

Complete the third statement on the crisis of belief in your own words.

1. An encounter with God requires faith.
2. Encounters with God are God-sized.
3. What I do in response to God's revelation (invitation) _____
4. True faith requires action.

When the two blind men demonstrated that they believed Jesus was merciful and that He was the Messiah (Son of David), Jesus healed them according to their faith. The woman believed that just a touch of Jesus' garment would allow His healing power to flow to her. She was willing to risk public ridicule in order to experience His healing power. When the storms of life overtake us like this storm overtook the disciples, we often respond as if God does not exist or does not care. Jesus rebuked them, not for their human tendency to fear, but for their failure to recognize His presence, protection, and power. "Just say the word, and my servant will be healed," the centurion claimed. Jesus commended the centurion's

faith in His authority and power.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **What I do reveals what I believe about God, regardless of what I say.**
- **What I believe about God will determine what I do and how I live.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 7

ENCOUNTERS WITH GOD ARE GOD-SIZED

The only way people will know what God is like is when they see Him at work, when they see His nature expressed in His activity. **Whenever God involves you in His activity, the assignment will have God-like dimensions to it.**

God-sized Assignments

Some people say, “God will never ask me to do something I can’t do.” But, the kind of assignments God gives in the Bible are always “God-sized”; **beyond what people can do, because He wants to demonstrate His nature, His strength, His provision, and His kindness.** That is the only way the world will come to know Him.

Name some assignments God (the Father or Jesus) gave to people in the Bible that were “God-sized” assignments—things that were humanly impossible.

(ex.)

Abraham to father a nation when Abraham had no son and Sarah was past the age to bear children.

Moses to deliver the children of Israel, to cross the Red Sea, and to provide water from a rock.

Gideon to defeat the giant Midianite army with 300 men.

Disciples to feed the multitudes and to make disciples of all the nations.

People Come to Know God

Read the following biblical accounts of God’s activity through His servants. Note statements that indicate how people responded to God’s activity when they observed it.

God had **Moses lead the Israelites to camp beside the Red Sea.** God said, “I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord” (**Ex. 14:4**). What was the result? “When the Israelites saw the great power the Lord displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord and put their trust in him” (**Ex. 14:31**).

God commanded **Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River at flood stage**. Why? “He did this so that all the peoples of the earth might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful and so that you [Israel] might always fear the Lord your God” (**Josh. 4:24**).

A vast army came to make war against Israel. **King Jehoshaphat** proclaimed a fast and led the people to seek God’s counsel. He prayed, “**O our God . . . we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you**” (**2 Chron. 20:12**).

God responded, “**Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s...You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you**” (**2 Chron. 20:15, 17**). Jehoshaphat sent a choir in front of the army singing praise to God for His enduring love. God destroyed the invading army before Jehoshaphat and Israel got to the battlefield. Then: “**The fear of God came upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel**” (**2 Chron. 20:29**).

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to obey God rather than King Nebuchadnezzar. Before being thrown into a blazing furnace, they said, “**The God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand**” (**Dan. 3:17**). The bystanding soldiers died, but God delivered these three faithful men.

King Nebuchadnezzar said, “**Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who**

has sent his angel and rescued his servants . . . Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego

be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way” (**Dan. 3:28-29**). This pagan king wrote to the whole nation, “It is my pleasure to tell you about the miraculous signs and wonders that the Most High God has performed for me. How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders!” (**Dan. 4:2-3**).

Christians in the early church followed the directions of the Holy Spirit. Here is the testimony of the impact God had on their world:

The disciples were **filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in foreign languages** they had not learned. Then Peter preached and “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about **three thousand were added** to their number that day” (**Acts 2:41**).

God used **Peter and John to heal a crippled beggar** in the name of Jesus. They preached, and “many who heard the message believed, and the **number of men grew to about five thousand**” (**Acts 4:4**).

God used **Peter to raise Dorcas from the dead**. “This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:42).

How would you describe the response of the people in your community to the gospel of Jesus Christ?

?????What our world often is seeing in our day is a devoted, committed Christian serving God. **But, they are not seeing God**. They comment on what we are doing, “Well, there’s a wonderful, dedicated, committed group of people serving God.” They, however, do not see anything happening that can only be explained in terms of the activity of God. **Why???????** Because, we are not attempting anything that only God can do.

Our world is not attracted to the Christ we serve, because they cannot see Him at work.

The world is passing us by, because they are not having an opportunity to see God. Let the world see God at work and He will attract people to Himself. **LET CHRIST BE LIFTED UP—NOT ONLY IN WORDS, BUT IN LIFE**. Let them see the difference that a living Christ makes. When the world sees things happening through God’s people that cannot be explained except that God Himself has done them, then the world will be drawn to the God they see.

Review questions.

1. How will the world come to know God?
2. Why are people in our world not being attracted to Christ and His church?
3. What kind of assignments does God give His people?
4. Why does God give God-sized assignments that the individual or church cannot do on their own?
5. What are you attempting to do that only will happen if God brings it to pass?
6. What is your church attempting to do that only will happen if God brings it to pass?
7. Do you see any connection between local people’s response, and the kinds of things you attempt that are God-sized?

God is interested in your having an experience with Him. He is not interested just in getting a job done. He can get the job done any time He wants. So, God will come to you and give you a God-sized assignment. **When you start to do what He tells you to do, He brings to pass what He has purposed**. Then, you and all the people with you will rejoice that you have experienced Him, and you and the people around you will know more of Him than you have ever known before.

A God-sized Assignment

(ex. Yvonne Robinson, 62, 1-way ticket, 7 day visa, met with govt. official to work with handicapped kids (didn't know how), hard circumstances, raised money to get supplies w/o \$ for shipping costs, later became administrator of children's hospital for 10 years, traveling by camel to witness to nomads and distribute NT tapes.)

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- The kind of assignments God gives are God-sized.
- When God's people and the world see something only God can do, they come to know God.
- Let people see the difference that a living Christ makes in a life, a family, or a church; that will make a difference in how they respond to the gospel.

LESSON 5; UNIT 7

TRUE FAITH REQUIRES ACTION

James 2:26, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."
When you face a crisis of belief, what you **do** demonstrates what you believe. Faith without action is dead!

Hebrews 11 is sometimes called "The Roll Call of Faith." Take a look at the actions of these individuals who demonstrated their faith.

Read Hebrews 11: People commended for their faith. **Name the action (verbs) that each one did that demonstrated his faith. Some names will have more than one action.**

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. Abel (v. 4) | A. Chose to be mistreated along with God's people |
| _____ 2. Enoch (v. 5-6) | B. Offered a righteous sacrifice to God |
| _____ 3. Noah (v. 7) | C. Left Egypt |
| _____ 4. Abraham (v. 8-19) | D. Made his home in a foreign country |
| _____ 5. Joseph (v. 22) | E. Marched around the walls of Jericho |
| _____ 6. Moses (v. 24-28) | F. Pleased God by earnestly seeking Him |
| _____ 7. Israelites (v. 29-30) | G. Gave instructions to bury his bones in the promised land |
| _____ 8. Rahab (v. 31) | H. Followed God without knowing where he was going |
| | I. Kept the Passover |
| | J. Passed through the Red Sea on dry ground |
| | K. Welcomed and hid the Israelite spies |
| | L. Considered God faithful to keep His promise |
| | M. Built an ark to save his family |
| | N. Offered Isaac as a sacrifice |

Notice that a faithful life does not always bring desired results in human terms.

Heb. 11:32 through Heb. 11:38 ³²And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. ³⁵Women received back their dead, raised to life again. **Others were tortured and refused to be released**, so that they might gain a better resurrection. ³⁶**Some faced jeers and flogging**, while still others were **chained and put in prison**. ³⁷They were **stoned**^o; they were **sawed in two**; they were **put to death by the sword**. They **went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated**—³⁸the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

List the “good” outcomes of a faithful life on the left and the “bad” outcomes on the right.

“Good” Outcomes

Routed Enemies

“Bad” Outcomes

Stoned To Death

Were some more faithful than the others?

No. **“These were all commended for their faith” (Heb. 11:39).** They decided a **“Well done!”** from the Lord was more important than life itself.

Heb. 11:40 ⁴⁰God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.

Therefore:

“Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.” (Heb. 12:1-3)

Outward appearances of success do not always indicate faith, and outward appearances of failure do not always indicate lack of faith. A faithful servant is one that does what his Master tells him, whatever the outcome may be. A reward is awaiting faithful servants.

Has God led you to do something that you did not do because you lacked faith? If yes, describe what you may need to do to demonstrate your faith in Him, His purposes, and His ways.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Faith without action is dead!
- Genuine faith is demonstrated by action.
- God has planned something far better for people of faith.
- ☐ Don’t grow weary in being faithful. A reward awaits faithful servants.

UNIT 8

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.—LUKE 14:33

Elisha and the Rich Young Ruler were given invitations to join God. Read about them and answer the following questions.

Elisha—1 Kings 19:15-21

Rich Young Ruler—Luke 18:18-27

1. What adjustment was required of each?
2. What was the response of each?

Lesson 3 Activities

Read Acts 9:1-25. What adjustment did Saul have to make to serve God. What cost did he have to pay to follow Christ._____

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 and list some of the costs Paul had to pay for following and obeying Christ._____

Lesson 4 Activities

Answer the following questions. Read the Scripture passage if you do not know the answer already.

1. When Moses was obedient and told Pharaoh to let Israel go, what did it cost the Israelites? (**Ex. 5:1-21**)_____
2. When Jesus obeyed and went to the cross, what was the cost to His mother as she stood there and watched Him die? (**John 19:17-37**)_____
3. When Paul was obedient in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles at Thessalonica, what did it cost Jason? (**Acts 17:1-9**)_____

Lesson 5 Activities

Read the following Scriptures and notice why you must depend on God to carry out His purposes.

John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians. 2:20; Isaiah 14:24; 41:10; 46:9-11
Why must you depend totally on God to work through you?_____

LESSON 1; UNIT 8

ADJUSTING YOUR LIFE TO GOD

Memorize this verse:

Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.—LUKE 14:33

A Young Couple's Sacrifice

[A need arose in one of our mission points that was 40 miles away. I asked the church to pray that God would call someone to move to that community and be a lay pastor of the mission.

A young couple responded. He was attending the university, and they had very little financially.

If they took up residence in the mission community, he would have to commute 80 miles a day to the university. I knew they couldn't afford to do it. I said, "No, I can't let you do that." I went through all the reasons why that would not be fair.

This young couple was deeply grateful that God had saved them. The young man looked at me and said, "Pastor, don't deny me the opportunity to sacrifice for my Lord." That statement crushed me. How could I refuse? Yet, I knew that this couple would have to pay a high price because our church had been obedient to start new missions.

We prayed for God to call out a lay pastor. I needed to have been open to God's answering our prayers in an unexpected way. When this couple responded with such a deep sense of commitment and personal sacrifice, the body (our church) affirmed their sense of call; and God provided for their needs!]

ADJUSTMENTS ARE NECESSARY

You cannot stay where you are and go with God.

Many want God to speak to them and give them an assignment, but are not interested in making any major adjustments in their lives. Biblically, that is impossible. Every time God spoke to people in the Scripture about something He wanted to do through them, major adjustments were necessary. They had to adjust their lives to God. Once the adjustments were made, God accomplished His purposes through those He called.

A Second Critical Turning Point

Adjusting your life to God is the second critical turning point in your knowing and doing the will of God. The first turning point was the crisis of belief—you must believe God is who He says He is and that He will do what He says He will do. Without faith in God, you will make the wrong decision at this first turning point. **Making the adjustment of your life to God also is a turning point.** If you **choose to make the adjustment**, you can **go on to obedience**.

If you refuse to make the adjustment, you could miss what God had in store for your life.

Once you have come to believe God, you demonstrate your faith by what you DO. Some **action is required**. Your adjustments and obedience will be costly to you and those around you.

Action = Adjustments + Obedience

FAITH > ACTION (Adjustments + Obedience)

In your own words, summarize what you see stated above._____

Adjustments to God

When God speaks to you, revealing what He is about to do, that **revelation is your invitation to adjust your life to Him**. Once you have adjusted your life to Him, His purposes, and His ways, you are in a position to obey. **Adjustments prepare you for obedience**. You cannot continue life as usual or stay where you are, and go with God at the same time. That is true throughout Scripture.

- **Noah** could not continue life as usual and build an ark at the same time (**Gen. 6**).
- **Abram** could not stay in Ur or Haran and father a nation in Canaan (**Gen. 12:1-8**).
- **Moses** could not stay on the back side of the desert herding sheep and stand before Pharaoh at the same time (**Ex. 3**).
- **David** had to leave his sheep to become king (**1 Sam. 16:1-13**).
- **Amos** had to leave the sycamore trees in order to preach in Israel (**Amos 7:14-15**).
- **Jonah** had to leave his home and overcome a major prejudice in order to preach in Nineveh (**Jonah 1:1-2; 3:1-2; 4:1-11**).
- **Peter, Andrew, James, and John** had to leave their fishing businesses in order to follow Jesus (**Matt. 4:18-22**).
- **Matthew** had to leave his tax collector's booth to follow Jesus (**Matt. 9:9**).
- **Saul** (later Paul) had to completely change directions in his life in order to be used of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (**Acts 9:1-19**).

Enormous changes and adjustments had to be made! Some had to leave family and country. Others had to drop prejudices and change preferences. Others had to leave behind life goals, ideals, and desires. Everything had to be yielded to God and the entire life adjusted to Him. The moment the necessary adjustments were made God began to accomplish His purposes through them. Each one, however, learned that adjusting one's life to God is well worth the cost.

Have you come to a place in your life where you are willing to yield "everything" to Him in order to follow Him?

God most certainly will require adjustments of His people. **He even required major adjustments of His own Son:**

"You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich" (**2 Cor. 8:9**).

Jesus emptied Himself of position and wealth in heaven in order to join the Father in providing redemption through His death on the cross—that was a major adjustment!

If you want to be a disciple—a follower—of Jesus, you have no choice. You will have to make major adjustments in your life to follow God. Until you are ready to make any adjustment necessary to follow and obey what God has said, you will be of little use to God. Your greatest single difficulty in following God may come at the point of the adjustment.

Our tendency is to want to skip the adjustment and go from believing God to obedience. If you want to follow Him, you don't have that choice. His ways are so different than yours (**Isa. 55:9**) that the only way to follow Him will require an adjustment of your life to His ways.

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” —**Isaiah 55:9**

Elisha and the Rich Young Ruler were given invitations to join God. Read about them and answer the following questions.

Elisha

1 Kin. 19:15 through 1 Kin. 19:21

¹⁹So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who *was* plowing *with* twelve yoke *of oxen* before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. ²⁰And **he left the oxen**, and ran after Elijah, and said, **Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee.** And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? ²¹And he returned back from him, and **took a yoke of oxen, and slew them**, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and **gave unto the people, and they did eat.** Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Rich Young Ruler—Luke 18:18-23

Luke 18:18 through Luke 18:27 ¹⁸And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ¹⁹And Jesus said unto him, **Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God.** ²⁰**Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.** ²¹And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. ²²Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, **Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.** ²³And when he heard this, **he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.**

1. What adjustment was required of each?

2. What was the response of each?

The rich ruler wanted eternal life, but he didn't want to make the necessary adjustment to Jesus. His money and wealth were more important. Jesus knew that. Jesus knew that man could not love God completely and love his money at the same time (**Matt. 6:24**). Jesus asked him to put away the thing that had become his god—his wealth. The young ruler refused to make the necessary adjustment, and he missed out on experiencing eternal life.

What is “eternal life” according to John 17:3?

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” —**John 17:3**

The rich young ruler's **love of money and his greed made him an idolater (Eph. 5:5)**. He missed coming to know the True God and Jesus Christ whom God had sent. **He wanted eternal life, but he refused to make the necessary adjustment of his life to the True God.**

Elisha responded much differently. He had to leave family and career (farming) in order to follow God's call. You have heard the phrase about "burning your bridges behind you." Well, Elisha burned his farm equipment and killed his 24 oxen. He cooked the meat and fed the people of the community. He was not about to turn back! When he made the necessary adjustments, he was in a position to obey God. As a result, God worked through Elisha to perform some of the greatest signs and miracles recorded in the Old Testament (**2 Kings 2**). Elisha had to make the adjustments on the front end of his call. Not until he made the adjustments, was God able to work through him to accomplish the miracles.

No one can sum up all God is able to accomplish through one solitary life, wholly yielded, adjusted, and obedient to Him!

FAITH → ADJUSTMENTS → OBEDIENCE

When God invites you to join Him, the task will have such God-sized dimensions you will face a crisis of belief. Your response will first require faith. Faith will be demonstrated by action. The first action will involve the adjustment of your life to God. The second action will be your obedience to what God asks you to do. You cannot go on to obedience without first making the adjustments. **So the order is faith → adjustment → obedience.**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **When God speaks to me, revealing what He is about to do, that revelation is my invitation to adjust my life to God.**
- **Adjustments prepare me for obedience.**
- **I cannot stay where I am and go with God.**
- **My greatest single difficulty in following God may come at the point of the adjustment.**
- **No one can sum up all God is able to accomplish through one solitary life, wholly yielded, adjusted, and obedient to Him!**

LESSON 2; UNIT 8

KINDS OF ADJUSTMENTS

God is interested in ABSOLUTE SURRENDER

What kind of adjustments are required? Trying to answer that question is like trying to list all the things God might ask you to do. The list could be endless. However, we can name some general categories of adjustments that may be required.

Adjustments may be required in one or more of the following areas:

- **In your circumstances** (like job, home, finances, and others)
- **In your relationships** (family, friends, business associates, and others)
- **In your thinking** (attitudes, prejudices, methods, your potential, and others)
- **In your commitments** (to family, church, job, plans, tradition, and others)
- **In your actions** (how you pray, give, serve, and others)
- **In your beliefs** (about God, His purposes, His ways, your relationship to Him, and others)

When you face the crisis of belief, you must decide what you believe about God. That mental decision may be the easy part. The **hard part is adjusting your life to God and taking an action** that demonstrates your faith. You may be called to attempt things that only God can do, where formerly you may have attempted only that which you knew you could do.

Read each of the following Scriptures. What kind of adjustment was (or is) required in each?

- A. In circumstances
- B. In relationships
- C. In thinking
- D. In commitments
- E. In actions
- F. In beliefs

Matt. 4:18 through Matt. 4:22 ¹⁸As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for **they were fishermen.** ¹⁹**“Come, follow me,”** Jesus said, **“and I will make you fishers of men.”** ²⁰At once **they left their nets and followed him.**

²¹Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were **in a boat with their father** Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²²and immediately they **left the boat and their father and followed him.**

Matt. 5:43 through Matt. 5:48 ⁴³**“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^o and hate your enemy.’** ⁴⁴**But I tell you: Love your enemies^o and pray for those who persecute you,** ⁴⁵**that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** ⁴⁶**If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?** ⁴⁷**And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?** ⁴⁸**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**

Matt. 6:5 through Matt. 6:8 ⁵**“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.** ⁶**But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father,** who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷**And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.** ⁸**Do not be like them,** for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Matt. 20:20 through Matt. 20:28 ²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him.

²¹**“What is it you want?”** he asked.

She said, “Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.”

²²“**You don’t know what you are asking,**” Jesus said to them. “**Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?**”

“**We can,**” they answered.

²³Jesus said to them, “**You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father.**”

²⁴**When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.** ²⁵Jesus called them together and said, “**You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶Not so with you. **Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.**”**

Acts 10:1 through Acts 10:20 ¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ²He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

⁴Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to **bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.** ⁶He is **staying with Simon the tanner**, whose house is by the sea.”

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. ⁸He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.

⁹About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, **Peter** went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he **fell into a trance.** ¹¹He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹²It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³Then a voice told him, “**Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.**”

¹⁴“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “**I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.**”

¹⁵The voice spoke to him a second time, “**Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.**”

¹⁶This **happened three times**, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the **Spirit said to him, “Simon, three^o men are looking for you.** ²⁰So get up and go downstairs. **Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.**”

Sometimes an adjustment may involve several of these areas at once. For instance, Peter’s experience with Cornelius probably required adjustments in Peter’s relationships with Gentiles, his thinking and beliefs about what is clean and unclean, his commitments to the traditions of the Jews, and his actions regarding fellowship with Gentiles. Being able to place a title on an adjustment is not as important as your identifying what change God wants you to make to Him, His purposes, or His ways.

Are there areas in which God may ask you to make an adjustment of your life to Him.

Absolute Surrender

God frequently requires adjustments in areas you have never considered or been open to in the past. You may have heard someone say something like this: “Don’t ever tell God something you

will NOT do. That is what He will ask you to do.” God is not looking for ways to make you “squirm.” He does, however, want to be Lord of your life. Whenever you identify a place where you refuse to allow His lordship, that is a place He will go to work. He is interested in **absolute surrender.** Any adjustment God expects you to make is for your good.

The adjusting is always to a Person. You adjust your life to God. You adjust your viewpoints to be like His viewpoints. You adjust your ways to be like His ways.
After you make the necessary adjustments, He will tell you what to do next to obey Him.
When you obey Him, you will experience Him doing through you something only God can do.

Read these statements made by godly men. Describe the kind of adjustment this person had made or was willing to make. In the first quote, for example, one adjustment David Livingstone was willing to make was to live in poverty as a missionary (in Africa) rather than to have riches as a physician in his homeland.

David Livingstone (medical missionary to Africa)—“Forbid that we should ever consider the holding of a commission from the King of Kings a sacrifice, so long as other men esteem the service of an earthly government as an honor. /// I am a missionary, heart and soul. God Himself had an only Son, and He was a missionary and a physician. A poor, poor imitation I am, or wish to be, but in this service I hope to live. In it I wish to die. I still prefer poverty and missions service to riches and ease. This is my choice.”

Adjustment(s) _ _ _ _ _

Jim Elliot (missionary to Quichua Indians in South America)—“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Adjustment(s) _ _ _ _ _

Bob Pierce (established World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse)—“Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.”

Adjustment(s) _ _ _ _ _

Oswald J. Smith (missionary statesman of Canada)—“I want Thy plan, O God, for my life. May I be happy and contented whether in the homeland or on the foreign field; whether married or alone, in happiness or sorrow, health or sickness, prosperity or adversity—I want Thy plan, O God, for my life. I want it; oh, I want it!”

Adjustment(s) _ _ _ _ _

C. T. Studd (missionary to China, India, and Africa)—“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to give for Him.”

Adjustment(s) _ _ _ _ _

Some adjustments these men made or were willing to make include:

- Livingstone **considered the work of a missionary** to Africa **as a high honor**, not a sacrifice.
- Jim Elliot was **willing to give up earthly things** for heavenly reward. He was killed by South

American Indians as he sought to spread the gospel to those who had never heard about Jesus.

- Bob Pierce was **willing to be broken hearted** so he could be like the Father.
- Oswald Smith so wanted God's plan for his life, that he was **willing to be content** with any pleasure or adversity.
- C. T. Studd was **willing to make any sacrifice** for Jesus' sake.

Think about which quote is the most meaningful to you.

Think about the level of commitment that is reflected in that quote.

You cannot stay where you are and go with God in obedience to His will. Adjustments must come first. Then you can follow in obedience (to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him **(Luke 9:23)**). Keep in mind—the God who calls you is also the One who will enable you to do His will. Like Elisha, you will find that the adjustments are well worth the reward of experiencing God.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God is interested in my absolute surrender to Him as Lord.**
- **I adjust to a Person.**
- **Adjustments are well worth the reward of experiencing God.**
- **The God who calls me is also the One who will enable me to do His will.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 8

OBEDIENCE IS COSTLY TO YOU

For you to DO the will of God, you must adjust your life to Him, His purposes, and His ways.

Obedience Requires Adjustments

1. You cannot stay where you are and go with God at the same time.
2. **Obedience is costly to you and those around you.**
3. Obedience requires total dependence on God to work through you.

Look at the second statement: Obedience is costly to you and those around you. You cannot know and do the will of God without paying the price of adjustment and obedience.

Willingness to pay the price of following His will is one of the major adjustments. At this very point **“many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him” (John 6:66).**

This

also is a point where churches will not know and experience the fulfilling of God's purposes and will through them, because they are not willing to pay the price of obedience.

The Cost: An Adjustment in Our Program

[Some people in our Vancouver association sensed God might be calling them to a place of ministry. They asked me to share with them how they could know and follow God's call.

For two days we spread the word that anyone sensing a call to ministry could come to an informal meeting. Seventy-five people came to hear me share. They all sensed God was calling them to some form of ministry. They said, “We need some training.”

Within two weeks the number grew to 120. We began to identify needs and list training possibilities and so forth. In a small group of churches, a training program for 120 who sense God’s call is a giant-size task. When we started to talk about providing training for this group, someone asked, “But, Henry, what about all of the program plans we have made for the fall?” This person knew that we probably could not do our fall program and the training for these 120 people.

In light of what you have been studying, how would you respond to that question? What would you tell the 120 people?

I could have responded to this group of 120 people in several ways. I could have reported the large response in our newsletter and just asked people to praise God for what He was doing. Then I could have told these 120 that we already had our program set for the next year. They would have to wait a year so we could get these training plans into our program calendar. I could have stayed with our full program plans and done a token amount of training to pacify the 120. I didn’t do that. I responded by explaining: “If God has called these folks to ministry and they need training, we must adjust our plans and program to what God is doing. We need to remember, we are servants of God.” That’s what we did. We adjusted our plans to join God in what He was doing.]

We say that God is Lord and that He can interrupt us anytime He wants. We just don’t expect Him to do it. We expect Him to affirm everything we are doing and never ask us to change anything we have planned. If we want God to go down the channels that we have already established and protect our own plans and programming, we are in trouble. When God invites us to join Him, we will have to make some major adjustments, which will be costly.

Acts 9:1 through Acts 9:25 ¹Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶“Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸Saul got up from the ground, but **when he opened his eyes he could see nothing**. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

¹²**In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”**

¹³“Lord,” Ananias answered, “**I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.** ¹⁴And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵But the Lord said to Ananias, **“Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. ¹⁶I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”**

¹⁷Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, **he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”** ¹⁸Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. **He got up and was baptized,** and ¹⁹after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he **began to preach in the synagogues** that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹**All those who heard him were astonished** and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²²**Yet Saul grew more and more powerful** and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ²³

After many days had gone by, the **Jews conspired to kill him,** ²⁴but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵**But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket** through an opening in the wall.

How did Saul have to change his plans? Describe the adjustment(s) Saul had to make.

Describe the cost He had to pay to follow Christ.

The Cost: Enduring Opposition

[In Saskatoon our church sensed very clearly that God had called us to start new churches all across our province. Not everyone understood or agreed with what we were doing. Some actively opposed us at almost every mission church we started. Though we were totally convinced of

the awesome spiritual darkness in Canada, some did not see it. In Regina, the capital of our province, a full page article appeared in the paper condemning us for daring to start a new church in this city of 150,000. In our efforts to have a Bible study in Humboldt, a delegation of leaders from another church group came to my office and urged me to stop.

They said our efforts were “of the devil” and that they would oppose the Bible study. In Deschambault, our pastor was met on the street and cursed by a witch doctor. From Prince Albert I received letters condemning our efforts. In Blaine Lake we were told of a prayer meeting dedicated to praying that we would fail and withdraw.

Some in our own conference felt we were foolish to attempt new mission churches when we were so small ourselves. We were told not to ask for help if we got into trouble with salary support for mission pastors or other staff workers. Those who had not been with us when God spoke to us saw our efforts as “presuming on God.” I soon discovered that every step of faith could be interpreted as presumption by others. Only obedience and the affirmation of our obedience in the working out of God’s activity would reveal that we were doing the will of God.

Later, as mission churches grew, flourished, and became self-supporting, our critics realized this work was indeed of God. Many of these former critics were encouraged to take these same steps of faith in starting new works for themselves. God helped us remain faithful to Him, with a heart full of love toward others; but that was costly.]

List some of the “costs”, described above, that we had to pay in starting new churches.

Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 and list some of the costs Paul had to pay for following and obeying Christ.

2 Cor. 11:23 through 2 Cor. 11:33 ²³Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have **worked much harder**, been **in prison more frequently**, been **flogged more severely**, and been **exposed to death again and again**. ²⁴**Five times I received** from the Jews the **forty lashes minus one**. ²⁵**Three times I was beaten with rods**, once I was **stoned**, **three times I was shipwrecked**, I **spent a night and a day in the open sea**, ²⁶I have been **constantly on the move**. I have been **in danger from rivers**, in danger **from bandits**, in danger **from my own countrymen**, in danger **from Gentiles**; in danger **in the city**, in danger **in the country**, in danger **at sea**; and in danger **from false brothers**. ²⁷I have **labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep**; I have **known hunger and thirst** and have often **gone without food**; I have **been cold and naked**. ²⁸Besides everything else, I face **daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches**. ²⁹Who is weak, and I do not **feel weak**? Who is led into sin, and I do not **inwardly burn** (sin nature)?

³⁰If I must boast, **I will boast of the things that show my weakness**. ³¹The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²In Damascus the governor under **King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me**. ³³But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

2 Cor. 12:7 through 2 Cor. 12:10 ⁷**To keep me from becoming conceited** because of these surpassingly great revelations, there **was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me**. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹**But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰**That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

Gal. 6:14 ¹⁴May I never boast except in **the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which^o the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.**

Gal. 6:17 ¹⁷Finally, let no one cause me trouble, for **I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.**

Phil. 3:10-12 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and **the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death**, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me .

1 Cor.9:22 “**I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some**”.

Your adjustments and obedience to Christ will be costly as well.

Have you ever had an experience where your adjustment or obedience to God was very costly?

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer story)

God’s promise: “He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him” (**Ps. 126:6**).

David Livingstone was a famous Nineteenth Century missionary from Scotland. He gave his life making Christ known in Africa. Perhaps his words of commitment may inspire your own commitment to pay the cost of following Christ:

**Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me.
Lay any burden on me, only sustain me.**

Sever any tie but the tie that binds me to Thyself.
DAVID LIVINGSTONE

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Obedience is costly to me and those around me.**
- **I cannot know and do the will of God without paying the price of adjustment and obedience**
- **I must adjust my plans and program to what God is doing.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 8

OBEDIENCE IS COSTLY TO THOSE AROUND YOU

One of the most demanding adjustments to doing the will of God will be **deciding to obey even when obedience will be very costly to those around you.**

Answer the following questions. Read the Scripture passage if you do not know the answer already.

- 1. When Moses was obedient and told Pharaoh to let Israel go, what did it cost the Israelites?**

Ex. 5:1 through Ex. 5:21 ¹Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert.’”

²Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.”

³Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.”

⁴But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!”

⁵Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.”

⁶That same day **Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people:** ⁷**“You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. ⁸But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota.** They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to our God.’ ⁹**Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies.”**

¹⁰Then the slave drivers and the foremen went out and said to the people, “This is what Pharaoh says: ‘I will not give you any more straw. ¹¹Go and get your own straw wherever you can find it, but your work will not be reduced at all.’” ¹²So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble to use for straw. ¹³**The slave drivers kept pressing them, saying, “Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw.”** ¹⁴**The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh’s slave drivers were beaten and were asked, “Why didn’t you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?”**

¹⁵Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: “Why have you treated your servants this way? ¹⁶Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, ‘Make bricks!’ Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people.”

¹⁷Pharaoh said, “Lazy, that’s what you are—lazy! That is why you keep saying, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ ¹⁸Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks.”

¹⁹The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, “You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day.” ²⁰When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, ²¹**and they said, “May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”**

2. When Jesus obeyed and went to the cross, what was the cost to His mother as she stood there and watched Him die?

John 19:17 through John 19:37 ¹⁷Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). ¹⁸Here **they crucified him**, and with him two others—one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

¹⁹Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. ²⁰Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.”

²²Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

²³When the soldiers crucified Jesus, **they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares**, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

²⁴“Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said,

“They divided my garments among them
and cast lots for my clothing.”^o

So this is what the soldiers did.

²⁵Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, **“Dear woman, here is your son,”** ²⁷**and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”** From that time on, **this disciple took her into his home.**

²⁸Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, **“I am thirsty.”** ²⁹A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips. ³⁰When he had received the drink, Jesus said, **“It is finished.”** With that, **he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**

³¹Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³²The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³But when they came to Jesus and found that **he was already dead**, they did not break his legs. ³⁴Instead, one of the **soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear**, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,”^o ³⁷and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”^o

3. When Paul was obedient in preaching the gospel to the Gentiles at Thessalonica, what did it cost Jason?

Acts 17:1 through Acts 17:9 ¹When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Christ^o had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,^o” he said. ⁴Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

⁵But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.^o ⁶But when they did not find them, **they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.”** ⁸When they heard this, **the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil.** ⁹**Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.**

You must not overlook this very real element in knowing and doing the will of God. God will reveal His plans and purposes to you, but your obedience will cost you and others around you. When, for instance, a pastor surrenders his life to missions, it may cost those

around him (his family, his church) more than what it will cost him. If he leads his church to become directly involved in doing missions, it may cost some in the church more than it will cost the pastor.

1. You cannot _____ where you are and go with _____ at the same time.
2. Obedience is _____ to you and those _____ you.
3. Obedience requires total dependence on God to work through you.

Cost to My Family for Me to Do God's Will

[When Marilyn and I committed ourselves to do mission work, one of the great costs we had to face was what it would cost our children for me to be gone so much. Our oldest was eight when we went to Saskatoon. Our youngest was born a few months after the move. I was gone from home much of the time during those years the children were growing up. Marilyn also had to pay a high price by rearing all five children with me gone so much.

I have heard many people of God say, "I really think God is calling me; but, after all, my children need me. I can't put my family through that." Well, your children really do need your care. But, do you suppose that if you were to respond obediently to the activity of God, He would have a way to take care of your children? We did!

We believed God would honor our obedience to Him. We believed the God who called us would show us how to rear our children. We came to believe that the heavenly Father, who loves His servants, could take better care of our children than we ever could. We believed that God would show us how to relate to our children in a way that would make up for the lost time with them. Now, I could not let that become an excuse for neglecting my family. But, when I was obeying the Father, I could trust Him to care for my family.

We baptized three persons the first year we were in Saskatoon. After two and a half years of hard, hard labor, we were running 30 in Sunday School. Marilyn said to me, "Henry, Richard came to me today and said he really feels sorry for you. He said, 'Dad preaches such good sermons. He gives an invitation week after week, and nobody comes.'"

I went to Richard and said, "Richard, don't ever be sorry for your father. Even if God lets me labor for ten years and see very little results, I will hardly be able to wait for the day when He brings the harvest." I had to help Richard understand what was taking place. I explained God's promise: "He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6). God worked through me at that moment to teach my son a deeply meaningful spiritual truth.

I remember a time when Marilyn hit a low point. She had gotten discouraged. The next

Sunday, after I preached, Richard came down the aisle to make a decision. He said, “I feel called to the ministry.”

Right behind him came our neighbor, also named Richard. Marilyn had spent hundreds of hours taking care of this young lad from a troubled home. He came saying, “I also feel that God has called me to the ministry.” Then he turned and said, “And a lot of the credit goes to Mom Blackaby.”

Another boy named Ron stood up in that same service and said, “I want you to know that God is calling me to the ministry also. And I want you to know that it is due largely to Mother Blackaby.” At a crisis time in his life, our family had ministered to him and encouraged him to seek God’s will for his life. Marilyn had done much to show love to Ron. At this very critical time for Marilyn, God took care of her.

Now, all five of our children sense God’s call to vocational ministry or mission work. Only God could have done such a beautiful work with our children. I want you to know that you can trust God with your family! I would rather entrust my family to God’s care than to anyone else in the whole world.]

Can you recall an experience when your family had to pay a high price for you to do the will of God in a matter?

Can you recall a time when you chose not to obey God because of the high cost to those around you?

What are some things you know about God that could help you trust God to care for your family? List several.

Let Christ Communicate with His People

Suppose your church began praying for a special financial need and a retired person sensed God wanted her to give half of her \$4,000 life savings to meet that need.

How do you think you would respond? Check your response.

- ☐ 1. I would refuse her gift and ask the more financially secure people to give instead.
- ☐ 2. I would receive the gift, thank God for answering prayer, and weep about the high cost she had to pay for our church to do God’s will.
- ☐ 3. I would receive the gift, but I would try to work out a way to replace the money as soon as possible.
- ☐ 4. I would ask her to wait for two more weeks and pray to make sure this is what God wants her to do.

Cost to an Individual for Our Church to Do God’s Will

[I had to face a situation similar to this. One of our new missions needed a building. The financial agency we were working with required that a certain percentage of the cost be paid as a down payment in order for us to get the loan.

The mission was very small, so I asked our church members if they would be willing to pray about the possibility of contributing toward the down payment. They agreed to pray and watch to see how God would provide. Ivah Bates, one of our real prayers, was a widow. In addition to a small pension, she had a total of \$4,000 in the bank to last her the rest of her life. She gave a check for \$2,000 to the building fund.

As her pastor, a whole lot of emotions went through my own heart. Here I was leading our church to do what we believed God wanted us to do. I had pain in my own heart to see what it was costing our people to respond. I talked with Ivah's daughter. She said, "Don't deny my mother the right to give. She has always trusted her Lord. She wants to do that now, too." Some pastors or finance committees say, "We can't ask our people to give too often, or it will hurt our ongoing budget giving." I learned to never deny God's people the opportunity to give. I never tried to pressure or manipulate people to give. That was not my job. I would create the opportunity and encourage them to give only what God led them to give. God's people will cheerfully do the will of God. Some of them will respond with generosity and count it an honor that God has allowed them to sacrifice for Him. Some will have life-changing experiences as a result of such an opportunity.]

Do you know of a situation where a person or a family had to pay a high price because your church followed God's will?

The Cry of a Mother's Heart

Hudson Taylor, a great man of prayer and faith, responded to God's call to go to China as a missionary. His father had already died. He had to leave his widowed mother to go to China. By the end of his life in 1905, he had been used by God to found the China Inland Mission. There were 205 preaching stations, 849 missionaries, and 125,000 Chinese Christians—a testimony of a life absolutely surrendered to God. Hudson Taylor described something of the cost he and his mother experienced as he obeyed God's will to go to China as a missionary.

Imagine that you are Hudson Taylor. Your father is dead. You realize that you may never see your mother again here on earth. Slowly read Taylor's account of their parting and try to imagine the emotions they must have felt.

"My beloved, now sainted, mother had come to see me off from Liverpool. Never shall I forget that day, nor how she went with me into the little (ship) cabin that was to be my home for nearly six long months. With a mother's loving hand she smoothed the little bed. She sat by my side, and joined me in the last hymn that we should sing together before the long parting. We knelt down, and she

prayed—the last mother’s prayer I was to hear before starting for China. Then notice was given that we must separate, and we had to say good-bye, never expecting to meet on earth again.

“For my sake she restrained her feelings as much as possible. We parted; and she went on shore, giving me her blessing! I stood alone on deck, and she followed the ship as we moved towards the dock gates. As we passed through the gates, and the separation really commenced, I shall never forget the cry of anguish wrung from that mother’s heart. It went through me like a knife. I never knew so fully, until then, what ‘God so loved the world’ meant. And I am quite sure that my precious mother learned more of the love of God to the perishing in that hour than in all her life before.”

“Praise God, the number is increasing who are finding out the exceeding joys, the wondrous revelations of His mercies, vouchsafed to those who ‘follow Him,’ and emptying themselves, leave all in obedience to His great commission.”

What did it cost Hudson Taylor to adjust his life to God and obediently go to China?

What did it cost Hudson’s mother for him to obey God’s will?

What did they learn about God’s love through this experience?

Leaving home and family on a dangerous mission was a very costly step for Hudson Taylor to take. His mother so loved the Lord that she was willing to pay the cost of releasing her son to missions. Both of the Taylors had to pay a high cost for obedience. Yet, they both experienced the love of God in a way they had never known before. History reveals that God rewarded the faithfulness of His servant Hudson Taylor. God used him in miraculous ways to reach interior China with the gospel of Christ.

Do you think God might call you to a costly adventure of faith?

How will you respond to God when He calls you to a costly commitment?

You may think that the last question is a little premature. Not really. That is what the lordship of Christ is all about. You should be able to answer the last question without knowing anything about what God may call you to. Your whole life should be lived with the attitude of “Lord, whatever you may ask of me today or in the future, my answer is YES!” Come to the place in your life where you are willing to surrender ALL to Him.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **My obedience is costly to those around me.**
- **I can trust God to care for my family.**
- ☐ **Don’t deny others the opportunity to sacrifice for their Lord.**
- **I need to trust Christ to communicate with His people.**

- **Lord, whatever you may ask of me today or in the future, my answer is yes!**

LESSON 5; UNIT 8

TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Obedience requires total dependence on God to work through you.

Another adjustment that is a part of knowing and doing the will of God is your coming to a total dependence on God to complete what He wants to do through you. Jesus said our relationship to Him would be **like a vine and the branches**. He said,

“Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

When you are God’s servant, you must remain in an intimate relationship with God in order for Him to complete His work through you. You must depend on God alone. The adjustment **requires moving from doing work for God according to your abilities, your gifts, your likes and dislikes, and your goals, to being totally dependent on God and His working** and His resources. This is a MAJOR adjustment! It is never easy to make.

Read the following Scriptures and notice why you must depend on God to carry out His purposes. Answer the question that follows.

John 15:5—“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing.**”

1 Corinthians 15:10—“By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet **not I, but the grace of God that was with me.**”

Galatians. 2:20—“I have been crucified with Christ and **I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Isaiah 14:24—“The Lord Almighty has sworn, ‘Surely, **as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand.**’ ”

Isaiah 41:10—“Do not fear, for **I am with you**; do not be dismayed, for **I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.**”

Isaiah 46:9-11—“I am God, and there is none like me. . . . **My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. . . . What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do.**”

Why must you depend totally on God to work through you?

As you are **crucified with Christ**, **He lives through you** to accomplish His purposes by His grace. Without God at work in you, you can do nothing to bear Kingdom fruit. When God purposes to do something, He guarantees that it will come to pass. He is the One who will accomplish what He purposes to do. **If you depend on anything other than God, you will be asking for failure** in Kingdom terms.

The Bus Ministry Parable

[Once a church asked, “Oh God, how do you want to reach our community through us and build a great church?” God led them to start a bus ministry and provide transportation for children and adults to come to church. They did what God told them to do, and their church grew into a great church.

They were flattered when people from all over the country began to ask, “What are you doing to grow so rapidly?” They wrote a book on how to build great churches through a bus ministry. Thousands of churches began to buy buses to reach their communities, feeling that the method was the key to growth. Later many sold those same buses. They are saying, “It didn’t work for us.”]

“IT” never works! HE works! The **method** is never the key to accomplishing God’s purposes. The key is your **relationship** to a **Person**. When you want to know how God would have you reach your city, start a new church, or whatever--ask HIM. Then, when He tells you, don’t be surprised if you can’t find any church that is doing it just that way. Why? God wants you to know Him. If you follow someone else’s plan, use a method, or emphasize a program, you will have a tendency to forget about your dependence on God. You leave the relationship with God and go after a method or a program. **That is spiritual adultery.**

Books, tools, methods, advise or instructions from others are helpful to give practical wisdom, but these must be submitted to God, prayerfully, to learn what He would have us do.

Good books, successful methods, creative programs, and the success of others cannot take the place of your relationship with God. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. By focusing on other things instead of God as “the answer,” you rob yourself and your church from seeing God at work, and keep yourself and your church from knowing God. That is a great tragedy for many in our day. May God deliver us from that.

Does that mean that you will never be led by God to develop an organized program or follow a method? No. But only God has the right to tell you what to do. You do not take the initiative to decide for yourself what you will do. You must wait before God until He tells you what to do.

Psalm 5:3—“In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation.”

Psalm 33:20—“We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.”

Psalm 37:34—“Wait for the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land.”

Psalm 38:15—“I wait for you, O Lord; you will answer, O Lord my God.”

Isaiah 40:31, KJV—“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

You may think of waiting as a passive, inactive time. **Waiting on the Lord is anything but inactive.** While you wait on Him, **you will be praying** with a passion to know Him, His purposes, and His ways. You will be **watching** circumstances and **asking** God to interpret them by revealing to you His perspective. You will be **sharing** with other believers to find out what God is saying to them. As you wait on the Lord, you will be very **active in asking, seeking, and knocking** (Matt. 7:7-8). While you wait, **continue doing the last thing God told you to do.** **In waiting you are shifting the responsibility of the outcome to God—where it belongs.**

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” —**Matthew 7:7-8**

Then, when God gives you specific guidance, He will do more through you in days and weeks than you could ever accomplish in years of labor. Waiting on Him is always worth the wait. His timing and His ways are always right. You must depend on Him to guide you in His way and in His timing to accomplish His purpose.

The Holy Spirit Helps You Accomplish the Father's Will

The Holy Spirit will never misunderstand the Father's will for your life. The Father has a purpose to work out through your life. In order that you not miss it, **He places His Spirit in you.** The Spirit's job is **to guide you according to the will of the Father.** Then He **enables you**

to do God's will. You are completely dependent on God for the knowledge and ability to accomplish His purposes. That is why your relationship to Him is so important. That is why you need to wait until you have heard a word from Him about His purposes and ways.

Jesus is your example of One who never failed to know and do the will of His Father.

He was always rightly related to the Father! The Christ who lived His life in complete obedience is fully present in you to enable you to know and do His will. We need to adjust our lives to God and consistently live out that relationship with absolute dependence on Him.

Adjustments in Prayer and the Cost

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

Some people think this verse means “**Decide what I want**, name it in my prayer, claim it, and it’s mine.” That is a self-centered theology.

Remember that only God takes the initiative. His Holy Spirit guides you to pray according to God’s will (**Rom. 8:26-28**). The God-centered approach would be to **let God lead you to pray according to His will (in the name and character of Jesus)**. Believe that what He has led you to pray, He Himself will bring to pass. Then **continue praying in faith and watching for it** to come to pass.

Prayer will be exceedingly costly to you. You may need to let God wake you up in the middle of the night to pray. You may need to spend much time in prayer. Times may come when you pray into the night or even all night.

Becoming a person of prayer will **require a major adjustment of your life** to God.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Obedience requires total dependence on God to work through me.**
- ☐ **“IT” never works! HE works!**
- **The key is my relationship to a Person.**
- **Through me He will do more in days and weeks than I could ever accomplish in years of labor. Waiting on Him is always worth the wait.**
- **Fervent prayer will be one of the most demanding things I ever do.**
- **My church needs to be a praying church!**

UNIT 9

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” —**JOHN 14:23**

Lesson 2 Activities

Read Jonah 1:1-17; 2:9—3:10

Lesson 3 Activities

Read Exodus 7:1-6; Exodus 8:16-19

Read Luke 10:1-24

(AFTER these lessons are taught)

Lesson 5

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today? _____
Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God. _____
What does God want you to do in response to today's study? _____

Review your Scripture memory verses and be prepared to recite them to a partner in your next class.

LESSON 1; UNIT 9

EXPERIENCING GOD THROUGH OBEDIENCE

Memorize this verse:

Jesus replied, **“If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” —JOHN 14:23**

Obedience Provided Future Blessing

[When we were still a very small church with a Sunday School attendance of 45, we had three mission churches we were trying to staff and support. We were asked to sponsor another mission in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It was 510 miles from Saskatoon. Someone would have to drive this 1,020 mile round-trip in order to provide them a pastor. At first glance, this sounded like an impossible task for our little group.

I shared with our congregation how a faithful group of people had been meeting for more than two years. They wanted to start a Southern Baptist church. We were the closest possible sponsoring church. We had to determine whether this was God's work and whether He was revealing His work to us. Was this our invitation to join Him in what He was doing? The church agreed this was God's doing. We knew we had to obey Him. We agreed to sponsor the new mission. Then we asked God to show us how and to give us the strength and resources to do it.

I drove a number of times to Winnipeg to preach and minister to the people. Sooner than for any of our other mission churches, God provided a pastor and a salary! The story of our obedience did not end there, however. Friendship Baptist Church has become the mother church to nine other mission churches and started an entire association of churches.

When our oldest son Richard finished seminary, this church in Winnipeg called him to be their pastor. This was his first pastorate! Our second son Tom was called to be on the staff of this church to guide music, education, and youth. Little did I know that this one act of obedience—that at first appeared impossible—held such potential for future blessing for my family.]

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[My schedule was absolutely full! I was asked if I could now take on a role with two other major agencies, working with the presidents to counsel toward revival and spiritual awakening. One responsibility would be to travel extensively overseas. So I began to pray for God's guidance to know how to clear my calendar to take on added responsibilities. I began to cancel many assignments. But I came to one, Howard Payne University, and was about to cancel when the Spirit of God put a clear check in my spirit. I was not to cancel this one. It didn't make sense to me, but the command to obey God's leading persisted. It was difficult to even get there, and so much went wrong on the way, but obedience kept ringing in my heart. I was to speak at Coggin Avenue Baptist Church on Sunday and be on campus Monday through Wednesday. It was soon obvious why God had commanded me to go—revival was breaking out! People were praying everywhere, especially the students.

Both Sunday and during those days on campus, hundreds of lives were touched and radically changed. Every service, including an open luncheon for business people, was crowded. Open confession of sin broke out, testimonies were given spontaneously, people were saved, and a great renewal happened in many lives. This deep moving of God spread to other churches across Texas, then to Southwestern Seminary, on to Wheaton College in Chicago, and eventually deeply touched as many as 300 college campuses. Lives touched during those weeks are still being greatly used of God six years later. When God speaks, obedience is crucial to the mighty work of God.]

OBEDIENCE

You come to know God by experience, as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

God has always been at work in our world. He is now at work where you are. God always will take the initiative to come to you and reveal what He is doing, or what He is about to do. When He does, this will be His invitation for you to join Him.

Joining Him will require major adjustments of your life to Him, so He can accomplish His will through you. When you know what God has said, what He is about to do, and have adjusted your life to Him, there is yet one remaining necessary response to God.

To experience Him at work in and through you, you must obey Him. When you obey Him, He will accomplish His work through you; and you will come to know Him by experience.

Obedience is the last of our seven realities—You come to know God by experience as you **obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you.**

Review the seven realities in your own words using the “hints” below.

1. Work — — — — —

2. Love relationship— _____
3. Invitation — _____
4. Speaks — _____
5. Crisis — _____
6. Adjust — _____
7. Obey — _____

You **must obey Him first. Then, He will accomplish His work through you.** When God does a God-sized work through your life, you come to know Him intimately by experience.

You Obey Him

In unit 4, you studied the relationship between love and obedience. You found that **obedience is the outward expression of your love of God (John 14:15, 24a).** By way of review, here are some statements from that lesson:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” —**John 14:15, 24**

“Faith without works is dead.” —**James 2:20,**

“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” —**Matthew 12:50**

- Obedience is the outward expression of your love of God.
- The reward for obedience and love is that He will reveal Himself to you.
- If you have an obedience problem, you have a love problem.
- God is love. His will is always best.
- God is all knowing. His directions are always right.
- God is all powerful. He can enable you to do His will.
- If you love Him, you will obey Him!

In many ways, obedience is your moment of truth. What you **DO** will:

1. Reveal what you believe about Him.
2. Determine whether you will experience His mighty work in you and through you.
3. Determine whether you will come to know Him more intimately.

Read 1 John 2:3-6 below. Note the word “know” each time it occurs; also the word “obey(s)” and the word “love”.

1 John 2:3-6 “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his

word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: **Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**"

1. How can you **know** that you have come to **know** God in Jesus Christ?
2. What is one clear indication that a person does **not** know Him?
3. What does God do in the life of anyone who **obeys** His Word?

Jesus stated it a different way when He said,

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, **'I never knew you.** Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

The Importance of Obedience

Read the following Scriptures and note the word "obey" in each. Answer the question that follows.

Deuteronomy 28:1, 8 "If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. . . The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to."

Deuteronomy 28:15, 20 "If you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today . . . The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him."

How important is obedience?

List some of the benefits of obedience found in the following Scriptures .

Jeremiah 7:23 "Obey me, and I will be your God and you will be my people. Walk in all the ways I command you, that it may go well with you."

Luke 6:46-49 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a

man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

God blesses those who are obedient to Him (**Deut. 28:1-14**). The benefits of obedience are beyond our imagination; but they include being God’s people (**Jer. 7:23**), having a solid foundation when the storms of life come against you (**Luke 6:46-49**), and knowing spiritual truth (**John 7:16-17**).

Rebellion against God is the **opposite of obedience**. It is a serious rejection of God’s will. **Deuteronomy 28:15-68** speaks of some of the costs of disobedience. (For further study on the results of obedience and disobedience see **Deut. 30 and 32**.)

Consider this prayer for your own life:

Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees;
then I will keep them to the end.
Give me understanding, and I will keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.

—**Psalm 119:33-35**

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **I come to know God by experience as I obey Him and He accomplishes His work through me.**
- **If I love God, I will obey Him.**
- **Obedience is the outward expression of my love of God.**
- **Faith that does not obey in actions is dead.**
- **Obedience is my moment of truth.**
- **God blesses those who are obedient to Him.**

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THE NEXT TWO LESSONS ARE EXTRA MATERIAL, ADDED TO THE ORIGINAL “EXPERIENCING GOD” OUTLINE FROM SEPARATE BIBLE STUDIES ON THE DISCIPLESHIP TOPICS OF “BEARING THE CROSS OF CHRIST”; “MARTYRDOM”; AND “LOVING YOUR ENEMIES”. These topics are important to consider in any study of true **discipleship**.

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LESSON 2; UNIT 9

The CROSS of CHRIST and MARTYRDOM;

- “When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bonhoeffer: The CROSS of CHRIST:

Mark 8:31 through Mark 8:38 ³¹He then began to teach them that the **Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected** by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must **be killed** and after three days **rise again**. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and **Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him**.

³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “**Get behind me, Satan!**” he said. “**You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.**”

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “**If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**” ³⁵**For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.** ³⁶What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? ³⁷Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸**If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.**”

- “**Suffering and rejection** sum up the whole cross of Jesus. To die on the cross means to **die despised and rejected of men.**” “...despised and rejected of men...is an essential quality of the suffering of the cross.”
- “**To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self**, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us...**Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for his sake.**”
- “To endure the cross is not a tragedy; it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ...it is not an accident, but a necessity...an **essential part of a specifically Christian life.**”
- “Jesus says that **every Christian has his own cross waiting for him**, a cross destined and **appointed by God**. Each must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection. But each has a different share; some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom, while others he does not allow to be tempted above that which they are able to bear. But it is one and the same cross in every case.”
- **Followers of Christ expected to become martyrs:**

- **Acts 1:8** “witness”, in Greek, here means “martyr”.

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be **witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth**” (**Acts 1:8**).

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (**Acts 4:20**).

“Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (**2 Tim. 1:8**).

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Phil. 1:29).

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (**Luke 9:23**).

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

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (**1 Cor. 6:19-20**).

“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all” (**Phil. 2:17**).

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (**Phil.3:8-12**)

But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore

our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. **(1 Pet. 2:20-24)**

Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. **(1 John 2:6)**

“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Hebrews 12:3).

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” **(1 Peter 4:11-12)**.

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” **(Matthew 16:25)**.

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you” **(2 Peter 3:15)**.

1) The first cross for every believer to suffer is the **call to abandon the attachments of this world**, with all its affections and lusts. Every day there are new temptations, and every day the believer must suffer anew for Christ’s sake. But Christ promises that He will abundantly reward back to us all that is lost.

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple” **(Luke 14:26-27)**.

Mark 10:28 through Mark 10:31 ²⁸Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹“I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “**no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel** ³⁰**will fail to receive a hundred times as much** in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹**But many who are first will be last, and the last first.**”

2) The second cross for every believer is **to bear the burdens of others’ sins—by forgiving them. Just as Christ bore their sins** on the cross so that they were freed from the burden of sin. Just as **we must bear their unbearable burdens** in all areas of life, we must also **“bear their sin”, by forgiving it**, in the power of the cross, as Jesus forgives it.

Gal. 6:1 through Gal. 6:2 ¹Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ²Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of **forgiving** men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian’s duty to bear.

Matt. 26:39, 42 ³⁹Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

⁴²He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.”

3) A third cross for every believer is the call to “bear” or to **endure** life in all its painful forms so that communion with Christ will be maintained.

Christ walks under the cross with us; it is His cross, the one which brings victory, freedom, power through separation from the world. It is not a misery or desperation, but peace and refreshment for the soul; the highest joy.

Matt. 11:28 through Matt. 11:30 ²⁸“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰**For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**”

1 John 5:3 through 1 John 5:5 ³This is love for God: to obey his commands. And **his commands are not burdensome**, ⁴**for everyone born of God overcomes the world**. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even **our faith**. ⁵Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he **who believes that Jesus is the Son of God**.

from: ????????

4) A forth type of cross for many believers is **persecution**. (**Mat.24:9**)

- Christ says His followers will suffer the cross of persecution **in three forms**:
 - a. **Affliction** (Acts 4:3; 8:1; 12:4; 13:50; 14:19; 2 Cor.11:23-25).
 - b. **Killing** (Acts 7:59; 12:2).
 - c. **Hatred** by all nations.

“Concerning this sect (Christianity), we know that everywhere it is spoken against” (**Acts 28:22**).

(See outline—^{*}Mat.10:16-23 and notes; John 15:20; John 16:2.)

- **Why believers are persecuted:** “For my sake” (Mat.10:22). “For my sake” means at least three things. Or to say it another way, there are at least **three reasons why the world often tries to silence and stamp out those who believe in Christ**.

“But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles” (**Matthew 10:17-18**).

- a. The world opposes **the believer’s standard of true godliness**. The believer sets

before the world a different standard. Neither the world, nor its standard, are godly. Therefore, **any man who lives for the world and does not wish to change his behavior opposes believers.** He opposes believers by his very nature (1 John 2:14-15).

- b. The world opposes **the believer's life of purity and justice.** The genuine believer lives such a life. He **controls his mind, dresses modestly, speaks respectfully, and behaves justly.** The world lives to fulfill the lust of the flesh and to have what one wishes. Thus, the believer is opposed by any person who does not wish to live a pure and just life (Galatians 5:19-21).
- c. The world opposes **the believer's message of repentance and self-denial.** The genuine believer proclaims the message of Christ, which is repentance and self-denial. Few men are willing to change (**repent**) to the degree that **self is totally denied.** Most, even the religious, oppose the idea of giving all one is and has, even if it does mean saving a starving and dying world. (See outline—"Mat.19:21-22 and notes; 19:23-26)

around the

Note the words "**hated of all nations.**" This definitely points to persecution all world. Christ is again looking well beyond the last days before Jerusalem's fall. He is looking to the persecution that shall be launched **against His followers across the centuries and be intensified in the end time.** He had even foretold such persecution before.

"But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles" (**Matthew 10:17-18**).

Rev. 6:9 through Rev. 6:10 ⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.** ¹⁰They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

- Jesus said that persecution and betrayal will increase and intensify in the end time. Mat.10:21

"This now also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...traitors" (**2 Tim. 3:1-2**).

"For then shall be **great tribulation**, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there

should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (**Mat. 24:21-22**).

- “**(Many) shall hate one another.**” So few will be kind, tender, and loving. **Dissension and division** will prevail in the last days. Most will **begrudge what another has or is doing** or is not doing. Such has been the case down through the centuries. Too often the church has experienced one person disliking and opposing another person. **Envy, greed, concern for security and recognition—all the sins of selfishness**—have caused too many to stand against another's position, beliefs, abilities, leadership, and on and on. Unfortunately, **criticism and judging**, dissension and division among believers have been, and still are, among the most visible traits of the church, both locally and universally. Christ says that such hatred will increase and intensify in the end times.

5) Martyrdom

- **Caused by a spirit of rebellion** against God and His people (Acts 7:54).

“And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people” (**Exodus 32:9**).

“Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear” (**2 Chron. 24:19**).

“To whom he said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear” (**Isaiah 28:12**).

“Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness” (**Isaiah 46:12**).

“Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (**Acts 7:51**).

“Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (**Psalms 95:8**).

“Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” (**Proverbs 28:14**).

“He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (**Proverbs 29:1**).

- The **insanity of murdering the believer** (Acts 7:57-58).

Whatever the predicament, the believer is called to minister. He is not out to destroy, but to build. It is utter insanity to oppose and kill such a person. For men to oppose a genuine believer, their **behavior has to reach a peak of insanity**. Note what is involved...

- loud voices: to drown out the truth.
- stopped ears: to keep from hearing the truth.
- ran upon: to attack and take vengeance.
- cast out and stoned: to get rid of the convicting message, allowing them to live as they desire instead of living for God.

- **The insane leadership.** A person who takes the lead in persecution is **in rebellion against God**.

Those who follow such a leader are following a person who is actually **reacting against the Lord, not against a believer** (Acts 9:4-5). The man who took the lead in Stephen's murder was Saul of Tarsus. He was *kicking* against the pricks, the conviction of conscience (Acts 9:5).

It is dangerous to follow man in rebellion against God. The **path of rebellion leads to destruction**. The man in rebellion shall perish. **There is no exception**.

Saul of Tarsus: most likely he was one of those who suffered defeat in arguing with Stephen and became so hostile against him. Paul was certainly aware of the message Stephen preached. He was the one who took charge of Stephen's murder (Acts 7:54-60; Acts 8:1).

“Maliciousness...murder...malignity...haters of God...proud...covenant breakers...implacable, unmerciful...they which commit such things are worthy of death” (**Romans 1:29-32**).

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (**Romans 2:5**).

“Hatred...wrath...strife...seditions...heresies...murders...and such like...they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (**Galatians 5:20-21**).

“The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (**Rev. 21:8**).

“Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you” (**2 Chron. 30:8**).

“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

- **Antichrist is the spirit of one who persecutes (God’s) Christ’s people.**

“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:22-23).

“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:2-3).

- **The believer’s supreme confidence (Acts 7:59).**

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col.1:16).

“And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10).

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it” (Col. 2:15).

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

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

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

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Phil. 1:23).

“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” (**1 Thes. 4:17**).

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

“[Christ is] far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (**Eph. 1:21**).

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (**Luke 23:43**).

Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan,

⁵And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. **Deut. 34:1, 5**

- **The Lord’s provision** (Acts 7:55-56).

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God” (**2 Tim. 1:7-8**).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (**John 8:51**).

“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (**John 11:26**).

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

“And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever” (**2 Tim. 4:18**).

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing

many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” **(Hebrews 2:9-10)**.

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” **(Rev. 2:10)**.

“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, [they shall receive] eternal life....But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [they shall receive] indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish” **(Rom.2:7-9)**.

“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” **(Romans 8:17)**.

“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us” **(2Tim. 2:12)**.

“And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” **(Luke 18:29-30)**.

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” **(1 Cor. 15:58)**.

“Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God” **(Luke 22:69)**.

“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and sat him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” **(Eph. 1:20)**.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” **(Phil. 2:9)**.

“Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” **(Rev. 5:12)**.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” **(John 5:24)**.

- **The believer’s peaceful departure (Acts 7:60).**

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of

Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" (1 Peter 4:14).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

"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 sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor. 15:53-56).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1)

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 16:25).

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4).

"And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful" (Rev. 21:5).

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:10-13).

“Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you (1 Peter 5:7).

“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” **(John 11:25-26).**

“And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom [heaven]: the rich man also died, and was buried” **(Luke 16:22).**

“For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (Romans 14:18).

“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest” **(Job 3:17).**

(Resources)

MARTYR - MARTYRDOM

- **Described. As sacrifices offered to God.** 'Rev. 6:9
- **Discussed.** 'Acts 7:54-60
- **First martyr. Stephen.** 'Acts 6:8-15
- **In the end time.** 'Matthew 24:9; 'Rev. 6:9-11; 'Rev. 7:9-17; 'Rev. 12:11; 'Rev. 14:1-5; 'Rev. 17:6; 'Rev. 18:24
- **Methods of martyrdom listed.** 'Hebrews 11:35-40
- **Of Antipas, an early believer.** 'Rev. 2:13
- **Of the end time. Seen in heaven.** 'Rev. 6:9-11; 'Rev. 7:1-8; 'Rev. 7:9-17
- **Reward. Position in heaven before God. Very special.** 'Rev. 6:9; 'Rev. 6:9-11; 'Rev. 7:9-17; 'Rev. 7:9-10; 'Rev. 7:15-17; 'Rev. 14:1-5
- **Why believers are martyrs. Two reasons.** 'Rev. 6:9

LESSON 3; UNIT 9

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Luke 6:27 through Luke 6:31 ²⁷“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

What Jesus preached was a complete reversal from the way men and society lived: things men had never heard or thought about, new principles governing human relationships.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).

Matt. 5:43 through Matt. 5:45 ⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^o and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you: Love your enemies^o and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

The **Jewish law** said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”.

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:18).

Israel made **two serious mistakes** in interpreting this law.

1. They said “neighbor” meant only the people of their own community, religion, and nation. They did not include anyone else. In fact, they shut out and cut off everyone else (John 4:5; Mark 7:25; Luke 7:4-5).
2. They **inferred they were to hate their enemies**. God said, “Love thy neighbor”; therefore, they reasoned and added, “Hate thine enemy.” Human reason actually leads a person to think that he should oppose and hate his enemy. But such is just deduced or inferred from depraved human reason. It is the natural reason of man at work. It is not God, and it is **not what God knows to be the best for the world**: love, joy, peace.... (Galatians 5:22-23).

Love your enemies. Believers are to love *all* men, even enemies. They are to respect and honor all men (1 Peter 2:17). Every human being has something that is commendable, even if it is nothing but the fact that he is a fellow human being with a soul to be reached for God.

- Loving our enemies is against human nature. The behavior of human nature is to react, strike back, hate, and wish hurt. At best human nature treats an enemy with a cold shoulder and keeps its distance. The **root of human reaction against enemies is self and bitterness**.

(Self-preservation is not evil of itself. [Mat. 5:44]. Agape love is not complacent acceptance of wickedness and license.)

The point is this: **the believer is not to react against a person who mistreats and does evil against him.** There are at least **two reasons why** he is not to react.

- **Reaction may further damage the relationship** with the person and **lose all hope of ever reaching the person for Jesus Christ.** The evil doer will be able to say, “A Christian did that to me.” The believer will have made Christ an unappealing Savior. On the other hand, if the believer returns good for evil, he opens the door for eventual friendship and bears testimony to the love of God for all men, even for those who do evil.
- **Reaction is not the way of God or of Christ.**

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Romans 13:8).

“Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee” (**Proverbs 20:22**).

“LOVE” DEFINED

(Mat.5:44) When **Christ said “Love your enemies,”** He **could have used any one of four words.** The Greek language is very descriptive and detailed in its expressions. Its words are precise and full of meaning. In speaking of love, the Greek language describes exactly what is meant. It separates the various types of love, and uses four different words for love. Thus, it is always important to know which word is used in the New Testament and what that word means.

1. **“Eros” love.** This is love that arises from passion, infatuation, and sexual attraction. It is the love (passion) of a man for a woman. The word is never used in the New Testament.
2. **“Storge” love.** This is love that arises from affection, a natural born affection, the affection of family love. It is the love and natural affection between parent and child.
3. **“Phileo” love.** This is love that arises from affection also, but from a different kind. It is a deep, intense, and warm affection. It is an affection that fills a person’s heart with warmth, tenderness, preciousness, and a deep consciousness of really loving and really being loved. It is the love of precious affection and feelings toward those who are very near and very dear to one’s heart (see notes—^aJohn 21:15-17).
4. **“Agape” love.** This is the love that wishes well. It is a love that demonstrates kindness, benevolence, and esteem. It is the love of the mind, reason, and choice. It is a sacrificial love, that is, a love that cares, gives, and works for another person’s good—no matter how the person may respond or treat one (see notes—^aJohn 21:15-17).

The word Christ uses in saying “Love your enemies” is agape: the love that must be willed. The Christian must use his mind and reason and deliberately choose to love his enemy.

- **Four things about loving our enemies:**

1. The Christian’s love for his enemy is different from the love he holds for his family. It would be impossible to love an enemy with affection. Christ knew this.
2. The Christian sacrifices himself, bears all in order to work for his enemy’s good. Whether Christian minister or layman, the Christian chooses deliberately to love a world of antagonistic men for their own good (their salvation and hope of eternity).
3. The Christian’s love (agape love) is not complacent acceptance of open wickedness and license. It is not passively allowing a person to do as he pleases. It is not allowing selfishness and deception and a wallowing around in license. Agape love is putting a stop to sin and license as much as possible. It is restraint, control, discipline, and even punishment when it protects the offender from himself and protects those whom he hurts. Very simply pictured, it is a parent controlling a child for his own good and for the good of those who love him.
4. Agape love is God’s love. A **Christian can have agape love only as he allows God to love through him** (see notes—**John 21:15-17**). The believer deliberately wills to love as God loves, and God empowers him to do so (**Romans 5:5**).

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (**Matthew 22:39**).

“Let love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (**Romans 12:9**).

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (**1 Thes. 3:12**).

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (**James 2:8**).

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (**1 John 4:7**)

- **BLESS YOUR ENEMIES**

“**Bless them that curse you.**” People do curse, and sometimes they curse other people. When someone curses a believer, the **believer is to bless his curser, not curse back**. Christ is saying to speak softly to the curser.

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger”
(**Proverbs 15:1**).

Use kind, friendly words. When face to face, be courteous; when behind his back, commend his strengths. Do not render “railing for railing,” that is, do not condemn or attack him in bitter or abusive language (1 Peter 3:9).

The word “**ble**ss” (eulogeo) means to *spea*k *we*ll *of*. Therefore, the believer is charged to do something that could be most difficult: to speak well of **those who persecute him**. Picture how difficult this is **when you are verbally or physically attacked: mistreated, insulted, by-passed, overlooked, slandered, cursed, abused, injured**. We **do not react against them by cursing, speaking harshly, or striking out at them**. It will only stir up more anger and hate in the curser.

We do not try to hurt them either verbally or physically. On the contrary, we **seek to find something that is commendable about them and we commend them for it**. We praise some “good thing” about the person; we do not tear him down.

Cursing is a serious sin to God (Psalms 59:12 & 109:18).

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not” (**Romans 12:14**).

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (**1 Peter 3:9**).

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (**Eph. 4:31-32**).

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (**Proverbs 24:17**).

○ DO GOOD TO ENEMIES

“**Do good to them which hate you.**” Imagine the impact of these words to the world of Jesus’ day. They were an enslaved people conquered and hated by the Romans, yet Jesus was saying, “Do good to them.”

Note that **doing good goes beyond words**; it actually **does** things for the person who hates. It **reaches out** to him through his family and friends, employment and business. **It searches for ways to do good to him**, realizing that he needs to be reached for God. If no immediate way is found, then the Christian **continues to bless him**, ever **waiting for the day** when the hater will face one **of the crises** that comes to every human being. And **then the believer goes and does good, ministering as Christ Himself ministered**.

- The greatest proof of love is “doing good to those who hate you.”

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (**Galatians 6:10**).

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (**Romans 12:20**).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (**1 Thes. 5:15**).

“If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him” (**Exodus 23:5**; also v.4).

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (**Proverbs 25:21**).

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (**Luke 6:27**).

“But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (**Luke 6:35**).

▪ PRAY FOR OUR ENEMIES

“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (**Romans 12:19**).

“Pray for them which despitefully use you.” This refers not only to those who **speak despitefully** but those who **use us despitefully**. It is an attempt to shame and to hurt both our name and body. Someone may shame, dishonor, disgrace and reproach us. And they go even farther; they misuse, mistreat, abuse, attack, and persecute us. What are we to do? **Christ says, “Pray for them.** When they despitefully use you, pray for them.”

(a) Pray for God to **forgive** the persecutor (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60).

(b) Pray for **peace** between one’s self and the persecutor.

(c) Pray for the persecutor’s **salvation and correction**.

Those who are enemies may choose to remain antagonistic, but the believer can still forgive in mercy and compassion. In fact, if the believer does not have compassion for those who hate him, he has gained nothing of the spirit of Christ (Luke 6:36).

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (**Eph. 4:32**).

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering” (**Col. 3:12**).

Prayer for the persecutor **will greatly benefit the believer**. It will keep the believer **from becoming bitter, hostile, and reactionary**.

Vengeance: the **believer is to give no place to revenge**. Three reasons why:

1. **Vengeance belongs to God.** The beloved of God are given **no choice**. Any person who follows God is to **leave vengeance up to God**. **No man has the right to judge others**, not in a private judgment nor in a personal vengeance. The right to judge and to execute vengeance is God’s and God’s alone. However, Scripture is clear: **God will repay**—God will execute vengeance. The day of His wrath is coming and it will be inescapable.

“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (**2 Thes. 1:7-8**).

“For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people” (**Hebrews 10:30**).

“To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste” (**Deut. 32:35**).

“O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself” (**Psalms 94:1**).

2. **Treating an enemy with kindness will affect him greatly.** By doing good, the believer heaps “coals of fire” on his enemy’s head. This means at least two things:

- a. Kindness will shame and cause anguish for an enemy. In his lonely moments, his thoughts will focus upon his evil treatment of believers and cause him to think and wonder about God. There is some chance the enemy might repent and be converted.

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (**Romans 12:20**).

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee” (**Proverbs 25:21-22**).

- b. Kindness will store up wrath against the evil doer in the day of judgment. If an evil doer represses his thoughts of God and hardens himself more and more and continues in his wicked treatment of God’s people, then he stores up more and more wrath against himself in the terrible day of judgment.

“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (**Romans 2:5**).

3. Vengeance makes evil victorious. If the believer takes vengeance, then he allows evil to conquer him, and this he must never do. The believer is to conquer evil, never allowing evil to conquer him.

- Note **how he conquers evil**: by doing good. He overcomes evil by doing what he should do, in particular by doing good toward those who mistreat and abuse him.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (**Mat. 5:44**).

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil” (**Eph. 4:26-27**).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (**1 Thes. 5:15**).

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” (**Luke 23:34**).

“And he [Stephen] kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (**Acts 7:60**).

▪ TURN THE OTHER CHEEK TO OUR ENEMIES

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:39-41).

“Unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other.” The **word for cheek** (siagon) really means the **jaw or jawbone**. It is a **strong blow, a punch and not just a slap** of contempt. Of course, **there is contempt and bitterness**, but there is **also physical injury**. Christ is saying that the believer is not to strike back, not to retaliate against...

- bitter insults or contempt.
- bodily threats or injury.

When suffering for the gospel’s sake, for his personal testimony for Christ, the believer is to respond to physical abuse just as his Lord did. He is to **demonstrate moral strength through a quiet and meek spirit**, trusting God to touch the heart of his persecutors.

The believer is to demonstrate **good behavior in the sight of all men**: when someone does evil against the believer, the believer is **to think before he acts**.

“Providing (thinking before acting) for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

He is to **think and pray about his behavior**. Why? So that he can respond in the right and proper way. The believer **needs to do what is right and noble**, and the only way to do it is to think the situation through.

Scripture clearly tells the believer why he is to respond this way: so that his honest and noble response is seen by men. In essence, the believer is to **love** by turning the other cheek to the evil doer in “the sight of all men.” A strong testimony of God’s love will then be seen by men.

- JESUS’ TEACHING ON THE LAW Governing RETALIATION FOR INJURY

”You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’³⁹ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.⁴⁰ And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.⁴¹ If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. (Matt. 5:38-42)

Man often used this law to treat others as he wished. But Christ has changed the law. He says that the **Christian is not to render evil for evil**; he is **not to bear a grudge or seek revenge**. **He must even go beyond this and forgive**. (* However, the Christian has the right to avoid and resist evil for security’s sake) (see note—”Romans 12:18 for more discussion).

1. The law (v.38).
2. The real meaning: do not retaliate (v.39).
3. The ideal behavior (v.39-41).

1. (Mat.5:38) **This law is often thought to be justification for retaliation** (Ex. 21:24; Lev.24:20; Deut. 19:21). God’s purpose for the law was to show mercy and to limit

vengeance. In antiquity men killed for the most minor of offenses. For example, if a person was injured accidentally, a whole family or village was subject to be killed in retaliation. Thus, this law was the beginning of mercy in a merciless society. It limited retaliation to an equivalent injury. Several facts show the merciful aspect of the law. The law was given to control the irresponsible and unregulated passions of men: to control evil

and to limit retaliation and revenge. The law was given as a restraint, as a deterrent (1) to the criminal or person who would do evil; and (2) to the victim, lest he inflict a more terrible vengeance than what the crime deserved.

- The law was **not a command that had to be executed**. It was a law that allowed a person some justice if he wished. He did not have to insist upon it.
- The law was **given to the courts to guide the judges** in the execution of justice. It was not given to individuals to take vengeance on others.
- The law **could be satisfied with money** or some other **ransom or payment** deemed just (Numbers 35:31). However, no ransom was to “be taken for the life of a murderer.” The murderer was to pay with his life.

“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (**Exodus 21:24**).

“Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again” (**Leviticus 24:20**).

“And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (**Deut. 19:21**).

2. (Mat.5:39) Christ says the **law really means that a person is not to retaliate**. However, a person must understand what Christ is saying.

- Christ is **not saying “resist not evil”—ever**. Christ Himself resisted evil. (1) He drove out the money exchangers from the temple (Mat.21:12; Mark 11:15), and (2) He resisted the punishment of the High Priest (John 18:22-23). Paul, the apostle, also resisted evil (Acts 16:35; 22:25; 23:3; 25:9-10).
 - The point is this: **Jesus and Paul followed Jesus’ new law, “resist not evil.”** They observed the spirit of the new law, **but they were not enslaved by it**. There are times when evil should be resisted. (See note—“Romans 12:18)
- Christ is saying **“resist not evil,”** that is, **do not seek evil for evil; do not bear a grudge or resent those who have mistreated you. Do not seek revenge or look for a chance to retaliate. But forgive**, go out of your way to help those who do evil against you. Such an attitude is the only way to ever reach them for the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19, 21; Mat.19:23-24; Proverbs 20:22; 24:29; 25:21-22.)

Revenge consumes. It can eat up a person's inner being.

- 1) It can consume a person's **mind**—be the focus of all his thoughts. A person can be so intent upon revenge that he does nothing but think about retaliation.
- 2) It can consume a person's **emotions**—cause all kinds of emotional problems. A person can be so engrossed in revenge that he becomes...
 - self-centered (harbors how great a wrong has been done to him)
 - withdrawn
 - self-pitying
 - paranoid
 - destructive (strikes out at other persons and other things)

“But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (**Mat. 5:39**).

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient” (**2 Tim. 2:24**).

“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (**1 Peter 3:9**).

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord” (**Leviticus 19:18**).

“Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee” (**Proverbs 20:22**).

“Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (**Proverbs 24:29**).

3. (Mat.5:39-41) How the Christian should treat those who do him wrong.

- **Accept physical injury.** It is the right cheek that is slapped. This says something that is often overlooked. The person who slaps with his right hand has to strike with the back of his hand in order to hit someone's right cheek. Hitting someone with the back of the hand has always been considered more insulting. Throughout history it has been used to symbolize a challenge to duel. It showed contempt and bitterness. Christ is clearly making His point: the believer is not to retaliate against the most terrible insults or bitter contempt—not even against threats of bodily harm.

Turning the other cheek is difficult. It means a person does **not challenge, resent, avenge, retaliate, or enter a legal action against an attacker**; but he prepares for another slap and bears it patiently. He **lets it pass and accepts it**. He **forgives and trusts the matter to God**. There is the knowledge that God will work all things out for good as the person goes about his life and service for God.

A “slap in the face” can come by insult, slight, criticism, rumor, abuse, threat, or physical attack
(2 Cor. 11:20).

Submission is sometimes the way to overcome (Proverbs 25:21-22).

The believer who endures shameful treatment shall reap eternal glory. (Mat.5:10-12)

“And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also” (**Luke 6:29**).

“[Love] beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”
(**1 Cor. 13:7**).

“[Walk] with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (**Eph. 4:2**).

“And, ye masters [employers], do the same things unto them [employees, workers], forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him” (**Eph. 6:9**).

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another; if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (**Col. 3:13**).

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (**2 Tim. 2:25**).

- **Accept property injury.** The coat referred to was the tunic (chiton), **the inner garment**. The **cloak was the long robe-like outer garment**. William Barclay says that Jewish law allowed a man’s tunic to be given as a pledge, but the cloak could never be taken. The reason was simply that a man would have a number of tunics (under clothing), but he might have only one cloak (*The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol.1, p.165) (Exodus 22:26-27).

Christ’s point strikes at the heart of the matter. A Christian is not to be consumed with fighting over property and disputing rights. He is not to retaliate just because he has the right. The believer forgets self and forgets property and rights, and he lives for God and for the salvation of others. (1 Cor. 6:1-8)

Giving one's cloak is difficult. It means that a believer **does not defend, stand up, or dispute the taking of his property**. He forgives, and he gives more to the person who takes. He even gives his coat (tunic) if necessary. A believer doesn't get tied up and occupied with his rights and privileges in or out of court. He has time only to go about his duties and responsibilities. He is tied up and engrossed with living to the fullest for Christ and reaching out to a world lost and consumed with disputes and needing the peace which only God can bring.

The world is full of division and disputes, bitterness and hatred, quarrels and wars. It is a divided world because individuals are self-centered. The Christian must be a person of peace, a person who keeps his mind upon God, not upon self. He must deny the world and the things of the world (Luke 9:23; Romans 8:5-6.) Disputes paint a person as divisive, as a disputer who is worldly-minded.

Some steal property and some even use the law to do the greatest injustices. They twist the facts, stretch the truth, exaggerate, slander, lie—do anything to justify themselves to get what they want. They injure and take and their conscience bothers them little. Their word and oath matter little.

Sometimes recovering or fighting for one's property costs more than giving it up and purchasing more.

When does a person fight for his rights? There are some factors to consider:

- ⇒ the damage being done to himself;
- ⇒ the damage being done to his family;
- ⇒ the factors discussed in Romans 12

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison” (**Matthew 5:25**).

“And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also” (**Matthew 5:40**).

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters” (**1 Cor. 6:1-2**).

“But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure

will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will” (**2 Tim. 2:23-26**).

“Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame” (**Proverbs 25:8**).

- **Accept any forced burden.** In antiquity the citizens of a conquered country could be enlisted into forced service (aggarevein) by the conquerors in any way deemed necessary. A citizen could be compelled to carry water, supplies, anything (Simeon of Cyrene, Matthew 27:32).

Christ is saying that if a believer is forced to go a mile, he should go twice as far. Again, rights—even the rights of liberty—are not the primary concern of the believer. The believer’s primary concern is people and their burdens—reaching and relieving their burdens in obedience to God. (Galatians 6:2)

Going a second mile is difficult. It means a person does not become bitter and resentful, grumbling and griping, complaining and criticizing, self-pitying and begrudging. It means a person forgives and serves and offers more service. He sets his mind and heart on reaching out to the offender by helping more and more. Such action will more likely reach the offender for the Kingdom of Heaven. His purpose is to fulfill the law of Christ which is the law of love, and thereby to help bring the Kingdom of God to this earth through their conversion.

Some go well beyond reason in insisting and impressing, in compelling and enforcing their will. Others even enslave. Such exists within families, friendships, businesses, nations—everywhere.

There are times, of course, when a person is not to submit to the will of another. There are definite commands governing morality and injustice in the Bible. (Matthew 5:39; Romans 12:18.)

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (**John 13:34-35**).

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (**Galatians 6:2**).

“Charity [love] suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (**1 Cor. 13:4**).

“Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness” (**Col. 1:11**).

“To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” (**Titus 3:2**).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (**James 3:17**).

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (**1 John 3:23**).

“And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head” (**Matthew 27:30**).

“And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?” (**John 18:22**).

“They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me” (**Job 16:10**).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (**Galatians 5:22-23**).

“In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (**2 Tim. 2:25**).

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD” (**Leviticus 19:18**).

“Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee” (**Proverbs 20:22**).

“Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger” (**Zeph. 2:3**).

LOVING OUR ENEMIES IS PART OF OUR “PERFECTION” (SPIRITUAL MATURITY)

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (**Matthew 5:48**).

The mature believer will do good and show kindness to all men, both good and bad men. He is **mature** in heart **when he shows love to his enemies** as well as to his friends. **God Himself is the believer's example.** (John 13:33-35; John 21:15-17).

Think about the challenge! The true Christian...

...has his enemies, yet he is to love them.

...has his cursers, yet he is to bless them.

...has his haters, yet he is to do good to them.

...has his spitters, yet he is to pray for them.

...has his persecutors, yet he is to pray for them.

God is love, perfect love (1 John 4:8, 16). He loves all; therefore, He wants a world of love from creatures who will freely choose to love. He challenges everyone to be like Himself: to love all, even his enemies.

(Mat.5:48) **Perfect** (teleios): “**Be ye therefore perfect.**” The idea is **perfection of purpose**. It has **to do with an end, an aim, a goal, a purpose**. It means fit, mature, fully grown at a particular stage of growth. It does **not mean perfection of character**, that is, being without sin. It is fitness, sufficient maturity for task and purpose. It is full development, maturity of godliness. (Eph. 4:12-16; Phil.3:12-16; 1 John 1:8-10.)

The Bible reveals **three stages of perfection**.

1. **Saving perfection.** Christ's death has guaranteed forever the perfection or redemption of those set apart for God.

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (**Hebrews 10:14**).

2. **Progressive or maturing perfection.** God reveals anything that is contrary to His purpose, and the believer is expected to clean it up (Phil. 3:13-15). The believer's “perfect holiness” (2 Cor. 7:1) is “now being made perfect” (Galatians 3:3). As a member of the church, the believer is experiencing “the perfecting of the saints” (Eph. 4:12; Col. 4:12; Hebrews 13:21; James 1:4; 1 John 4:17-18).

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (**Eph. 4:11-12**).

3. **Redemptive or resurrected perfection.** The believer's purpose and aim is to “attain unto the resurrection of the dead...[to be] perfect” (**Phil. 3:11-12**).

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were

already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (**Phil. 3:10-12**).

No man will ever gain perfection, particularly in the area of human relationships. Just consider how short each person comes in relating to spouse, child, friend, fellow workers, and enemies. Yet he is to “follow after...forget the past...reach forth...press.” He is to walk as he has learned to walk—more and more like Christ (Phil. 3:12-16; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (**2 Cor. 13:11**).

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (**Eph. 4:13**).

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (**Col. 1:28**).

“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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (**2 Tim. 3:16-17**).

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (**Hebrews 6:1**).

“[God] make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever” (**Hebrews 13:21**).

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (**James 1:4**).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (**1 Peter 5:10**).

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (**1 Cor. 1:10**).

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Cor. 13:11).

“Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph.4:3).

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8).

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Cor. 13:4-13)

▪ NON-VIOLENCE IS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”^o says the Lord. (Rom. 12:18 -19)

The believer is to live at peace with all men. However, **peace is not always possible**. There are two qualifications.

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If it is possible the believer is to live at peace with all men. However, it is not always possible. Some persons are troublemakers: grumblers, complainers, dissenters, splitters, fighters, ego-hunters, self-centered leaders, image-seekers, power-builders, warmongers. Some persons have no interest in living at peace with the believer.

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As much as possible, the believer is to live at peace with all men. The believer is to work for as much peace as possible. Some level of harmony and concord can be achieved at

least some of the time. The believer is never to give up, not as long as there is hope for some degree of peace. He is to achieve as much peace as possible. However remember, peace is not always possible—not with everyone.

1. **The cause of conflict must not arise from a believer.** He is to try everything possible to bring about peace and to keep peace (Romans 12:20; Matthew 5:39-41). However, this may be impossible because of the wickedness of others or because the control of peace is not within his hands. It is possible that some will not live peaceably. They continue to indulge every whim and live a life of repugnant license. Such living often threatens the peace and security, preservation and life of oneself and family and friends.

2. **What is it that determines whether a believer is to turn the “other cheek” or to defend himself?** For example, Jesus spent His life combating evil and wrong, and He did not always turn the other cheek (John 18:22-23); neither did Paul (Acts 23:2-3). Paul encouraged the believer not to give license to anyone, and he was strict in the command. For example, he said that if a man did not work because of laziness, he should not eat (2 Thes. 3:7, 10).

The **governing principle** for the believer is clear: “**be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good**” (Romans 12:21). There are times when an attacker, if allowed to continue in his attack, is encouraged in his evil nature of indulgence and license. If **allowed to continue, his evil overcomes the believer**—either within through bitterness and revenge, or without through domination. Thus, a **believer is not to sacrifice truth in order to preserve peace**. Evil is not to be allowed to overcome truth.

“If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences” (**Eccl. 10:4**).

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (**Romans 12:18**).

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (**Romans 14:19**).

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (**Hebrews 12:14**).

(Resources)

ENEMIES

» **See:** BROTHER - BROTHERHOOD

» **See:** FORGIVENESS, HUMAN

• **Attitude toward.**

» **See:** PERSECUTION - PERSECUTORS

- **Discussed.** "Matthew 5:43; "Matthew 5:44; "Matthew 5:44-48; "Matthew 5:48; "Luke 6:20-23; "Luke 6:27-31
- **Duty toward.**
 - **Discussed.** "Romans 12:14-21
 - **Love.** "Matthew 5:43; "Matthew 5:44; "Matthew 5:44-48; "Matthew 5:48; "Luke 6:27, 35
- **How to treat. Reasons.** "Romans 12:19-21

FORGIVENESS, HUMAN

- **Attitudes toward.** "Matthew 6:14-15
- **Discussed.** "Matthew 6:12; "Matthew 6:14-15; "Matthew 26:28; "Romans 4:6-8
- **Duty - Essential.**
 - **To be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of one another.** "Ephes. 4:24
 - **To forbear one another and to forgive one another.** "Col. 3:13
 - **To forgive all offenses.** "Mark 11:25
 - **To forgive an unlimited number of times.** "Matthew 18:21-35, esp. 21-22; "Luke 17:3-4
 - **To put on a forgiving spirit.** "Col. 3:12-14, esp. 13
- **Importance of.**
 - **Assures that one's prayers will be answered.** "Matthew 6:14-15; "Mark 11:25-26
 - **Assures the forgiveness of God.** "Mark 11:25-26; "Luke 6:37
 - **Cleanses one's conscience.** "1 John 3:20-21
 - **God does not forgive if we do not forgive.** "Matthew 6:14-15; "Mark 11:25-26; "Luke 6:37; "1 Peter 3:9
 - **Is the basic principle of prayer.** "Matthew 6:14-15
 - **Is the most important thing in life.** "Matthew 6:14
 - **Relationships are impossible without forgiveness.** "Matthew 18:22
- **Motive. Why we should forgiveness others. Because God has forgiven us.** "Ephes. 4:32
- **Spirit of.** "Matthew 18:21-35; "Acts 7:60
- **Verses. List of.** "Romans 4:6-8
- **Who is to be forgiven.**
 - **A divisive person.** "2 Cor. 2:5-11
 - **All believers.** "Ephes. 4:32; "Philemon 1:8-21
 - **Those who fail us and forsake us.** "2 Tim. 4:16
 - **Those who offend.** "Matthew 6:14-15; "Ephes. 4:32
 - **Those who persecute us.** "Luke 23:34; "Acts 7:60

LESSON 4; UNIT 9

OBEDIENCE

Servants of God do what He directs. They obey Him. The servant does not have the option to decide whether he wants to obey or not. Choosing not to obey is rebellion, and such disobedience will bring serious consequences.

What Is Obedience?

Many people today are so self-centered they want to do their own “thing.” They do not stop to consider what obedience may mean in their lives. Jesus told a parable about obedience:

There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, “Son, go and work today in the vineyard.” “I will not,” he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, “I will, sir,” but he did not go. —**Matthew 21:28-30**

Which son did the will of his father?

What is the meaning of obedience?

- ☐ 1. Saying you will do what is commanded.
- ☐ 2. Doing what is commanded.

Obey What You Already Know to Be God’s Will

Some people want God to give them an assignment to do for Him. They vow that they will do whatever He asks. But when God observes their lives, He notices they have not obeyed in the things He already has told them to do.

When God gives you **Ten Commandments**, are you obeying them? When Jesus tells you to **love your enemies**, are you doing that? When Jesus tells your church to **make disciples of all nations**, are you doing all you know to obey Him? When God tells you through Scripture to **live in unity with your Christian brothers and sisters**, are you doing it?

God’s commands are not given to you so you can pick and choose the ones you want to obey and forget about the rest. **He wants you to obey ALL His commands** out of your love relationship with Him. When He sees you are faithful and obedient in a little, He will be able to trust you with more. The Holy Spirit will guide you daily to the specific commands God wants you to obey.

Second Chances

Frequently, people will ask me the question, “When a person disobeys God’s will, does God give him or her a second chance?”

Read Jonah 1:1-17

1. What did God ask Jonah to do? (v. 2)
2. How did Jonah respond? (v. 3)
3. Then how did God respond to Jonah? (vv. 4-17)

Now read Jonah 2:9—3:10

4. When God gave Jonah a second chance, how did Jonah respond? (3:3)
5. When Jonah obeyed God, what did God do through Jonah's ministry? (3:4-10)

It is comforting to know that God often gives a second chance. When God had a plan to call Nineveh to repentance, He asked Jonah to join Him in His work. Jonah disobeyed because he was prejudiced against these “pagan enemies.” Jonah would have rather seen God carry out the destruction of the city. Jonah went through the trauma of being thrown into a raging sea and spending three days in the belly of a big fish. But when Jonah confessed and repented of His disobedience, God gave him a second chance to obey.

The second time Jonah did obey (though reluctantly). On his first day Jonah preached a one-sentence message, and God used the message to call 120,000 people to repentance. Jonah said, “I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity” (**Jonah 4:2**). God's response to Jonah and Nineveh taught Jonah much about how deeply God cares for all peoples and wants them to come to repentance.

Some of the **great people of God were broken by sin and disobedience**, yet **God did not give up on them**. If God allowed people only one mistake, Moses would never have come to be the person he was. He made several mistakes (for example, **Ex. 2:11-15**). Abraham started out with a great walk of faith, but He went into Egypt and blew it—more than once (for example, **Gen. 12:10-20**). David muffed it (for example, **2 Sam. 11**), and so did Peter (for example, **Matt. 26:69-75**). Saul (Paul) even began his “service for God” by persecuting Christians (**Acts 9:1-2**).

Disobedience Is Costly

Disobedience, however, is never taken lightly by God. You read how Jonah's disobedience almost cost him his life. Moses' murder of the Egyptian cost him 40 years in the wilderness. David's sin with Bathsheba cost the life of his son. Paul's early ministry was greatly hindered because of his disobedience. Many people were afraid to get near him because of his reputation as a persecutor of Christians.

God is interested in developing your character. At times He lets you proceed, but He will never let you go too far without **discipline to bring you back**. In your relationship with God, He may let you make a wrong decision. Then the **Spirit of God causes you to recognize that it is not God's will**. He **guides you back** to the right path. He will **clarify what He wants**. He will even take the circumstance of your disobedience and **work it together for good** (**Rom.**

8:28) as He **corrects you** and **teaches you His ways**.

Even though God forgives and often gives second chances, you must not take disobedience lightly. **Sometimes He does not give a second chance.** Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, were disobedient in offering unholy incense to the Lord; and God struck them dead (**Lev.10**).

Moses **stole God's glory** in front of all Israel and struck the rock saying, "Listen, you rebels, must **we** bring you water out of this rock?" (**Num. 20:10**). Notice the word "we." God was the One who would bring water from the rock. Moses took God's glory, and God refused to take away the consequences of that disobedience. He refused to allow Moses to go with Israel into the Promised Land.

God can take the circumstances of disobedience and work them together for good for those who love Him.

God is interested in developing your character.

Disobedience can be very costly.

God does not always remove the consequences of sin.

His commands are not to limit or restrict you but to free you to experience the most meaningful life possible.

Obedience means joy and uninterrupted fellowship with God. A hymn by John H. Sammis reminds us of the relationship between obedience and fellowship with God:

When we walk with the Lord In the Light of His Word
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
But we never can prove The delights of His love
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favor He shows And the joy He bestows
Are for them who will trust and obey.
Then in fellowship sweet We will sit at His feet
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do, Where He sends we will go;
Never fear, only trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, But to trust and obey.

YOU COME TO KNOW GOD

God reveals Himself to His people by what He does.

God reveals Himself to His people by what He does. **When God works through you to accomplish His purposes, you come to know God by experience.**

In Scripture when God did something through an obedient person or people, they came to know Him in new and more intimate ways. (For more examples see **Judg. 6:24; Ps. 23:1; Jer. 23:6; Ex. 31:13.**) **God revealed His personal name to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM” (Ex. 3:14).**

When God “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (**John 1:14**), **Jesus expressed Himself to His disciples** by saying:

“I am the **bread of life**” (**John 6:35**).

“I am the **light of the world**” (**John 8:12**).

“I am the **gate**” (**John 10:9**).

“I am the **good shepherd**” (**John 10:11**).

“I am the **resurrection and the life**” (**John 11:25**).

“I am the **way and the truth and the life**” (**John 14:6**).

“I am the **true vine**” (**John 15:1**).

When you believe Him, adjust your life to Him, and obey what He says next, you come to know and experience Him as “the I AM.” This is true about everything God reveals to you day by day.

What are some names by which you have come to know God by experience.

Affirmation

When we hear God invite us to join Him, **we often want a sign: “Lord, prove to me this is you, and then I will obey.”** When Moses stood before the burning bush and received his invitation to join God, God told him that he would receive a sign that God sent him. God told Moses,

“This will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain” (Ex. 3:12).

In other words: “Moses, you obey me. I will deliver Israel through you. You will come to know me as your Deliverer, and you will stand on this Mountain and worship Me.” God’s affirmation that He had sent Moses was going to come **after Moses obeyed, not before.** This is most frequently the case in Scripture. The **affirmation comes after the obedience.**

God is love. Trust Him and believe Him. Because you love Him, obey Him. Then you will so fellowship with Him that you will come to know Him intimately. That affirmation will be a joyous time for you!

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Obedience is doing what is commanded.
- I should obey what I already know to be God's will.
- When God sees I am faithful and obedient in a little, He will be able to trust me with more.
- God often gives second chances.
- Sometimes He does not give a second chance.
- Disobedience is costly.
- God is interested in developing my character.
- Affirmation comes after the obedience.

LESSON 5; UNIT 9

(OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

God will never give me an assignment that He will not enable me to complete.

For a little change of pace, you may want look at some questions related to this unit that are commonly asked.

Q: Why does God seem to be working so slowly in my life?

Jesus had been with His disciples about three years when He said, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (**John 16:12-13**). He had more He needed to teach them, but **they were not ready to receive it**. Jesus knew, however, that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide these disciples into truth on God's time table.

You may be saying, "God, hurry up and make me mature."

And God is saying, "I'm moving just as fast in your life as you will allow me. When you are ready for your next lesson, I will bring a new truth into your life."

Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I responding to all God already is leading me to do?
- Have I obeyed all I already know to be His will?

- Do I really believe that He loves me and will always do what is best and right?
- Am I willing to patiently wait on His timing, and obey everything I know to do in the meantime?

Why do you think God sometimes works slowly in a person's life as He matures him or her?

Grass that is here today and gone tomorrow does not require much time to mature. A big oak tree that lasts for generations requires much more time to grow and mature. God is concerned about your life through **eternity**. Allow Him to take all the time He needs to shape you for His purposes. Larger assignments will require longer periods of preparation.

Would you be willing for God to take all the time He needs to prepare you for the assignments He may have purposed for your life?

Q: Why doesn't God give me a big assignment?

God might say to you, "You are asking Me to involve you in my great movements, but I am trying to get you simply to understand how to believe Me. I can't give you that assignment yet." God has to lay some basic foundations in your life before He can prepare you for the larger tasks.

Have you ever said something like, "Lord, if You just give me a great assignment, I will serve You for all I am worth"?

God might respond, "I really want to, but I can't. If I were to put you into that kind of assignment, you would never be able to handle it. You are just not ready."

Then you may argue, "Lord, I am able. I can handle it, just try me." Do you remember any of the disciples who thought they were able to handle a bigger assignment?

On the night before Jesus' crucifixion Peter said, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me." (**Luke 22:33-34**). Is it possible that He also knows exactly what you would do? Trust Him. Do not insist that God give you something that you think you are ready for. That could lead to your ruin.

God is far more interested in accomplishing His kingdom purposes than you are. He will move you into every assignment that He knows you are ready for.

How do you think you should respond when God has not given you the kind of assignment you want?

Let God orient you to Himself. The servant does not tell the Master what kind of assignment

he needs. The servant waits on his Master for the assignment. So be patient and wait. Waiting on the Lord should not be an idle time for you. Let God use times of waiting to mold and shape your character. Let God use those times to purify your life and make you into a clean vessel for His service.

As you obey Him, God will prepare you for the assignment that is just right for you. Any assignment, however, that comes from the Maker of the universe is an important assignment. Don't use human standards to measure the importance or value of an assignment.

Q: What is happening when I obey and the “doors” close?

Suppose you sense the call of God to a task, or to a place, or to an assignment. You set about to do it and everything goes wrong. Often people will say, “Well, I guess that just was not God's will.”

God calls you into a relationship with himself. Be very careful how you interpret circumstances. Many times we jump to a conclusion too quickly. God is moving us in one direction to tell us what He is about to do. We immediately jump to our own conclusion about what He is doing because our conclusion sounds so logical. We start following the logic of our own reasoning and then nothing seems to work out. We have a tendency to leave the relationship and take things into our own hands. Don't do that.

Most of the time when God calls you or gives a direction, His call is not what He wants you to do for Him. He is telling you what He is about to do where you are. For instance, God told Paul that He was going to reach the Gentiles through him. God, not Paul, was going to reach the Gentiles. Paul started to go in one direction and the Spirit stopped him (**Acts 16:6-10**).

He started to go another direction. Again, the Spirit stopped him. What was the original plan of God? To reach the Gentiles. What was Paul's problem? He was trying to figure out what he ought to do, and the “door” of opportunity closed. Did the door close? No. God was trying to say, “Listen to me, Paul. Go and sit in Troas until I tell you where you are supposed to go.”

“Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” —**Acts 16:6-10**

In Troas Paul had the vision to go over to Macedonia and help them. What was happening? God's plan was to turn the gospel to the west toward Greece and Rome. God was at work in

Philippi and wanted Paul to join Him.

When you begin to follow and circumstances seem to close doors of opportunity, go back to the Lord and clarify what God said. Better yet, always try to make sure on the front end of a sense of call exactly what God is saying. He most often is not calling you to a task, but a relationship. Through that relationship He is going to do something through your life. If you start off in a direction and everything is stopped, go back and clarify what God has said. Do not deny what God has said, clarify what God has said.

Read the following illustration about a couple that sensed God's call to student work. Watch for instructions on what to do when you begin to move in the direction you sense God is leading and circumstances "close the door."

[I talked with a wonderful couple who said they were invited to go to Saskatoon to do student work. They started the process for assignment as missionaries and the Missions Board said, "No."

Their conclusion was: "Then, we made a mistake." I advised them not to jump to that conclusion, but to go back and recall what God said when they sensed His call. They were canceling the whole plan of God, because one detail did not work out as they thought it would.

I asked them to go back and clarify what God had called them to do. Was He calling them to missions? Was He calling them to student work? Was He calling them to Canada? They did sense God was calling them to Canada and student work.

Then, I said, "Keep that sense of call in place. Because one door closed, don't assume that the assignment is over. Watch to see how the God who called you is going to implement what He said. When God speaks a word of direction, He will bring it to pass. Be very careful that you do not let circumstances cancel what God said."

God may have a different city in mind for them. He may want them to have a different means of financial support. Or He may need more time to prepare them for the assignment. Let Him work out the details in His timing. In the meantime, do all you know to do, then wait for the next word of instruction.]

What are some of the things you would do when faced with a circumstance that seemed to close the door on God's will.

When things seem to go wrong after you take a step of obedience:

- Clarify what God said and identify what may have been your "additions" to what He said.
- Keep in place what God has said.
- Let Him work out the details in His timing.
- Do all you know to do.

- Then wait on the Lord until He tells you what to do next.

The God who initiates His work in a relationship with you is the One Himself who guarantees to complete it.

God's greatest single task is to get His people adjusted to Himself. He needs time to shape us until we are exactly what He wants us to be. Suppose you sense that God is going to do something great because of what He has said in His Word and prayer. You sense He is going to do it because of the way circumstances are working out and other believers (church) agree. Then six months pass and you still haven't seen anything great. Don't get negative and depressed and discouraged. Watch to see what God is doing in you and in the people around you to prepare you for what He is going to do. **The key is your relationship with God.**

Q: How can I know whether the word I receive is from God, my own selfish desires, or Satan?

Some people go to much trouble studying Satan's ways so they can identify when something appears to be a deception of Satan. But it is important not to focus on Satan. He is defeated. The One who is guiding you, the One who is presently implementing His will through you is the Victor. The only way Satan can affect God's work through you is when you believe Satan and disbelieve God. Satan always will try to deceive you. Satan cannot ultimately thwart what God purposes to do.

Read the following illustration and see if you can make an application to your spiritual life.

[Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Mounties, train men in anti-counterfeiting work. They never let a trainee see a counterfeit bill. They know only one genuine type of ten-dollar bill exists. They so thoroughly study the genuine bill that anything that does not measure up to that is counterfeit.]

You can't imagine all the ways people can counterfeit money. But Mounties don't study how people counterfeit money. They just study the real thing. Anything that doesn't measure up to that is fake.]

When you are faced with a sense of direction, you may ask yourself, "Is this God, me, or Satan." How can you prepare yourself to know clearly a Word from God?

How should you approach spiritual warfare with Satan? Know the ways of God so thoroughly

that if something doesn't measure up to God's ways, turn away from it. That's what Jesus did in the temptations. In essence Jesus just quietly said, "I understand what you are saying, Satan; but that is not the last word I had from God. The Scriptures say . . ." (**See Matt. 4:1-11.**) Jesus never discussed it with Satan. He never analyzed it. He just kept doing

the last thing God told Him to do until God Himself told Him what to do next.

Q: Does God Have One Plan for My Life For Eternity?

Does God plan your life for eternity and then turn you loose to work out His plan? God's plan is for a relationship. We get in trouble when we try to get God to tell us if He wants us to be a Christian business person, a music director, an education director, a preacher, or a missionary. We want to know if He wants us to serve in our home country or go to Japan or Canada. God doesn't usually give you a one-time assignment and leave you there forever. Yes, you may be placed in one job at one place for a long time; but God's assignments come to you on a daily basis.

He calls you to a relationship where He is Lord—where you are willing to do and be anything

He chooses. If you will respond to Him as Lord, He may lead you to do and be things you would have never dreamed of. If you don't follow Him as Lord, you may lock yourself into a job or an assignment and miss something God wants to do through you. I've heard people say things like: "God called me to be a . . . , so this other thing couldn't possibly be His will." Or "My spiritual gift is. . . so this ministry couldn't be God's will for me."

God will never give you an assignment He will not enable you to complete. That is what a spiritual gift is—a supernatural empowering to accomplish the assignment God gives you. Don't focus on your talents, abilities, and interests in determining God's will. I have heard so many people say, "I would really like to do that; therefore, it must be God's will." That kind of response is self-centered. You need to become God-centered. Read "The Day I Lay My Isaac Down" (margin). When God is Lord, your response should be something like this:

Lord, I will do anything that your kingdom requires of me. Wherever you want me to be, I'll go. Whatever the circumstances, I'm willing to follow. If you want to meet a need through my life, I am your servant; and I will do whatever is required.

Suppose a teenager in your church were to come to you for counsel. He says, "I think God may be calling me to the ministry. Can you tell me how to know whether I should be a pastor, missionary, or minister of education? I want to be very careful. I don't want to miss God's plan for my life!"

How would you respond?

Did you point him to God's plan as a relationship, not just a job description? Did you help him see his need to submit to Christ's lordship on a daily basis? Hopefully you would have been able to help him to a God-centered approach to knowing and doing God's will.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- I will allow Him to take all the time He needs to shape me for His purposes.
- Any assignment that comes from the Maker of the universe is an important assignment.
- God calls me to a relationship.
- ☐ I won't leave the relationship and take things into my own hands.
- Let Him work out the details in His timing.
- ☐ Know the ways of God so thoroughly that if something doesn't measure up to God's ways, I will know it is not from Him and turn away from it.
- God will never give me an assignment that He will not enable me to complete.

UNIT 10

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. –Romans 12:5

Lesson 3 Activities

Read Romans 12

Read 1 Corinthians 12:11-31

Lesson 5 Activities

Read each of the following Scriptures. Under each one, write a brief statement or summary of God's will for relationships in the church body.

Romans 14:1, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 10:24; Ephesians 4:25, 29; 4:31-32; 5:19-20; 5:21;
Colossians 3:13-14;

Read 1 Corinthians 12 once more. This time ask God to speak to you about your church and how it can better function as the body of Christ. Ask Him to speak to you about your relationship to the body of Christ. Record anything you sense God is saying to you through His Word.

Read Romans 12 again and ask God to speak to you about how you and your church can function like the body of Christ should. On a separate sheet of paper record what you sense God is saying to you.

LESSON 1; UNIT 10

GOD'S WILL AND THE CHURCH

Memorize this verse:

In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.
–Romans 12:5

[IVAH BATES WAS A KNEE

I've mentioned Ivah Bates before. She was a widow who had lived on a farm and was retired. She was one of the greatest pray-ers I have ever known. Our church was the body of Christ, and we called Ivah a knee. God put her in the body as a powerful pray-er.

When we had new believers, I would send them over to Ivah and let her talk to them about how to pray. She equipped many pray-ers. When we began our ministry to the university campus, Ivah didn't know how to function in the body concerning the campus. Who was to equip her to function in the body in this new ministry? Well, our campus minister was. He shared with Ivah how she could pray regarding the campus. She did not change her role in the body. She just learned how to be the "knee" (prayer) for the campus. The students were told, "Whenever you are going to witness to somebody or you have a particular assignment in our ministry, go to Ivah and tell her about it. She will pray."

So a student named Wayne said to Ivah, "Next Tuesday I will be witnessing to Doug, would you pray for me?" Ivah agreed. She dropped everything and began to pray over the noon hour while Wayne was witnessing. She did that every time the students told her what they were doing. Only the "hand" was touching the campus, but the whole body was fitly joined together. Each part functioned where God put it, so that the hand could be effective.

About three months later, a young man came down the aisle during the invitation. He was trusting the Lord. I said to the congregation, "This is Doug. He has just become a Christian." I looked over at Ivah and she was deeply moved and weeping. She had never met Doug, but she had prayed for him for three months.

Who won Doug to the Lord? The body did!]

Ten Years of Experiencing God

[A local church, living out together the life of Christ within them, is God's strategy to change a lost world! It often begins with God moving in the heart of one member. This happened in the life of a pastor on the east coast of Java in Indonesia. The pastor, who knew English, studied through Experiencing God and his life was dramatically changed. Because he was a vital part of a local church, he wanted all his people to have the opportunity to study this course as well, but they did not know English. He began the long and arduous task of translating the entire course into the language of his people. The missionaries saw him sitting at a manual typewriter three to four hours every day translating. He was a leper. His hands were affected, and lepers can't sit still long. But his pastor's heart kept him at his typewriter day after day until his people could have the material for themselves.

When I heard this, I wept! I asked the missionary who told me the story if she would get a picture of him at his typewriter, showing his hands. She said he was very humble, and might not let her. Several years later, at a large meeting in Salt Lake City, I saw the missionary running toward me holding a picture. "I've got the picture. It is for you!" I have it hanging in my prayer room where I can pray for this dear pastor and his people, and be reminded of

how precious to God are His people in every local church.]

THE CHURCH

When a church allows God's presence and activity to be expressed, a watching world will be drawn to Him.

Church members need to be **taught how to walk with God**. They need to know **how to hear Him speaking**. They need to be able to identify things that only God can do. A pastor, is responsible for that. **During the first year of ministry as a pastor, take time to find out what God has been doing before you got there**. Then take **time to lead the people into the kind of relationship with God** so that they understood what a church is and how it is to function.

In the Bible, God gave vision and enabled the **spiritual leaders** He called. These leaders then led the people. **Their walk with God and sensitivity to what God was doing among the people was crucial**. (A picture of this pattern is seen in Acts 6.)

First you must come to understand who you are in relation to God and each other.

1. **A church is a creation of Christ**. He builds His church (**Matt. 16:18**) using Spirit-directed pastors and leaders (**Eph. 4:11-13**), and arranges the members in it according to His will (**1 Cor. 12:18**). Therefore, spiritual leaders and members should **have respect** for the pastor and every member God has placed in their church.
2. **A church is a living body of Christ** with many members (**1 Cor. 12:27**). The church is
Not a building or an organization. It is **a group of people built up into a living body**.
3. **A church is uniquely related to Christ as Head of the body** (**Eph. 1:22; 4:15-16**).
All
matters in a church are to come under His lordship.
4. **Members of a church are uniquely related to every other member** of the church (**Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12**). All members are interdependent on one another. All members **need each other**.
5. **A church is on mission with Christ in our world** carrying out the Father's redemptive purpose (**Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 5:17-20**). "We are God's fellow workers" (**1 Cor. 3:9**).

Many statements that are commonly used around churches indicate, however, that often we are very human-centered in our religious work. We give our human intelligence and abilities far more credit than they are due. God is the One who gets the glory rightfully due Him for Kingdom work.

“Being” is More Important than “Doing”

Just like individuals, churches are often more interested in what God wants them to **DO** than what He wants them to **BE**. **Being the kind of people that please God is far more important than doing something for Him.** Yes, God does want a church to obey Him by doing what He asks. Yet, **He is not interested in a church violating His commands in order to get a task done.**

For example: can you imagine how God must feel when a church splits out of hatred for each other, because one group wanted to do something for God and the other group refused?

What do you think?

1. Does God want a church to complete an assigned task even if it brings about a major division.
2. Does God want His people to demonstrate love above all else.
3. As long as a church is doing God’s work, can they do it in ways that are unethical or illegal.

For some people these are tough questions. Individuals often think that a work for God can be done with whatever means are necessary. They don’t hesitate to violate God’s written will in order to accomplish something they think is His will. God is interested in His people being **holy, clean, and pure**. He is interested in the **unity of the church**—“there should be no division

in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25). He is interested in **members loving one another**, because the world will know we are His disciples by our love (John 13:35). God is able to accomplish His work through His people in a way that is consistent with all His commands and His nature.

Throughout the New Testament, God expresses some of His desires for the church.

1. God wants His people to be holy and pure.
2. God wants His people to display unity.
3. God wants His people to love each other.

Read the following Scriptures. For each Scripture, match it with one of the three statements above.

A. “I pray . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me...May

they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me” (Jn.17:20, 21, 23)

B. “This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another... Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth... This is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as He commanded us” (1 Jn.3:11, 18, 23).

.....
C. “Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy’ ” (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

D. “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blame-less and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life” (Phil. 2:14-16).

E. “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3).

How would you evaluate your church’s faithfulness to these commands? Is your church holy, pure, united, and loving?

Knowing and Doing God’s Will as a Church

Much of what you have studied applies to churches as well as individuals. For instance:

- God is always at work in and around a church.
- God pursues a continuing love relationship with His church that is real and personal.
- God invites a church to become involved in His work.
- When a church sees where God is at work, that is their invitation to join Him in what

He is doing.

- God speaks by the Holy Spirit--through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church.

- A church will face a crisis of belief when God invites them to become involved in a work only He can accomplish. Faith and action will be required.
- A church will have to make major adjustments in order to join God in His work.
- A church is totally dependent on God for accomplishing tasks of Kingdom value.
- Apart from God a church can do nothing of Kingdom value.
- As a church obeys God, they will come to know Him by experience as He does wonderful things through them.

The list could go on. But **something is different about the way a church comes to know God’s will and the way an individual knows God’s will.** A church is the body of Christ. A body functions as one unit with spiritual leaders and members. All are interdependent—they need each other. **Each leader and member of the body needs the others to fully know God’s will. Each member has a role in the body (Gal. 6:1-5) and each leader has a**

responsibility to the body to equip the members (Eph. 4:11-13). The pastor is responsible for the body as well as to the body.

The Parable of the Train Tracks

[Suppose your eye could say to your body, “Let us walk down these train tracks. The way is all clear. Not a train is in sight.” So you begin to walk down the tracks.

Then suppose your ear says to the body, “I hear a whistle coming from the other direction.”

Your eye argues, “But nothing is on the track as far as I can see. Let’s keep on walking.” So your body listens only to your eye and keeps on walking.

Soon your ear says, “That whistle is getting louder and closer!”

Then your feet say, “I can feel the rumbling motion of a train coming. We better get our body off these tracks!”

If this were your physical body, what would you do?

- ☐ 1. I would get off the train tracks as soon as possible!
- ☐ 2. I would take a vote of all my body members and let the majority rule.
- ☐ 3. I would try to ignore the conflict and hope it passed away.
- ☐ 4. I would trust my eye and keep on walking. My eye has never let me down, yet.

That may have seemed like a silly question. **God gave our bodies many different senses and parts. When each part does its job, the whole body works the way it should.** In our physical

bodies we do not take votes based on majority rule, ignore conflicting senses, or choose to listen only to one sense and ignore the others. To live that way would be very dangerous.

Because a church is the body of Christ, it functions best when spiritual leaders and members share what they sense God wants the church to be and do. A church needs to hear the whole counsel of God through its spiritual leaders and members. Then it can proceed in confidence and in unity to do God’s will.

When God wants to reveal His will to a church, He will begin by speaking to one or more individuals. Because of the nature of his call and assignment from God, this is often the pastor, although it may be another member of the body. The pastor’s job is to bear witness to the church about what he senses God is saying. Other members may also express what they sense God is saying. The whole body looks to Christ—the Head of the church—for guidance. He guides all the members of the body to understand His will fully.

You may have questions about how to practice that in your church. A church of 50 members

would do this somewhat differently than one with 5,000 members. The most important factor is not a method but a relationship with a Person. Christ is Head of His church and He knows how each one can work uniquely with Him to understand His will. The Jerusalem church had over 3,000 members and Christ was able to do His work through them, with the guidance of the apostles as spiritual leaders.

[In Saskatoon, as God moved and expressed His will to church members, I guided them as their pastor to share with the other members of the body. All were given an opportunity and encouraged to share. Each was encouraged to respond as God guided him or her. This happened, not only in worship (usually at the close of a service), but also in prayer meetings, committee meetings, business meetings, Sunday School classes, home Bible studies, and in personal conversations. Many called the church office and shared what God was saying to them in their quiet times. Still others shared what they experienced at work or at school. The entire church became experientially and practically aware of Christ's presence in our midst.]

When are some times that members of a church body could share with others what they sense God wants the church to be and do? Include ideas from the previous paragraph with any other ideas you may have.

Does your church take time for members in the body to share with the church what they sense God wants the church to be and do?

Sharing what God is doing in your life may help someone else encounter God in a meaningful way. Sometimes that testimony prompts others to respond in a similar way.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- ☐ **When a church allows God's presence and activity to be expressed, a watching world will be drawn to Him.**
 - **A church is a living body of Christ with many members.**
 - **A church is on mission with Christ in our world carrying out the Father's redemptive purpose.**
 - **God wants His people to be holy and pure.**
 - **God wants His people to display unity.**
 - **God wants His people to love each other.**
- ☐ **No one individual has the total vision for God's will for a local church.**
 - **A church needs to hear the whole counsel of God through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church.**
 - **Sharing what God is doing in my life may help someone else encounter God in a meaningful way.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 10

DISCERNING GOD'S WILL -- AS A BODY

A church comes to know the will of God when the whole body understands what Christ—the Head—is telling them.

Before Pentecost (in the New Testament), the Holy Spirit did not dwell in the lives of all of God's people. He only came upon chosen individuals for God's purposes. In the Old Testament God spoke to His people through a leader—a prophet, a priest, a king, and so forth. For instance, God would tell Moses His will for Israel; and Moses would tell the people what they were to do. Israel then (most of the time) did what Moses said.

“The Lord spoke to Moses... ‘Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover...’ So Moses told the Israelites to celebrate the Passover, and they did so.... The Israelites did everything just as the Lord commanded Moses.” —**Numbers 9:1-5**

In the Old Testament how did Israel come to know God's will? _____

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on the church at Pentecost, God came to dwell in every believer. He created the body—a local church—so that every member needed every other member. In the body of Christ every believer has direct access to God. God can speak to any and every member of the body. He can work through the whole body in revealing His will.

In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit also led the apostles as they guided the church. God led the members and leaders in a mutual interdependence of serving and decision-making. New Testament examples illustrate joint decision making under Christ's lordship:

- ☐ The Choosing of Judas' Replacement—**Acts 1:12-26**
 - The Choosing of the Seven—**Acts 6:1-7**
- ☐ Peter's Witness to the Gentile Conversions—**Acts 11:1-18**
 - Barnabas and Saul Sent Out—**Acts 13:1-3**
 - The Jerusalem Council—**Acts 15:1-35**

Notice in these examples that there are different methods of arriving at a decision. For instance, the Jerusalem Council settled an important doctrinal and practical issue. After Peter and James had spoken, the “whole assembly . . . listened to Barnabas and Paul” (**Acts 15:12**) also. “Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided . . .” (**Acts 15:22**). “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (**Acts 15:28**).

When God speaks to a person about the church, the person should share with the body what he or she senses God is saying. As each member shares what he senses God is saying, the whole body goes to God in prayer to discern His will for the body. **In His timing God confirms**

to the body what He is saying. Individual opinions are not that important. The will of God is very important. No single method can be given for discerning God's will as a body. **Pastors, other church leaders, and members are to have such a relationship with God and the church body that spiritual guidance is the outcome.** When Christ is able to guide each spiritual leader and member of the body to function properly, the whole body will know and be enabled to do God's will.

The church is a body, and every leader and member has direct access to God.

The pastor, leaders, and members should pray and ask God for guidance. Then each person shares what he or she senses God is saying to the church. All the leaders and members then look to the Head of the body—Christ—and continue praying until Christ has convinced them of His will.

A church comes to know God's will when the whole body comes to understand what Christ wants them to do. For a church, knowing God's will may involve many members, not just one. Yes, God often will speak to the leader about what He wants to do. That leader then bears witness to the body about what he senses God's will is. The leader does not have to try to convince the church that this is God's will. The leader does not have to ask the congregation to follow him without question. The leader encourages the body to go to Christ and get confirmation from the Head (Christ). The Head does the convincing on His timetable. Then the whole body follows Christ—the Head. This is why a church must learn to function as a body with Christ as the Head of His church.

[A new mission church entered into an agreement to buy land for their first building. The pastor led the church to buy the land based on some promises made by the realtor. Problems arose for the church because the realtor did not keep his promises after closing on the property. The group ran into financial problems and grew very discouraged about the whole project. Finally, the pastor brought the church together and told them about all the negotiations and the current problems. Two members spoke up and said, "Pastor, we knew that realtor was dishonest. He has deceived us in business dealings before. We were just afraid to disagree with your plans, because it would have appeared that we were opposing God." Fortunately, God was gracious, and soon the problems were resolved. This points out, however, that the church needs to function like a body with every member free to share what he or she knows or senses as God's will.]

Church Decision Making

[When God gave directions to our church in Saskatoon, He often gave them through persons other than me. Many of them came from the members of the body who sensed a clear direction of God and shared it with the body. We created the opportunity for people to share what they sensed God was leading us to be or do. Our desire was not to find out who was for it and who was against it. In our business meetings we never took a vote asking, "How many of you are for this and how many of you are against it?" (That is the wrong question. Every time you ask that question you have a potential church split.)

The right question is: “With all of the information and all of the praying that we have been doing, **how many of you sense that God clearly is directing us to proceed in this direction?**” This is a very different question. It does not ask members for their opinions. It asks them to vote based on what they sense God is saying to His church. On critical issues we never voted at the time we discussed the issue. This relieved the pressure of trying to get their point across that some would sense. After discussion, we would take time to pray and seek the mind of Christ.

Suppose 55 percent of the members voted saying, “Yes, we sense God clearly is leading us to proceed in this direction.” Forty-five percent voted saying, “We do not sense God is clearly leading us in this direction.” What did we do? We never proceeded. That expression told me as pastor two things: (1) God seemed to be leading us in that direction; and (2) the timing wasn’t right, because the head had not yet brought all the rest of the body to the same sense of direction. We definitely felt God was leading in this direction because 55 percent of us sensed that. But we knew the timing wasn’t right because 45 percent had not yet come to that understanding. **We prayed, worked, and watched.** We let the Head bring the body to understand what He wanted to do through us. God was in charge and was present to bring us to one mind and heart (**Rom. 15:5-6; 1 Cor. 1:10**). We trusted Him to do that.

“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.” —**1 Corinthians 1:10**

People often ask, “Did you always wait until you got a 100 percent vote?” No, I knew that we might have one or more that were so out of fellowship with the Lord that they could not hear His voice. Another might be purposefully disobedient. However, we usually did wait until the votes were almost unanimous.

I did not get angry or disappointed with those who did not agree with the rest of the body. Their disagreement indicated that they might have a fellowship problem with the Lord. As the pastor, I would then set my life alongside theirs to see how God might need to work through me to help them back to proper fellowship with the Lord. I always had to pray this through and only respond as the Lord led me.]

Reflect on the following questions.

1. Do you believe God wants the body to come to one heart and one mind on His will for the body?
2. Do you believe God is able to bring His people to understand His will?
3. Do you believe God is able to bring YOUR church to this kind of unity?
4. Would you be willing to wait on God until He has had time to adjust the members of the body to His will?

This may be another one of those places where you have reached a crisis of belief. Ask God for help through this one. Can God bring a whole church to a sense of unity about His will? Yes:

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

—Romans 15:5-6

What does God have to say to you through the two verses above?

God’s Timing

Good directions from God may be lost by missing God’s timing. Not only does a church need to know what God wants them to do, but they need to know **when** He wants them to do it. We **must wait until God’s time**. We need to wait on Him as a body until He has adjusted

us to Himself. **This develops a confident patience in the Lord and a loving trust in each other.**

Real Motivation

[I never tried to get the people just to support an organization, a program, or a person (human). I challenged them to ask God what He wanted. When they knew what God wanted, the only option was faithful obedience. That obedience could and often was expressed through an organization, a program, or corporate ministry of the church.

Which one of the following will best motivate God’s people to faithful obedience to the will of God?

- ☐ 1. Ask them to find out what God wants as they walk in an intimate love relationship with Him. When He clearly speaks, they should obey Him.
- ☐ 2. Ask them to support a program promoted by the denomination.
- ☐ 3. Ask them to support an influential leader in the church.
- ☐ 4. Ask them to go along with a committee recommendation.
- ☐ 5. Tell them, “I have a word from God” and expect them to just agree.

The churches I have served have had many traditions. I kept teaching and teaching and teaching until the Spirit of God, who is our common Teacher, brought us to one heart and one mind. We began to release ourselves and let God take all the time He needed. I felt that **my responsibility as a pastor was to lead God’s people into such a relationship with Jesus Christ that they would know clearly when He was speaking**. Then I asked them to obey God—not follow a program, an influential lay leader, a committee, or me. God the Holy Spirit is the Christian’s real Motivator.

Our business meetings became some of the most exciting times in the life of our church. People knew that at the business meeting we would clearly see the directions and activity of

God. They wanted to come to the business meeting because it became such a thrilling moment when our church saw God reveal His purposes and His ways to us.

The church is a body with Christ as the Head. The Spirit of God guides every believer. His indwelling presence can teach us and help us. I always allowed my understanding of the will of God to be tested in the life of the congregation—not because of what I thought the people were, but because of what I knew the church was.

When I sensed that God wanted our church to do something, as pastor I always asked the church family to work through it with me. If the people walk with God, then I can trust God to guide them. This can be true for pastors and for other church members as well. If the people do not walk in right fellowship with God, then I depend on God to guide me in helping them become what He wants them to be. God doesn't give up on His people, so neither should I.]

[As a director of missions, I led the churches in our association (a group of churches) to function

this way also. It took me awhile to help the pastors understand how to walk that way.

The work we were doing was not my program, it was God's work. **Can a whole association of churches function this way? Yes, if you will help them understand how to walk with God that way.]**

What is God saying to you about your church and how it currently makes decisions?

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **A church comes to know the will of God when the whole body comes to understand what Christ—the Head—is telling them.**
- **Every believer has direct access to God.**
- **Individual opinions are not that important. The will of God is very important.**
- **A church must learn to function as a body with Christ as the Head of His church.**
- ☐ **A church must wait until God's time.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 10

THE BODY OF CHRIST

A church needs to learn to function as the body of Christ.

The Body of Christ in Romans 12

Paul wrote to the church at Rome and gave the members some instructions about how the body of Christ should live in relation to each other. **A church needs to learn to function as the body of Christ.** These instructions from Paul will help you in relation to your church.

Read in Romans 12 and answer the questions.

1. **Verses 1-2.** What two things did Paul recommend to members of the body, so that the whole body would be able to discern God's will? Complete the sentence.

Offer your bodies as . . . _ _ _ _ _

Do not conform . . . but be transformed by _ _ _ _ _

2. **Verses 3, 10, and 16.** What are some specific things you can do to prevent problems caused by pride?

3. **Verses 4-6:** "Members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts."

Why are other members of the body important to you?

4. **Verses 9-21.** Which of the many instructions given in these verses do you think members of your church need to practice more than they do? (For example, you might respond: "We need to do more to share with God's people who have needs.")

- ☐ Love others sincerely.
- ☐ Hate evil.
- ☐ Cling to what is good.
- ☐ Be devoted to one another.
- ☐ Honor one another.
- ☐ Serve the Lord with zeal.
- ☐ Be joyful in hope.
- ☐ Be patient in affliction.
- ☐ Be faithful in prayer.
- ☐ Share with God's people in need.
- ☐ Practice hospitality.
- ☐ Bless those who persecute you.
- ☐ Rejoice with those who rejoice.
- ☐ Mourn with those who mourn.
- ☐ Live in harmony with one another.
- ☐ Don't be proud or conceited.
- ☐ Associate with people of low position.
- ☐ Don't repay evil for evil.
- ☐ Do what is right.
- ☐ Don't take revenge.

☐ Overcome evil with good.

Living sacrifices and renewed minds are necessary to “test and approve what God’s will is” (v. 2). Pride can cause problems in the body. You should think of yourself with sober judgment, honor others above yourself, live in harmony, and associate with people of low position.

Church members need to practice all the instructions given in verses 9-21.

Warning: following these instructions may be very costly!

The Holy Spirit Equipping Each Member to Function in the Body

The first part of 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the Holy Spirit enabling each member. Verse 7 says, “**To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good**” (1 Cor. 12:7). The Holy Spirit is the Gift (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit manifests (makes visible, clear, known; reveals) Himself to each member of the body for the common good of the body.

Answer the following questions. Base your answers on 1 Corinthians 12:7 above.

1. To whom does the Spirit manifest Himself?

- ☐ a. Only to a few very spiritual individuals.
- ☐ b. Only to church leaders.
- ☐ c. To every believer.

2. Why does the Holy Spirit manifest Himself to believers?

- ☐ a. So the individual can be blessed.
- ☐ b. So the individual can call attention to himself.
- ☐ c. So the whole body can benefit from His work.

Did you check the last item in both questions? Good job! ALL members of the church—Christ’s body—are gifted by the Holy Spirit’s presence. **Each person’s experience of the Holy Spirit is for the good of the body not for himself or herself.** That is why we need each other.

Without a healthy and functioning body, a church will miss much of the good God provides for a church.

The Old Testament is the kindergarten for understanding the Holy Spirit’s work. **In the Old Testament, the Spirit came upon individuals to help them achieve an assignment God had given them.** Moses had an assignment as an administrator, so God equipped him with His Holy Spirit to administrate.

God gave each of the judges an assignment. Then the Spirit of God came upon each one and equipped him or her to complete the assignment given. David was called to be king when

he was a shepherd. How could he possibly be king when he had never been king? The Spirit of God came upon him and equipped him to be king. Ezekiel was called to be a prophet. How could he possibly be a prophet? The Scripture says the Spirit of God came upon him and caused him to do everything God asked of him (Ezek. 2-3).

Here is the pattern we see in the Old Testament:

1. God gave an assignment to a person.
2. The Holy Spirit was given to that person to equip him or her for the assignment.
3. The proof of the Spirit's presence was that the person was able to complete the Assignment effectively through the supernatural enabling of the Holy Spirit.

The workmen of the tabernacle are a clear example. God gave Moses specific details about how to build the Tabernacle (**Ex. 25—31**). He wanted it done exactly as He had instructed Moses. Then God said, "I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts. . . . Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab . . . to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you" (**Ex. 31:2-3, 6**). How would Moses have known if the Spirit of God was upon those men? He would have watched them at work. If they were enabled to carry out the assignment God had given, Moses would have known the Spirit of God was upon them.

Throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit of God always was present to equip an individual to carry out a divine assignment. God didn't give a person "some thing". He Himself was the Gift. The Spirit manifested His presence by equipping each individual to function where God had assigned him.

When members of a church begin considering spiritual gifts, they sometimes run into difficulty by thinking that God gives them some "thing"—like an ingredient called administration. No, He doesn't give some thing; **He gives Himself**. The Gift is a Person. The Holy Spirit equips you with His administrative ability. So His administration begins to become your administration. What you observe when you see a spiritual gift exercised is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit—you see the Holy Spirit equipping and enabling an individual with His abilities and capabilities to accomplish God's work.

Read John 14:10 and 1 Corinthians 12:7 below. Which of the following is the better definition of a spiritual gift?

"To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." 1 Corinthians 12:7

"It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." —John 14:10

- ☐ 1. A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work in and through a person's

life for the common good of the body of Christ.

- ☐ 2. A spiritual gift is a special ability God gives a person so he or she can accomplish the work God has assigned to the church.

Jesus said: **“It is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work” (John 14:10).** Even in Jesus’s miraculous works, the Father was manifesting Himself. The Father was in Jesus, and He worked through Jesus to accomplish His purposes. The first definition above focuses on God and what He does through us. The second definition focuses more on what I get so I can do something for God or for His church. Remember, Jesus said, **“Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).** A spiritual gift is a manifestation of God at work through you.

The Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12

The first part of 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself in different ways. He manifests Himself to every believer. The second part of that chapter talks about the body.

Read the following list of summary statements. Then read 1 Corinthians 12:11-31 and see if you can locate at least one verse that supports each of the statements below.

- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 1. The Holy Spirit decides who to give assignments to and enables each spiritual leader and member to accomplish God’s work.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 2. The body is a single unit made up of many parts.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 3. Members of the body do not decide their own role in the body.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 4. God puts spiritual leaders and members in the body where He wants them to be.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 5. The body is not complete without all the spiritual leaders and members God has given the body.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 6. Members of the body need every other member of the body.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 7. The body should be united as one, not divided.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 8. Members of the body should have equal concern for each other.
- Verse(s) _ _ _ _ _ 9. Spiritual leaders and members of the body have different assignments from God for the good of the whole body.

For the statements above you may have identified fewer verses or different verses, but here are some possible answers: 1—verse 11; 2—verses 12-14; 3—verses 15-17; 4—verse 18; 5—verses 17-20; 6—verses 21-24; 7—verse 25; 8—verses 25-26; 9—verses 28-30.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **The Holy Spirit is the Gift.**
 - **The Spirit of God always is present to equip me to carry out a divine assignment.**
- ☐ **A spiritual gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit at work in and through a person’s**

life for the common good of the body of Christ.

- **The Spirit decides who to give assignments to, and enables spiritual leaders and members to accomplish His work.**
- **God puts spiritual leaders and members in the body where He wants them to be.**
- **The body is not complete without all the spiritual leaders and members God has given the body.**
- **Members of the body should have equal concern for each other.**
- **Spiritual leaders and members of the body have different assignments from God for the good of the whole body.**

LESSON 4; LESSON 10

THE BODY OF CHRIST

I understand the will of God for my church when I listen to the whole body express what they are experiencing in the life of that body.

Paul wrote the Corinthian church, a local body of believers, and said: “You are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it” (**1 Cor. 12:27**). Just as your physical body needs every part in order to live a normal and healthy life, so the church needs every member in order to live a normal and healthy church life. No member can say of any other member, I don’t need you. Apart from the other members of the church (the body) you will not be able to experience the fullness of life God has intended for you. When one member is missing or not functioning as God intended, the rest of the body will miss out on the fullness of life God has intended for the church.

God places members in the body as it pleases Him. If He makes a person an “eye,” the Holy Spirit will equip him to see. If God makes a person an “ear,” the Holy Spirit will equip her to hear. If He makes a person a “hand,” the Holy Spirit will equip him to function as a hand. In New Testament Scriptures relating to the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit’s work is to enable a person to function in the assignment where God puts him in the body. Not every member is an apostle, prophet, teacher, and so forth; but each one does have a God-given function. Each one functions where God puts him or her in the body so the whole body functions together as it should.

Below are statements that might be heard from a church member. They may reflect an incorrect view of the church as the body of Christ. If you heard a member of your church make the statement on the left, which of the biblical principles on the right could you use to help the person understand how God intends for the church to function? You may list more than one principle that may apply.

Statements

Principles

- — — — **A.** I think we should clean up our church rolls and get rid of all those names of people who don't attend any more.
- — — — **B.** Bill got himself into trouble by breaking the law. It doesn't bother he has to serve time in jail.
- — — — **C.** I think I should be elected chairman of the deacons. After all, I have been a body.
faithful member of this church of 42 years.
- — — — **D.** If I can't be a Sunday School teacher, I'll just quit coming to this church.
- — — — **E.** I don't care that the rest of the body thinks God is leading them to ask me to serve in that role. I have never been a.... and I know I couldn't do it. I don't have the talents necessary.
- — — — **F.** If those 10 families can't agree with the majority, that's tough. In this church the majority rules. If they don't like what we are doing, they can have
go somewhere else.
- — — — **G.** Since God has told me what His will is for this church, all you have to do is listen to me. Anybody who doesn't agree with me is unspiritual and out of God's will.

1. The Spirit decides who to give assignments to, and enables members to accomplish His work.
2. The body is a single unit made up of many parts.
3. Members of the body do not decide their own role in the
4. God puts members in the body where He wants them to be.
5. The body is not complete without all the members God has given the body.
6. Members of the body need every
7. The body should be united as one, not divided.
8. Members of the body should
Equal concern for each other.
9. Members of the body have different assignments from God for the good of the whole body.

Each of these statements may reflect an incorrect understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Some principles to use are A—5 and 6; B—8; C—3 and 4; D—1 and 3; E—1; F—7; G—2, 5, and 6.

Anytime you evaluate the way a church body functions, you should keep at least three concerns in mind:

!!

God's Concerns for the Body of Christ

1. Jesus is Head of the body. The body ought to be Christ-centered.
2. God is very concerned about the body maintaining unity and oneness of heart.

3. Love like that described in 1 Corinthians 13 should prevail. Members of the body ought to love each other as they love themselves.

As you read the following responses, note statements that will help you function correctly in the body of Christ.

A. “I think we should clean up our church membership rolls and get rid of all those names of people who don’t attend any more.” The first question this church needs to ask is, Are these people members of the body of Christ—are they Christians? If God added them to your body because that is where He wanted them (**1 Cor. 12:18**), do you have a right to delete them? A church needs all of the members God has given their body (principles 5 and 6). This church should pray and ask God to show them how to reclaim these wayward members for active fellowship.

B. “Bill got himself into trouble by breaking the law. It doesn’t bother me that he has to serve time in jail.” When one member suffers, all suffer (**1 Cor. 12:26**), even if the suffering is the consequence of sin. Members of Christ’s body are commanded to love one another. Read **1 Corinthians 13** if you want to see how love would respond in the body. Show concern for all members of the body (Principle 8).

C. “I think I should be elected Chairman of the Deacons. After all, I have been a faithful member of this church for 42 years.” This could be a self-centered desire. We serve in the church by God’s assignment (Principles 3 and 4). We do not choose our own function. If God intends for you to serve in a particular capacity, the Head (Jesus Christ) can bring the rest of the body to recognize that. Will you trust Him to do that through the body?

D. “If I can’t be a Sunday School teacher, I’ll just quit coming to this church.” The church needs to be sensitive to what others sense God may be leading them to do. Principles 1 and 3 focus attention on the fact that God is the one who should decide where one functions in the body. Trust Him to let the body know. A nominating committee for church leadership positions must be very prayerful in discerning God’s will. Both the individual and the church must carefully seek God’s will and trust Him to make His will clear.

E. “I don’t care that the rest of the body thinks God is leading them to ask me to serve in that role. I have never been a . . . and I know I couldn’t do it. I don’t have the talents necessary.” One problem we face in the body is that we seldom see God at work. We just see people. Do try to see God at work in His people. Principle 1 points out that the Holy Spirit will enable a person to carry out any assignment that God gives the person. Just because you have never done something before, or because you don’t think you have the skills does not necessarily mean that God is not giving you that assignment. Moses gave some objections like this one when God was calling him at the burning bush. Take very seriously what the body senses to be God’s will. Take what the body senses to the Lord and trust God to guide you correctly.

Be willing to respond as unto the Lord. Serve with all your heart as unto the Lord. That place in the church life could become one of the most exciting places of the activity of God. Don't do it just to fill a job. Do it as unto the Lord.

[Can teaching unruly teenage boys become a special assignment from God? Shortly after I began teaching teenage boys at a church in California, 23 leather-jacketed teenagers walked into the back of that church. None of them were Christians. God put me in the midst of a group of hurting young people. Within three months, 22 of the 23 teenagers had come to know the Lord. Their changed lives broke up a gang called The Untouchables. The low cost housing area where they lived had a high concentration of crime. The crime rate dropped dramatically when God brought 22 teenage boys to saving faith in Christ.]

God can display Himself anywhere in the life of the church that you are willing to let Him put your life. Ask God to fill that position and that place in the life of the church with His presence. You could become the catalyst to turn that church completely upside down.

F. "If those 10 families can't agree with the majority, that's tough. In this church the majority rules. If they don't like what we are doing, they can go somewhere else." The church functions by the rule of the Head—Jesus Christ. We often settle for majority rule, because we don't want to wait until the Head has time to convince the body of His will. If we are willing to sacrifice the unity of the body so the majority can have their way, we are not taking **1 Corinthians 12:25** (Principle 7) very seriously. Didn't Jesus pray for the unity of the church in **John 17** so the world could believe in Him? We ought to have a similar burden for unity. Give Jesus—the Head—time to do the convincing. When He has brought the body to an understanding of His will, the timing will be just right to proceed! Each member is precious to God.

"My prayer is . . . that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

—**John 17:20-21**

G. "Since God has told me what His will is for this church, all you have to do is listen to me. Anybody who doesn't agree with me is unspiritual and out of God's will."

Principles 2, 5, and 6 apply here. When the eye begins to see, the eye has a tendency to say, "Hand, why don't you see what I see? You're not spiritual."

Then the poor hand says, "I can't see, because I am a hand."

The eye has forgotten that the body is not one part but many (**1 Cor. 12:14**). The Spirit of God manifests Himself to every person. Why? For the common good. When the eye sees, it is not for the eye. His sight is for the body. Sight is not for the eye's sake so he can say, "I thank God that I have the gift of seeing. I wish all the rest of you did, too." Sight is for the body's sake. All the other members depend on the eye to tell them what he sees.

As illustrated in the “parable of the train tracks”, the eye will seldom get the whole picture of what God has for a church. The body needs everyone to express what he or she senses. When the church puts together what each member senses, then the body comes to know the will of God perfectly. No one individual can know all the will of God for a church. Leaders understand the will of God for the church when they listen to the members of the body express what they are experiencing in the life of that body.

You may come with a sincere heart and share what you sense God is saying through you as pastor, but never assume that you know all that God has for the church. Share and then listen to what all the rest of the body says. Often you’ll find that the **blending** of what God is saying through you and what He is saying through someone else is God’s will. Neither one of you knew the whole will of God. At other times, share and realize: the Lord wants the body to begin making some adjustments, but the timing is not right to start the work now. When God brings the body to unity, then you’ll know the timing is right. What you sense God wants to do may not be wrong, it is just not complete. You need to hear what the other members are saying in order to understand fully what God is saying to you.

What is one thing you think God wants you to do differently as you relate to other members of the body of Christ—your church?

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- Jesus is Head of the body.
- God is very concerned about the body maintaining unity.
- God-like love ought to prevail in the body.
- God decides where I ought to function in the body.
- I understand the will of God for my church when I listen to the whole body express what they are experiencing in the life of that body.
- Each member is precious to God.

LESSON 5; UNIT 10

LIFE IN THE BODY

As you and your church allow God to teach you how to effectively live as a body, you will **see a love and unity spring forth that you may not have experienced before**. Effective body life begins with each individual being rightly related to God in an intimate love relationship. It continues **as all the members are rightly related to Jesus Christ as the Head** of your church.

Right relationships with God are far more important than buildings, budgets, programs, methods, church personnel, size, or anything else.

The Scriptures give many helps for a church body to be rightly related to each other.

Read each of the following Scriptures. Note God's will for relationships in the church body.

Romans 14:1, 12-13—"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. . . . each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way."

God's will: _____

1 Corinthians 10:24—"Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others."

God's will: _____

Ephesians 4:25—"Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body."

God's will: _____

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

God's will: _____

Ephesians 4:31-32—"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

God's will: _____

Ephesians 5:19-20—"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything."

God's will: _____

Ephesians 5:21—"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

God's will: _____

Colossians 3:13-14—"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

God's will: _____

As you read the New Testament, you will find many instructions that speak specifically to

how God's people ought to live in relation to others. These instructions are not in the Bible just for you to study, memorize, discuss, or debate. They are written so you may know how to experience abundant life in Christ. When you have doubts about how to apply a Scripture, take your concern to the Lord. His Spirit can help you come to understand spiritual truth.

A Covenant Relationship in the Body

[**First Corinthians 12:7 and 18** tell us that God is the one who adds members to the body as it pleases Him. He adds them to the body for the common good of the whole body. When God added a member to our body, we had a cause for rejoicing. When a person came for membership in our church, we immediately began talking about what being the body of Christ meant. As pastor, I led the congregation to establish a covenant relationship with the person. (A covenant is a sacred pledge or agreement.) Though I varied the process depending on the individual's experience, the covenant making usually went something like this:

I would ask persons desiring membership to briefly share their personal testimonies. Then I would ask the person to respond to the following:

- Do you affirm before this congregation that Jesus Christ is your Saviour and Lord?
- Have you obediently followed the Lord in believer's baptism? (Or: Do you desire to follow the Lord in believer's baptism?)
- Do you clearly believe God is adding you to this body of Christ? (Or: Tell us how you have come to sense that God is adding you to this body.)

Then I would say, "God is not adding you to our church accidentally. If God is adding you to our body, He wants to do something through your life to help us become more complete."

- Will you allow God to work through you to make this body more complete?
- Will you open your life to allow this body to minister to you to help you become more complete?

After the person testified to these questions, I would turn to the congregation and ask:

- From the testimony you have heard, Do you believe that God is adding this person to our body?
- Would you open your life to this person to let God work in your life through him (her)?
- Would you let God work through each of you to help this one become all God has purposed for him (her)?

Then, I would remind the church: "None of us know what this person may go through in the days to come. God may have added him to our body because He knew he was going to need our ministry. Will you covenant with this person to let God flow through you to help him become all God wants him to be? If you will so pledge yourself, stand and let's thank God for what He has just done by adding this person to our body. Because God added this person to our church, God will do something that will make us more of what He wants us to be."

We took this covenant relationship very seriously. Once a young girl asked me to remove her name from our membership roll. She had joined a cult. I told her, “We cannot do that. We have entered into a sacred covenant agreement with you. We believe you are making a mistake in the decision you have made. Though you have broken your part of the covenant, we are obligated to keep our part. Our church family will continue to love and pray for you. Whenever you need us, we will be here for you.”

About six to nine months later she came back. She came to realize how she had been deceived. She said, “Thank you for continuing to love me. Thank you for not giving up on me.” That’s what the body of Christ is all about. The body cares for each member of the body, so that together all the members become more complete in love and in Christ.]

God Builds the Body to Match the Assignment

If you were going to be a weight lifter, you would train your body so that it could lift weights effectively. If you were going to be a sprinter, you would train your body differently. When you want to do a job well, you train your body to match the assignment.

When God builds a local church as the body of Christ, **He adds members to the body and trains them to match the assignment He has for that body.** He builds a local church body in a way that enables that body to respond to Him. Then God can accomplish an assignment through that body.

[Let me illustrate. In the early days in Saskatoon, our church had about 15 or 20 people. We sensed that God wanted to use us to start churches in towns and villages all across Canada. As we prayed about this, we sensed God wanted to work through us to reach students on the university campus. We came to believe that if we would be faithful to witness on that campus, God would save many of those students. If we would then be faithful in involving them in the life of the body, we believed God would call many of them to be pastors, church staff members, and missionaries all across Canada.

We had two major problems: we didn’t have a single college student and we didn’t know how to reach students on a university campus. But we had an assignment. We began to pray and watch to see what God would do to help this body become the kind of body that could fulfill that assignment to that campus. The first persons I baptized were a professor at the university and his daughter. Then God began to bring other students into the church, and the body began to grow.

God led us to Robert Cannon, the Baptist Student Union Director at a university in Texas. He sensed God was calling him to Canada to work with students, but we had no money to move him or pay him. Robert came and God provided. When Robert came, I said, “Robert, you are here to equip the body so that the body can fulfill its ministry of reaching students

for Christ on the campus. The assignment for campus ministry has been given to our church.” Read **Ephesians 4:11-13**.

Where did the assignment come from?

The assignment came from God to the church. God added Robert to our body to equip the body to carry out its ministry to the campus. Robert helped pray-ers know how to pray concerning the campus. He helped those given to hospitality to linkup with students who needed a home away from home. He equipped others to witness. He helped the church know how to minister to the needs of the campus.

At least 50 students have gone on to the seminaries to train for ministry. Many are returning to pastor churches. God built the body, gave it an assignment, and equipped it so He could accomplish the assignment through the members. The church was faithful, and God did what He told us He wanted to do.

Because I know God builds the body to match the assignment, **I pay close attention to the people God adds to the body. Sometimes that is an indication of an assignment God is getting**

us ready for. Over a short period of time, several people related to the medical profession joined our church. We began praying to see why God had added them to our church.

When the assignment to reach the native Indians on the reservations came to us, this group felt led to be a part of that work. They went to the reservations and provided a wide variety of free medical help. While people waited in line to receive help, other members of the church were there to talk and witness. The medical clinic opened doors for us to start Bible studies, lead people to the Lord, and start churches with the native Indians.]

Pay attention to the people God adds to your church.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Right relationships with God are far more important than buildings, budgets, programs, methods, church personnel, size, or anything else.**
- **God doesn’t add members to the body accidentally.**
- **God builds the body to match the assignment.**
- **God builds the body, gives it an assignment, and equips the body to carry out the assignment.**
- **I will pay close attention to the people God adds to my church.**

UNIT 11

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.—**1 JOHN 1:7**

Read the story of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-39.

Lesson 3 Activities

Select two of the following parables for further study: Matthew 13:47-50; 18:23-35; 20:1-16; 25:1-13; 25:31-46; Mark 4:26-29;

Answer the following questions for each of the two parables you selected.

1. What is the name of the parable and what is the Scripture reference? _____
2. What do you sense Jesus was trying to teach by telling this parable? _____
3. What application of this principle do you think God wants you to make in your life? in your church? _____

Turn to Matthew 5—7. Look for at least one principle for right living that God might want to apply to your life today.

Lesson 4 Activities

Read 1 John 1:1-7

Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 13. Slowly read verses 4-8 and write words and phrases that describe what Christian love is and is not.

LESSON 1; UNIT 11

KINGDOM PEOPLE

Memorize this verse:

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.—**1 JOHN 1:7**

Vincent Paul and East Indians

[Our Vancouver association had decided we would do everything God led us to do to reach every person with the gospel. I was driving through Vancouver and saw some East Indians (persons from the nation of India). We had an East Indian community of about 60,000 people. I realized that we didn't have a single East Indian congregation. At that time no evangelical group in Vancouver had a congregation reaching East Indians.

God gave me a burden for reaching East Indians. I began to share with our churches about the need for a congregation among the East Indians. In our area one of the strong prejudices is toward East Indians. Which church would be willing to sponsor a mission with a group that the community has a prejudice against? That would require a major adjustment in the thinking of one of our churches.

I shared the need and asked people to pray that God would show us how He was going to reach East Indians through us. We prayed. Then we watched expectantly for how God

would unfold His plan. We made an adjustment in our lives to receive what God was going to do. We wanted to ready ourselves; so when God began to move, we could join Him immediately.

At the end of the summer a pastor called me and said, “Henry, we have had an unusual thing happen in our Vacation Bible School. We had a large group, and two-thirds of them were East Indian.”

I shared with him what we had been praying. I asked, “Would you go back and ask your church if they would sponsor an East Indian mission church?” He did, and they agreed to sponsor that mission. Then I said, “Let’s pray that God will give us a trained East Indian pastor.”

I had no idea where to find such a man. But, God knew!

Two months later, I received a phone call. A man with an accent said, “My name is Vincent Paul. My wife and I were born in India. We started five Baptist churches in India. I am just now graduating from Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. God has laid on my heart that I am to come and start an East Indian congregation in Vancouver. Do you have a need?” Vincent Paul came, and the Lord put together all of his financial support. God is good!]

ON MISSION TO THE WORLD

You cannot be in relationship with Jesus and not be on mission.

When you respond to God’s invitation to an intimate love relationship with Him, He brings you into a partnership with Himself. God has added you to a local body of believers. Together you are the body of Christ in your community. As Head of your church, Christ Himself is guiding and working through your church to accomplish the will of the Father.

The Spirit that bonds you to other believers in a local church also bonds you to ALL believers.

God’s people from every local body of Christ are part of God’s kingdom. Christians are kingdom people, and Christ Himself is the eternal King over His kingdom. **He “has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father” (Rev. 1:6).** In this partnership with

Christ as King, **you become involved in His mission to reconcile a lost world to God.** To be related to Christ is to be on mission with Him. **You cannot be in relationship with Jesus and not be on mission.** Jesus said, “**As the Father has sent me, I am sending you**” (John 20:21).

God Has a World on His Heart!

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him

shall not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:16**). **God fashioned Christ’s first body by the Holy Spirit and placed Him in Mary. He became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus provided for our salvation through His death and resurrection. Once Jesus returned to heaven, God fashioned a new body of Christ through the Holy Spirit.**

God established each church as a body of Christ, so that He could continue His redemptive work in the world.

Every congregation is a world missions strategy center. God can touch a world through you. You just need to adjust your life to God’s activity where you are.

[In Vancouver I served as interim pastor of a little church. A Laotian refugee family had joined the church the week before I came. I knew that **God never adds to the body by accident.**

Those added to the church are my ministry. My responsibility as pastor was to see what God was doing when He added them to our church. I needed to see what God wanted to do in their lives through our church. I needed to see what God wanted to do through them in the life of our church.

Impacting the World

Thomas, the father, had been saved in a refugee camp in Thailand. His life was so gloriously transformed that he wanted all of his Laotian people to know Jesus. He went all over the community trying to find his Laotian brothers and lead them to Christ. The first week Thomas led 15 adults to the Lord. The next week he led 11 to the Lord, and he wept because he felt he was so unfaithful to the Lord.

In our next church business meeting I said, “We need to start a Laotian mission church.” I shared all I knew of what God was doing. “I believe God is leading those people to the Lord so we can start a Laotian mission,” I explained. Then I asked the church to decide how they sensed God wanted us to respond. They voted to start a Laotian mission church.

Then I said, “We ought to call Thomas as the pastor.” I told them what God was doing in Thomas’ life. God had given him a pastor’s heart. He had a burden for evangelism. He had just enrolled in a local Baptist theological college to get training to do anything God wanted to do through him. They voted to call Thomas as pastor of the new mission.

Two months later Thomas was invited to a meeting for ethnic pastors in Saint Louis. Thomas asked if he could go. I said, “Sure.”

Then he asked, “Can I take some friends with me?” I didn’t know what that meant until he said he wanted to take 18 friends with him. Then he said, “Henry, would you mind if I came back through all the major cities of Canada? My brothers are in all these cities. God wants me to go and lead some of them to the Lord. If God will help me, I’ll find a pastor for them. Then they can have a church in every major city of Canada.” Then I knew that God was doing something.

I said, “Oh, Thomas, please go!” He did. Later that year at Christmas, Laotian people from all across Canada came to celebrate the new life in Christ they had found.

Some time later I went back to Vancouver to visit. I asked about Thomas. The Laotian government had granted permission to start churches. Thomas returned to Laos and preached the gospel, and 133 members of his family came to know the Lord. He started four mission churches. He linked the church in Vancouver with the Laotian churches with the heart’s desire of seeing all the Laotian people come to know the Lord.

All we saw was one Laotian refugee. What did God see? He saw a people and a whole nation being drawn to Himself. When God honors your church by placing a new member in the body, ask God to show you what He is up to. He wants to touch your community and maybe even the world through your church.]

Think about your community. Where in your community could a person be used of God in ways that could impact world missions?

- ☐ International students at the local college or university
- ☐ International business personnel at local companies
- ☐ Tourists from foreign countries
- ☐ International seamen on ships in port
- ☐ Ethnic persons who have contact with their native country
- ☐ Local individuals who do business in foreign countries
- ☐ Christian youth and college students who might be called of God to be missionaries
- ☐ Laypersons who would be willing to serve as volunteers in short-term foreign mission projects (evangelism, medical and health care, disaster relief, agriculture, teaching English, and so forth).
- ☐ Others _____

[I was speaking to a conference in Minneapolis/St. Paul about participating with God to touch a world. A pastor from an inner-city church, said, “That’s how God told me to function as a pastor! We began to look for what God was doing. Someone from Jamaica joined our church and asked, ‘Would you come and preach in our country. We need the Lord so much.’ I took some people with me. We started three churches while we were there. The next month God

added to our church someone from another Caribbean nation. We went there and started churches. Now we are sponsoring mission churches in three Caribbean nations.”

Then he smiled and said, “Last Sunday we had a man join our church from Ghana, West Africa. I don’t know what God’s up to, but we’re ready to see!”]

They discovered they were Kingdom citizens. **To experience God and to know and do the will of God is to put your life alongside the activity of God and let the Spirit of God show you why that happened in your church.** Adjust your life to Him, and let Him work through you to draw a world to Himself.

Isn’t it sad when we become so self-centered that we come into the presence of God and say, “Oh God, bless me. Bless my family. Bless my church.”

Then God says something like: “I’ve been trying to do that all along, but in a completely different way than you have anticipated. I want you to deny self. Pick up a cross and follow me.

I will lead you to places where I am working, and I’ll include you. You will be an instrument in My hand so I can touch a world. When I do that through you, you will really experience My blessings.”

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **I am a Kingdom person, and Christ is my King.**
- **To be related to Christ is to be on mission with Him.**
- **Every congregation is a world missions strategy center.**
- **Anytime God has access to our church, He can touch the world through us.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 11

KINGDOM WAYS (revealed in Parables)

The principles of God’s kingdom and the principles of the world are vastly different.

“ ‘My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’ ” (**Isa. 55:8-9**).

The principles of God’s kingdom and the principles of the world are vastly different. Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place” (**John 18:36**). Servants in

God's kingdom do not function the way the world would expect. Paul cautioned the Christians at Colosse, "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Parables of the Kingdom

Jesus told many parables about the Kingdom. (A parable is a true-to-life story that illustrates a spiritual truth.) Jesus tried to help His disciples understand some of the characteristics of His kingdom and of Kingdom ways. Although some of Jesus' parables have much symbolic meaning (like the wheat and weeds below), most of the parables have one primary idea to teach.

Read the following parables of the Kingdom and respond to the questions that follow.

Read Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43—The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Tares)

1. According to Jesus' interpretation (vv. 37-43), match the items on the left with the interpretation on the right.

Parable

One who sowed good seed
The good seed
The field
One who sowed weeds
The weeds
The harvest
The harvesters

Kingdom

the devil
sons of the evil one
angels
the Son of Man
the end of the age
the world
sons of the kingdom

2. According to this parable, what two kinds of people will appear to be members of Christ's kingdom?
3. The two kinds of people will be separated. When and by whom?
4. What meaning do you think this parable has for you or your church?

Membership rolls of churches are not the true test of whether a person belongs to the Kingdom. Just because a person has some resemblance to other Christians does not mean he is a Christian. Using this parable, Jesus teaches that some lost and evil people are mixed with true believers in churches. Notice, however, that God is the one who will make the final judgment about each person's relationship to Him. We should give ourselves to helping true believers grow and bear fruit. God will do the weeding out of unbelievers. That is His job. When a person is not bearing fruit, we should let God work through us to help the person with his deepest spiritual need. He knows what that need is, and what needs to be done about it. Sometimes, however, Christian discipline is required as an expression of God-like love (Matt. 18:15-17; Heb. 12:6).

Read Matthew 13:31-32—The Parable of the Mustard Seed

1. Based on size, how does the Kingdom start and how does it end?
2. What meaning do you think this parable has for you or your church?

Even though you may feel small and insignificant, you can find hope in the story of the mustard seed. God can take something small and seemingly insignificant and use it to produce something large and helpful. Do you feel like you are just not strong enough or influential enough? Be encouraged! God can do anything He wants with one person who believes Him and will obey Him. Does your church feel like it is too small to do much? What seems impossible with man is possible with God (**Matt. 19:26**). A church committed to the lordship of Christ can touch the world!

Read Matthew 13:33—The Parable of the Yeast (Leaven)

Do you ever want to see things change quickly at church or in your community? They can. But in the Kingdom, growth is more often like the yeast in a lump of bread dough. Yeast affects the dough nearby. Then that dough affects the dough nearest it. Before long a little yeast can bring about change in the whole lump. **Be patient and faithful to the Lord.** God will cause your small influence to have far reaching effects in His timing. Don't try to force change with your own strength. Trust God to do His work of bringing change through you.

Read Matthew 13:44-46—The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl

1. How valuable is entrance into the Kingdom?
2. What would a wise person be willing to do to enter the Kingdom?
3. What meaning do you think this parable has for you or your church?

Participation in the Kingdom is more valuable than anything you can imagine. Jesus said it would be worth giving up everything you have in order to gain entrance to the Kingdom. In fact that is exactly what He demands (**Luke 14:33**). You must deny yourself and yield everything to His Lordship in order to be a disciple—the benefits are well worth the cost.

Read Matthew 25:14-30—The Parable of the Talents (Money)

1. What reward was given to the faithful servants who were good stewards of what the master had given them? (vv. 21, 23)
2. How did the wicked, lazy servant misuse the money the master entrusted to him? (vv. 24-27)
3. What meaning do you think this parable has for you or your church?

A very important Kingdom principle is found in the parable of the talents. (Talents were units of money in the time of Jesus.) When God gives you or your church resources, people, or assignments to develop and use for the Kingdom, He expects faithful stewardship. To those who are faithful, He will entrust even more and greater things. Jesus sums this principle

up this way:

If you are faithful in a little, God will make you ruler over much.

If you (or your church) are not faithful with what God entrusts to your care, don't be surprised if He refuses to give you more! Don't be surprised if He even takes away what He gave you! For instance, suppose God gives a church several new believers who join by profession of their faith. If the church just leaves them to grow and mature on their own, these new believers may get discouraged and drop out. Have you ever heard a church say something like, "We are bringing people in the front door, and they are leaving out the back door"? If God is giving them, and a church is losing them, the church would do well to take a serious look at the stewardship of those lives God is giving.

Suppose God seems to stop or decrease the people, resources, or assignments He is entrusting to you or your church. That ought to cause you to stand before the Master and find out what He wants you or your church to do and be. There may be a serious flaw that He wants to correct (**Luke 19:26**).

Match the Kingdom principle on the left with the parable on the right that teaches the principle.

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| ___ 1. Belonging to God's kingdom is worth giving up everything. | A. Wheat and Weeds |
| ___ 2. He that is faithful with a little will be made ruler over much. | B. Mustard Seed |
| ___ 3. Although non-Christians have joined our churches, God knows the ones who belong to Him. He will separate Christians from non-Christians in judgment. | C. Yeast |
| ___ 4. A small godly influence steadily grows and eventually affects those around it. | D. Hidden Treasure/Pearl |
| ___ 5. Small beginnings can grow into great ministries for the Kingdom's sake. | E. Talents |

Answers are: 1-D; 2-E; 3-A; 4-C; 5-B.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **God can do anything He wants with one person who believes Him and will obey Him.**
- **God can cause my small influence to have far-reaching effects in His timing.**
- **The Kingdom is worth everything.**
- **If I am faithful in a little, God will make me ruler over much.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 11

KINGDOM WAYS

The teachings of Jesus are filled with principles for living in His kingdom.

Here are some other parables of the Kingdom. I have listed at least one Kingdom truth that comes from each. You may want to read and study them as an optional activity.

Select two of the following parables for further study.

- **Matthew 13:47-50—The Parable of the Net**—God and His angels are the ones who distinguish between the wicked and the righteous in judgment.
- **Matthew 18:23-35—The Parable of the Wicked Servant**—Forgive and show mercy to others the way God does to you.
- **Matthew 20:1-16—The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard**—God is sovereign and generous. God is being fair when He treats new converts just as generously as He does people who have served Him for many years.
- **Matthew 25:1-13—The Parable of the Ten Virgins**—Keep watch and be prepared for the Lord Jesus to return. When He comes you must be ready.
- **Matthew 25:31-46—The Parable of the Sheep and Goats**—Those who really belong to the Kingdom will demonstrate their love for God by loving their fellowman. This love will be demonstrated in acts of kindness to meet real needs of others.
- **Mark 4:26-29—The Parable of the Seed Growing Secretly**—Human effort alone cannot produce fruit. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. Yet, we are privileged to work together with God in His kingdom work. But only He is able to bring forth the fruit.
- **Other parables** relate to the Kingdom but do not specifically mention “the kingdom.” Here are some passages you also may want to study: **Matt. 7:1-6; Matt. 7:24-27; Matt. 9:16-17; Matt. 11:16-17; Matt. 12:43-45; Matt. 13:3-8, 18-23; Matt. 21:28-30; Matt. 21:33-43; Matt. 24:32-35; Mark 4:21-22; Luke 7:41-42; 10:30-37; 11:5-8; Luke 12:16-21; 13:6-9; 14:16-24; 14:28-30; 14:31; 15:4-7; 15:8-9; 15:11-32; 16:1-9; Luke 16:19-31; 17:7-10; 18:2-5.**

Answer the following questions for each of the two parables you selected.

1. What is the name of the parable and what is the Scripture reference?
2. What do you sense Jesus was trying to teach by telling this parable?
3. What application of this principle do you think God wants you to make in your

life? in your church?

Kingdom Principles

The teachings of Jesus are filled with principles for living in His kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5—7**), for instance, is a valuable guide for right living in an evil world.

Matthew 5—7. You do not have to read the entire sermon right now, but look for at least one principle for right living that God might want to apply to your life today. Answer the following questions:

1. What is the Scripture reference?
2. What is the principle? State it in your own words.
3. How do you think God wants you to apply this principle to your life today?

At some time you may want to read through **Matthew 5—7** and make a list of principles for right living.

As you read the following list, ask God to identify principles that He wants you to pay more attention to.

1. Don't worry about your life. Seek first the purposes of the Kingdom, and God will take care of your physical needs (**Matt. 6:25-33**).
2. To achieve greatness in the kingdom of heaven, humble yourself as a little child (**Matt. 18:1-4**).
3. Leadership and greatness in the Kingdom are NOT based on power, influence, or position.
A leader who wants to be great will serve the needs of others. The one who wants to be first must become like a slave to others (**Matt. 20:25-27**).
4. The purpose of a believer or a church is to serve others, not to be served (**Matt. 20:28**).
5. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (**Matt. 23:12**).
6. If an individual (or a church) tries to save his spiritual life and vitality by keeping things to himself, he will lose it. If he (or a church) is willing to give himself away for the sake of others, he will find the fullness and abundance of life as God intended it to be (**Luke 9:24**).
7. "Stop passing judgment on one another" over disputable matters. "Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. . . . It is better not to . . . do anything else that will cause your brother to fall" (**Rom. 14:13-21**).

8. In the body of Christ, submit yourselves to one another out of reverence to Christ, the Head of the body (**Eph. 5:21**).

LESSON 4; UNIT 11

You cannot be in true fellowship with God and be out of fellowship with your fellow Christians.

KOINONIA: the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with others.

In the mind and teaching of Jesus, a church was a vital, living, dynamic fellowship of believers. The Greek word koinonia, most frequently translated “fellowship,” is the best way to describe what a church ought to be. In these last two units I will use the word Koinonia to mean **the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with other believers.**

Koinonia, or intimate fellowship, in the church is based on a personal Koinonia with God in Christ by individual believers. Koinonia with God only comes from a real, personal encounter with the living Christ and surrender to Him as absolute Lord of life. This is the intimate love relationship we have talked about. God pursues that kind of a relationship with you.

How would you define koinonia?

Which of the following words can you use to describe your relationship to God?

- ☐ alive
- ☐ close
- ☐ cold
- ☐ distant
- ☐ growing
- ☐ intimate
- ☐ personal
- ☐ real
- ☐ removed
- ☐ stagnant
- ☐ uneasy
- ☐ vibrant

Read 1 John 1:1-7. Notice the word “fellowship” (koinonia) each time it occurs. Then answer the questions that follow.

1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2) The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3) We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4) We write this to make our joy complete. 5) This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6) If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:1-7).

1. What are some words in verses 1-3 that indicate John had a personal and real relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ?
2. Why did John write about what he had seen and heard of Jesus? (v. 3)
3. What are two benefits to believers because of the fellowship they share with God and each other? (vv. 4, 7)
4. What is indicated when a person says he has fellowship (koinonia) with God, but he walks in sin and darkness? (v. 6)
5. What will be true of a person who walks in the light as God is in the light? (v. 7)

Answers for questions 1-5: (1) John said he had seen, heard, and touched Jesus. John had an experiential knowledge of Jesus. He had come to know Him as the “eternal life” (v. 2). John is also the one who recorded Jesus’ words: “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Eternal life means knowing God by experience in a real and personal way. **This is Koinonia—fellowship with God.** (2) John proclaimed Jesus so others would believe in Him and thus have **fellowship with John and the other believers.** (3) When we fellowship with God and when others come into fellowship with Him and with us, our joy is made complete and we experience the cleansing work of Jesus’ blood. (4) Such a person is a liar. His or her life is a lie. (5) If a person walks in the light as God is in the light, he or she will have fellowship with other believers and experience forgiveness and cleansing of sin.

Fellowship Among Believers

You cannot be in fellowship with God and His Son and not walk in godly fellowship with one another!

First John clearly states that your relationships with your Christian brothers and sisters are an expression of your relationship with God. **You cannot be in true fellowship with God and be out of fellowship with your fellow Christians** (brothers).

1 John 2:9-11 “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness.”

1 John 3:10 “This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”

You cannot be in fellowship with God and His Son and not walk in godly fellowship with one another!

1 John 3:14-15 “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.”

1 John 3:16-17 “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?”

1 John 4:7-8 “Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

1 John 4:11-12 “Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.”

1 John 4:20-21 “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

1 John 5:1-2 “Everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands.”

How does your relationship with your brother indicate the kind of relationship you have with God?

Suppose a person claimed to be a Christian. Suppose he claimed to love Jesus, yet he treated his Christian brothers and sisters harshly. He was unkind and hateful toward them. He was consistently in arguments with them. He publicly ridiculed them or slandered their name or reputation. He was unwilling to help them when they were in need. In the light of 1 John, what would you say about this person's relationship with God?

Read 1Corinthians 13. 4-8 and note words and phrases that describe what Christian love is and is not.

1 Cor. 13:4--8 ⁴Love is **patient**, love is **kind**. It does **not** envy, it does **not** boast, it is **not** proud. ⁵It is **not** rude, it is **not** self-seeking, it is **not** easily angered, it keeps **no** record of wrongs. ⁶Love does **not** delight in evil but **rejoices with the truth**. ⁷It **always** protects, always trusts, always **hopes**, always **perseveres**.

⁸Love **never** fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

(example).

Love is... patient

Love is not ...

Jesus said:

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **A church is a vital, living, dynamic fellowship of believers.**
- **Koinonia is the fullest possible partnership and fellowship with God and with others.**
- **I cannot be in fellowship with God and His Son and not walk in godly fellowship with other believers.**

LESSON 5; UNIT 11

KOINONIA IN THE KINGDOM

Koinonia takes on new dimensions, new possibilities, and new richness as churches relate in the wider circles of the Kingdom.

Kingdom people are interrelated with the other members and believers of the Kingdom worldwide. [After 12 years at Faith Baptist Church in Saskatoon, I became Director of Missions for an association of 11 churches and mission churches in the greater Vancouver area of British Columbia, Canada. Guiding a church to walk with Christ as Head of His body is one matter. Guiding an association of 11 congregations to walk together with God with one heart and one mind is a different matter. I had to face some serious questions:

- Would God speak to the churches individually, and then bring them to one mind as they came together as an association?
- Would the churches respond to God when He spoke?
- Would the churches have the same kind of Koinonia (fellowship) with other churches as believers have with other believers in a local church?

- Would churches be willing to give freely of themselves in order to experience the fullest life God has to offer (**Luke 9:23-24**) ?
- Would godly fellowship be expressed by the free sharing of resources with churches that had needs?

I came to this new assignment with the conviction that “the God we serve is able . . . and he will” (**Dan. 3:17**). Biblical principles of God’s working with His people do not change. Yes, helping a group of churches to learn to walk with God in intimate Koinonia with Him and with each other took some time. But God is the One who does that kind of miraculous work. I was only a vessel through which He chose to work.

“The God we serve is able . . .and he will” (Dan. 3:17).

Though we were a small band with few resources, God manifested His presence in the life of the churches and the association. At the beginning of unit 1 (p. 7), you read about how God led our churches to walk by faith as we witnessed to the people attending Expo ’86. At the beginning of this unit (p. 183) you read about how God worked through our association to begin ministry to East Indians. In four years the number of churches and missions in our association doubled. Student work grew from one part-time student director to five full-time directors. Almost one hundred persons expressed a sense of call into ministry or missions work. Once-strained relationships with other church groups flourished into dynamic cooperative efforts of fellowship and outreach. God did so much more than we could ever ask or think, according to the Holy Spirit’s enabling power at work in His churches (**Eph. 3:20-21**).]

[Our association in Saskatchewan had a unique Koinonia created by the Holy Spirit. Together our churches drew grids over the province. We developed a network to reach the entire province for Christ. Much like the New Testament churches, we considered everything each of us possessed as belonging by love to each other. A church’s resources don’t belong to the people themselves. The church is merely a steward of the resources. Everything a church has belongs to the Kingdom. Anything that our church in Saskatoon had was available to all the others. When one church called a student minister, he became a resource for every other church to call on for help in developing student ministry. When our church had a summer youth program, we invited other churches that were too small to have their own to participate with us. We even shared copy machines and other physical resources. If one needed financial help, we didn’t hesitate to let God’s people know. Then we would take an offering. Once we even mortgaged our building to help a mission church get a building of their own.

This kind of sharing developed a deep sense of Koinonia among our churches. We belonged to each other. We needed each other. We went out of our way to help each other and meet the needs that each church had. We learned to love each other. We planned times to get together for fellowship and mutual encouragement. That is what Christ’s kingdom ought to be like. The watching world ought to be able to say, “Look how they love one another.” That

unique kind of love can only come from God. When people see that kind of God-like love, they will be drawn to Christ and His church.]

When Koinonia exists between churches, it will show in their relationships. **We cooperated in our commission to reach our world for Christ. We were able to do things together that no one of the churches alone could have done effectively.** We shared anything we had if it would meet the need of a sister church. We spent time together and loved each other.

Can that kind of Koinonia exist between churches, not only on an associational level, but also on a state, provincial, national, or international level? Yes! Can God-like Koinonia exist between churches of different denominations as they cooperate to achieve greater Kingdom purposes? Yes! However, **humans left to their own ways cannot achieve those kinds of relationships.**

Only God through His Holy Spirit can create and sustain Koinonia between His people. He wants to be the King, Ruler, and Sovereign over all His kingdom. When He is allowed to rule, **man-made barriers will fall.**

When we have Koinonia with God the same quality and nature of that Koinonia will be reflected when we relate to:

- brothers and sisters in our local church
- other churches in a local area
- other churches in a state or province
- other churches in a nation
- other churches in the world
- other churches of different Christian denominations

What could your church DO to teach and encourage Koinonia between members and with other churches???

If your church has a Koinonia problem with other Christian churches or groups, that is an

indicator of a deeper Koinonia problem with the Lord. I am not suggesting that doctrinal differences ought to be compromised, but we can act like brothers and sisters who love each other. Koinonia takes on new dimensions, new possibilities, and new fullness as we relate in the wider circles of the Kingdom. This is the same way love works.

Love on a Scale of 1 to 10

Suppose, on a scale of one to ten, you are loving at level two—you love your parents and family who love you; and you love your friends who love you. Now, suppose God enables you to love your arch enemy like Jesus commanded in **Matthew 5:43-48**. If you can love your enemy at level ten, your capacity to love other persons will increase. If you can love on a

level of ten, every other person that you have been loving will receive a greater dimension of love than you have ever been able to give them.

Evaluate your Christian love life.

- ☐ 1. I don't love anybody.
- ☐ 2. I love my family.
- ☐ 3. I love those who love me first.
- ☐ 4. I love those whom I know will love me, too.
- ☐ 5. God has helped me love those around me who are irritable and unfriendly.
- ☐ 6. God has taught me to love those in my community who are unlovely, people who are very different from me.
- ☐ 7. God has taught me to show love for people who are openly living in sin.
- ☐ 8. God has given me the grace to love my enemies.

We usually do not try to improve our capacity to love by loving the hard to love. We try to love our “enemy” and frustration and anger confront us, instead of a new kind of love. Then we say, “Lord, I didn’t want you to bring anger into my life. I wanted you to bring love into my life.” But **God can deepen our capacity to love as He enables us to love the unlovely.**

When we learn to love at these deeper levels, our capacity to love others grows.

[While I was in Vancouver, our association of churches made a commitment to love everyone and to help every person in Vancouver know the Lord. Isn’t that what Jesus commanded us in the Great Commission (**Matt. 28:18-20**) ? God put me in a relationship with a person who had a deep love for anarchists. They were young adults who were mad at every-body and wanted to destroy established order and authority. This man said, “Henry, go with me to the anarchists’ restaurant. I want you to listen to this group of people with all of their anger and bitterness. I want you to see how God can bring the gospel to them.”

That was a very powerful experience for me. I sat in that restaurant for three hours listening to an outpouring of hate and bitterness. By the aid of the Spirit of God, with my heart, mind, and life I came to love those people. I tell you, **the next Christian I met got love poured out on him. He didn’t know what had come over me. God brought me to a deeper capacity to love when He taught me to love anarchists.]**

Cooperative Relationships between Churches

The **churches of the New Testament were INTERdependent.** Each was independent before the Lord, yet they needed each other. They **helped and encouraged each other.** They had **cooperative relationships that enhanced their experience of God.**

The Young Church of Jerusalem. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 people came to trust in

Christ. We do not know how many of these lived or remained in Jerusalem after the Jewish feast was over. We do know, however, that the Jerusalem church had many members. Early on, they met in the temple courts and in **many smaller groups in individual homes**. They **met daily for teaching, fellowship, eating, and prayer**. They **shared their material resources with any believer who had a need (Acts 2:42-47)**. These many small congregations were interdependent. Because of Koinonia they were “**one in heart and mind**” (Acts 4:32).

Jerusalem Shares with Antioch. When the gospel began to bear fruit among the Greeks at Antioch, the **Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to investigate and help the young church**. When Barnabas saw God’s activity there, he got Saul (**Paul**) **to come and help**. Together they stayed in Antioch teaching the new converts (Acts 11:19-26).

Antioch Shares with the Needs in Jerusalem. Word came to the church at Antioch that their **Christian brothers and sisters in Judea were suffering from a famine**. **Because of Koinonia:**

“The disciples, each according to his ability, **decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea**. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul” (Acts 11:29-30). These churches were not totally independent. They were bound together by their common Koinonia with Christ. They had **to care for each other’s needs out of love**.

Antioch Sends Out Barnabas and Saul. The church at Antioch was missions minded. They shared Christ’s heart for a lost world. One day “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘**Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them**.’” So after they had fasted and prayed, **they placed their hands on them and sent them off**” (Acts 13:2-3). The **church at Antioch freely had received leaders, and they freely gave them** for the spread of the Kingdom.

Notice that Barnabas and Saul (Paul) already had been called to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Saul’s conversion and call had occurred several years before (Acts 9:1-19; Gal. 1:16-24).

Only in the midst of the body of Christ did they come to know the right timing for their missionary work. **God spoke to them by the Holy Spirit and through the church**. Don’t be afraid to trust God and your church to help you know God’s will and His timing for your Kingdom assignments.

Jerusalem Helps Maintain Sound Doctrine. When a dispute arose about the nature of salvation, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem for consultation. **The apostles, elders, and church at Jerusalem helped settle the dispute**. Then they **sent two of their own members to the church at Antioch to instruct, encourage, and strengthen the Gentile Christians**.

.....

Other Churches Cooperate for Kingdom Purposes. Throughout Paul's letters, we read of ways the churches cooperated with other Christians for the Kingdom's sake.

- The faith of the **Roman Christians encouraged others** all over the Christian world (**Rom.1:8-12**). Paul planned on receiving **assistance from this church for a journey to Spain** he was planning (**Rom.15:24**).
 - **Churches in Macedonia and Achaia sent contributions to the poor** Christians in Jerusalem (**Rom.15:26-27**).
 - **The church at Philippi frequently provided financial support for Paul** so that he could preach the gospel and start churches in other cities (**Phil.4:14-16**).
 - **The churches at Colosse and Laodicea shared workers** (Epaphras) **and letters from Paul** (**Col.4:12-16**).
 - The believers in **the church at Thessalonica** inspired and **became models to all the believers** in Macedonia and Achaia (**1 Thess. 1:6-10**).
-

Experiencing More of God

A believer cannot experience God in all the dimensions God has for him or her apart from the body of Christ—a local church. In the body and together on mission to the ends of the earth, Christians begin to experience the fuller dimensions of life in God's kingdom. As we experience Koinonia with other groups of God's people, we experience greater dimensions of God's presence at work in our world. God already has in place channels through which you and your church can touch a world for Him. You need to **allow Him to break down any barriers that may prevent you from experiencing all there is of God through Koinonia with others**. Go to Him and watch for His initiative. He can show you how, with whom, and when.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Everything each church possessed belonged by love to each other.**
- **Everything a church has belongs to the Kingdom.**
- **When Koinonia exists between churches, it will show in their relationships.**
- **When Christ is allowed to rule, man-made barriers will fall.**
- **The churches of the New Testament were interdependent.**
- **As my church experiences Koinonia with other groups of God's people, we experience greater dimensions of God's presence at work in our world.**

UNIT 12

ASSIGNMENTS (BEFORE the lessons are taught)

Lesson 1 Activities

Memorize this verse:

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. —**HEBREWS 10:24-25**

Lesson 3 Activities

Acts 2:42, 46-47; Ephesians 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 14:26, 29-33;

(AFTER these lessons are taught)

Lesson 5

What was the most meaningful statement or Scripture you read today? _____

Reword the statement or Scripture into a prayer of response to God. _____

What does God want you to do in response to today's study? _____

LESSON 1; UNIT 12

CONTINUING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Memorize this verse:

Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. —**HEBREWS 10:24-25**

The Saskatoon Awakening

[I went to Saskatoon to talk with Faith Baptist Church about coming as their pastor. I went to see if God wanted me to serve there. In Saskatoon God spoke to me through a local pastor who told me that Duncan Campbell had been in Saskatoon the previous year. [Duncan Campbell was used of God in a great and powerful way in a spiritual awakening in the Hebrides islands off the coast of Scotland.] Duncan said that the night before he had been assured by God that revival fires would break out here and spread all across Canada. That turned me inside out. Much of my life I have had a yearning to see spiritual awakening come to Canada. I saw how the spiritual markers God had placed in my life pointed me to this work in Saskatoon, so I accepted the call to come as pastor of Faith Baptist Church.

I wanted to pray for awakening with fellow pastors from many denominations in the city. On Tuesdays I met with one group to pray for awakening, and on Thursdays I met with the other. For a year and a half we pastors prayed together. One day Bill McCleod called and said, “Henry that for which we have been praying is happening!” He explained that they had

just finished a week of revival meetings. Two brothers in his church had not spoken to each other for six years. Both were deacons. They ran across that auditorium, hugged, wept, and renewed their relationship. A deep moving of God swept the congregation.

The services continued and many in the Christian community began to participate. The crowd outgrew Bill's church. We moved to the Anglican church that seats 700. In one night the church was filled. We moved to the Alliance church that seated 900 and overflowed in two days. Then we moved to the United church that seated 1,500. We held services every night for eleven weeks. The services would last until ten or eleven o'clock every night. Each night we held an after-meeting where people stayed in great numbers getting right with God. Sometimes the after-meetings lasted until four and five o'clock in the morning. From that awakening revivals broke out across Canada.]

Ten Years of Experiencing God

John said to the believers in the first century, "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that **you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ**" (1 John 1: 3, NKJV). And then he adds, significantly, "**And these things we write to you that your joy [and our joy] may be full**" (1 John 1:4, NKJV).

GOD'S REMEDY FOR BROKEN FELLOWSHIP

Koinonia is not an option for a believer. Koinonia is not optional **for a church.** To be "in Christ" and to be a member of His body requires a fellowship with the living Christ. The **intimate love relationship, the Koinonia, the fellowship you have with God, is the most important aspect of your knowing Him, knowing His will, and being enabled to do His will.**

When human barriers fall, and people with significant differences can live together in peace, the world sees something only God can do.

In God's kingdom "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). This

Koinonia created by the Holy Spirit also is maintained by the Spirit. Koinonia with God and with others can, however, be threatened and even broken.

Sometimes **broken fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ may be due to the other person's**

sin and broken fellowship with God. In that case you would want to **pray for him or her and do everything you can to help the person return to the Lord.**

Broken fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ **indicates a broken fellowship with God.** You always ought to begin by looking at your own relationship to the Lord. The **break begins**

in your relationship with God. It does not start with your relationship to another person. If your fellowship with God is broken, you cannot continue in fellowship with Him or with your Christian brothers and sisters. **You must first allow God to bring you back into right relationship with Himself.**

Sin Breaks Koinonia with God

Sin separates you from intimate fellowship with God. Several words in the Bible (such as **sin**, **transgression**, **iniquity**, and **evil**) relate to what is commonly called “sin.” You sin against God when you:

- Miss the mark of His purposes for you
- Rebel against Him, refuse to follow Him
- Commit acts of evil, wickedness, or immorality

When you sin against God, your fellowship with Him is broken. In the Old Testament this **broken relationship is symbolized by God’s hidden face.** A person’s face includes the **major organs for communication.** The eyes see. The ears hear. The mouth speaks. Though God does not have a physical body, **God’s “face” represented to the Hebrew God’s presence, acceptance, and approval.** For God to turn away His face was a sign of rejection, disapproval, and the absence of His presence.

Notice the word “face” in each of the following verses.

“In a surge of anger I hid my face from you” (**Isa. 54:8**).

“I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger” (**Isa. 57 : 17**) .

“You have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins” (**Isa. 64:7**).

“I will hide my face from this city because of all its wickedness” (**Jer. 33:5**).

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened” (**Ps. 66:18**).

“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (**Isa. 59:2**).

“I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it” (**Amos 8:11-12**).

“Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong” (**Hab. 1:13**).

No wonder the Psalmist cried out in anguish,

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?” (Ps. 13:1).

Fellowship with God is the most cherished privilege of the child of God. God’s hidden face is one of the most terrible disciplines.

Even God’s discipline comes as an expression of love designed to draw us back into fellowship

with Him (**Heb. 12:1-11**). This experience of an individual’s broken fellowship with God also can happen to a group—a family, a church, a denomination, or a nation.

Heb. 12:4--11 ⁴Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. ⁵And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. ⁹Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

God’s Remedies for Sin

Thank God He has given us a remedy for sin and broken fellowship:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

You confess your sin when **you agree with God about the awful nature of your wrong**. Confession and repentance go together. When **you repent of sin you turn away from the sin and return to God**. When your fellowship with God is broken because of sin, agree with Him about your sin and turn from it. **Return to God and He will forgive you and reestablish your relationship to Him.**

When you do not respond to the Holy Spirit’s conviction, God will discipline you to draw you back into Koinonia with Him.

If you do not immediately respond to God’s discipline, He will bring on you more severe judgments to get your attention. (See Lev. 26.)

These judgments may come on a family, a church, a denomination, or even a nation. When God brings judgment on His people, He also offers to forgive and bring healing to the land:

“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, **if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from**

heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land” (2 Chron.7 :13 - 14).

In **Numbers 6:24-26** God told the priests to pray this beautiful blessing for the people:

**The Lord bless you and keep you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face toward you
and give you peace.**

GOD’S REMEDY FOR SIN

- Humble yourself. Do not try to justify yourself. Do not hold on to pride.
- Pray. God hears the prayer of repentance.
- Confess your sin to God. Agree with Him that it is wrong. Confess to all who have been directly affected by your sin and ask for their forgiveness (**Matt. 5:23-24**).
- Repent. Turn away from your sinful ways and return to God and His ways.
- ☐ Seek God’s face. Seek to renew fellowship with God. Talk to Him. Listen for His voice.
- If your sin has been an ongoing problem, confess the sin to one or more Christian friends and ask them to pray for you to be set free from sin’s bondage (**Jas. 5:16**).
- Grieve. Ask God to help you understand how He feels about your sin. His desire is that you feel grief. When your heart is broken over your sin, you will be less likely to ever repeat the offense (**Ps. 51:17**).
- Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil. Purify your heart (**Jas. 4:7-10**).
- Claim the promises of forgiveness, cleansing, and healing (**2 Chron.7:14; 1 Jn.1:9**).
- Then live in the victory Jesus gives through His resurrection power!

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Koinonia is created and maintained by the Holy Spirit.**
- **Broken fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ indicates a broken fellowship with God.**
- **Sin breaks Koinonia with God.**
- **Discipline and judgment of God are expressions of His love.**

LESSON 2; UNIT 12

ESSENTIALS OF KOINONIA

Koinonia (a love relationship, intimate fellowship) with God is the basic element of salvation and eternal life (John 17:3). God takes the initiative to invite you into a love relationship. He places His Holy Spirit in you to enable you to live in a right relationship with Him.

No human method or list of steps to follow can maintain fellowship with God. Koinonia with God is an experience of His presence. Although God does take the initiative, you must respond to God in order to fully experience His presence.

The seven realities of experiencing God identify the way you come to know God by experience.

1. *_God_* is always at work around you.
2. God pursues a continuing love *_relationship_* with you that is real and *_eternal_*.
3. God invites you to become *_involved_* with Him in His *_work_*.
4. God speaks by the *_Holy_* *_Spirit_* through the Bible, *_prayer_*, circumstances, and the *_church_* to reveal Himself, His *_will_*, and His ways.
5. God's invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of *_belief_* that requires *_faith_* and action.
6. You must make major *adjustments_* in your life to join God in what He is doing.
7. You come to know God by *_experience_* as you *_obey_* Him and He accomplishes His work through you.

Notice that the last three realities identify your response to God's initiative:

- You must act on faith in Him.
- You must make major adjustments to Him.
- You must obey Him.

When you respond to God's initiative, you come to know Him intimately by experience. **Living in faithful obedience to Him allows you to experience His presence. This is Koinonia with God.**

ESSENTIALS OF KOINONIA

1. We must **love God with our total beings.**
2. We must submit to God's sovereign rule.
3. We must experience God in a real and personal way.
4. We must trust completely in God.
- (5. We must **love one another no less than we love ourselves.** —Rev c.)

Essentials of Koinonia

1. We must love God with our total beings. "This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38). If you love God, you will obey Him (John 14:21-24). If you love Him, you also will love your brother (1 John 4:21; 5:3). If your fellowship with God is right—if you love Him with your total being—you will even be able to love your enemies. The threat to fellowship is anything that causes you to lose your "first love" for God. This was the problem with the church at Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7).

“Jesus replied: ‘ “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment.’ ” **Matthew 22:37-38**

Read 1 John 2:15-16 below, and list some things that can threaten or compete with your love for God.

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.” —**1 John 2:15-16**

Loving money or things more than God will break your fellowship with Him. Your sinful cravings and lust can capture your first love. You can even fall in love with what you have or what you are able to do. When your love is not pure toward God, fellowship with God is broken. Your fellowship with others will then reflect your broken fellowship with God.

For example: Suppose a person begins to love things more than God. When fellowship with God is broken, love for others will suffer. A person who loves things more than God will become stingy and greedy. When he sees a brother in need, he will keep his “things” to use for himself. He will not give to help others. He probably will even start using God’s tithe (tenth) for himself. Greed is very dangerous (**Eph. 5:5; 1 John 3:17**).

Materialism is a terrible trap that robs many people of their love for God. Churches also can be selfish and greedy. This will cause them to use God’s resources primarily on themselves rather than to help a lost and needy world.

What is one essential of Koinonia?

Name at least two things that can threaten Koinonia by interfering with your love for God.

2. We must submit to God’s sovereign rule. God is your Master. Because of His perfect love for you, He demands absolute obedience. As Head of the church, Christ demands submission to Him and obedience to His will. Absolute surrender to His lordship is necessary for right fellowship with God.

When a person becomes “a law unto himself,” and does “what is right in his own eyes,” the experience of Koinonia becomes impossible in his life, and often in the life of a church. Yielding your loyalty or allegiance to anyone other than Christ is spiritual adultery. If a pastor, the deacons, influential business persons, or a committee tries to “run” or rule the church, Koinonia is threatened.

The problem always starts with an individual’s (or church’s) relationship to God. When a

person refuses to deny self and follow Christ, fellowship with God is broken. When self is in control, all other authority relationships will be out of control. Asserting self in the body of Christ robs Christ of His rightful authority as Head of the body.

Not only is fellowship broken when an individual tries to be head of the church, but it also is broken when the church expects their pastor, other individual, or group to rule the church. No individual or group can function as head of the body and that church be a healthy body. It may look healthy on the outside, but God sees the rebellion against His Son's rule and hates it. Every member of the church must submit to the lordship of Christ over his own life and Christ's headship over the church.

In your opinion, who does your church look to as the head of your church?

In 1 Corinthians 1—3, divisions (broken fellowship) existed in the church because some were following Paul, some were following Apollos, and some were following Peter (Cephas). Paul condemned this kind of rebellion. He rebuked any attempt to follow anyone other than Christ. To follow him or Apollos would be childish, worldly, and ungodly (**1 Cor. 3:1-4**). The church must have the “mind of Christ” (**1 Cor. 2:16**) and follow Christ alone.

Koinonia is impossible if a church is made up of individuals who are unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Christ in the body of Christ. The same impossibility exists in a larger body of fellowship (association or denomination) where pastors and other participants refuse to submit to the lordship of Christ and function in that body under Christ's rule. Anything or anyone who hinders or usurps God's rule in your life, in the church, or in the larger bodies of the Kingdom causes broken fellowship with God. When fellowship with God breaks down, it is reflected in broken fellowship with others.

In your opinion, who is looked to as the head of your denomination?

What is a second essential of Koinonia?

1. We must love God with our total beings.

2. -----

Describe how interference with Christ's rule threatens Koinonia in a church.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Koinonia with God is an experience of His presence.**
- **Koinonia with God is the basic element of salvation and eternal life.**
- **I must love God with my total being.**
- ☐ **I must submit to God's sovereign rule.**
- **Koinonia is possible only if a church is made up of individuals who are willing to submit to the lordship of Christ in the body of Christ.**

LESSON 3; UNIT 12

ESSENTIALS OF KOINONIA

Only a personal encounter with the living Christ will result in an effectively functioning Koinonia.

Yesterday you learned that Koinonia with God requires that you love God with your total being and that you submit to His sovereign rule in your life. Many people, things, and influences in your life and in your church can threaten your fellowship with God if you allow them to distract you from loving Him and following Him.

3. We must experience God in a real and personal way. Your Koinonia with God is based on your personal experience with Him. No substitutes will do. You cannot rely on the personal experience of your spouse, your parents, your pastor, your Sunday School teacher, or your fellow church members. Your Koinonia with God must be real and personal.

The threat to Koinonia comes when you allow anyone or anything to make you a spectator rather than an active participant in relationship to God. You must encounter God firsthand; or you will become passive, apathetic, or just drop out all together. You must continually encounter God firsthand or your fellowship with God will grow cold. You will quit caring about the concerns of God for His church, for the Kingdom, or for the lost world.

What are some things that happen in churches that can tempt a person to become more of a spectator than an active participant?

What is one way in which you have substituted a “spectator religion” for a personal and real experience of God?

Although organizations and programs are designed to promote outreach, growth, and ministry, they can lead to shallow relationships and indifference. If a church is not careful, it may be helping people experience a program and miss a personal encounter with the living Christ. Well organized programs, plans, methods, and Bible studies are valuable but they must not take the place of the creative experience of the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that churches should not be organized. But they must be careful that the organization encourages personal experiences with God.

Spiritual truths and realities that already have been experienced by others must not be taught just for the sake of knowledge. Instead, persons must be led to experiences where God reveals the same spiritual truth or reality in a personal way to the individual believer.

Secondhand experiences will not do.

Agencies of a denomination, for instance, have a place in doing God's will in ways that individual churches cannot accomplish alone. Yet individuals and churches must not allow the work of the denomination to become a substitute for their personal involvement in God's work. This can lead to social and spiritual indifference rather than responsible involvement and participation. Only a personal encounter with the living Christ will result in an effectively functioning Koinonia.

What are some things your denomination is able to do that most churches could not do alone?

In what way could reliance on these good things, if misused, become a hindrance to a real and personal encounter with God?

This is not an "either/or" situation. It is a "both/and" situation. Denominations, programs, methods, prepared study materials, and so forth are helpful tools for churches. But, they must not become substitutes for personal encounters with God. Each individual needs to experience the presence of the Lord at work in his or her life. Individuals experience Koinonia when they follow God's leadership and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish God's purposes.

When programs and ministries become ends instead of means, activity for activity's sake, or just superficial signs of success, then Koinonia is in grave danger of being obscured and lost. Churches must not just concern themselves with numerical results. They must look carefully at the motive and inner spirit of their work. Are lives being transformed? Are broken people finding spiritual and emotional healing? Are people personally encountering a living Christ at work in the midst of the church? If not, something is wrong with the personal relationships of members to God.

What is a third essential of Koinonia?

1. We must love God with our total beings.
2. We must submit to God's sovereign rule.
3. _____

What are some things in a church that can take the place of a real and personal encounter with God?

What is one thing in your past that you have allowed to take the place of a personal experience with God?

4. We must trust completely in God. You must depend on the Holy Spirit to do the things only God can do. You must trust in God alone.

Once when Israel was faced with trouble, they turned to Egypt for help rather than to the Lord. God said to them:

“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the Lord” (Isa. 31:1).

What are some things or people in which a church may be tempted to place their trust? (For instance, a church may trust in some wealthy givers who provide financial stability rather than trust in the God who provides through His people.)

Placing your trust in anything other than God breaks your fellowship with Him. Trusting in any of the following things to accomplish God’s work instead of trusting in God will break fellowship with Him:

- yourself, your abilities, your resources
- other people, their abilities, their resources
- programs or methods
- manipulation or coercion
- pressure tactics or guilt
- deceit
- and others

God provides people, relationships, resources, methods, and programs to be used by a church. However, a church that yields to the temptation to trust in these rather than the Lord, will displease Him. Your church may be tempted to trust in yourselves; your pastor; a well-organized Bible study program; a denominational agency; a bank; an outreach method; the government; or other organizations, people, or things. When you depend on any of these rather than God to accomplish His work in a church, fellowship with God and other believers is broken. Sometimes leaders try to use pressure tactics to get members to do God’s will. That, too, denies God’s power to guide His people Himself. Then when conflict arises, leaders may depend on a manual on handling church conflict instead of leading people back to trusting in God and loving Him alone.

The Holy Spirit manifests Himself through believers and empowers them to accomplish God-sized tasks. God grows His church. The Holy Spirit produces unity. Christ brings forth the spiritual fruit. You and your church must depend on God to accomplish His purposes in His ways through you. Completely depend on God.

Yes, He will call on you to join Him. Yes, He will ask you to do some things through which He will work. Often He will lead you to a program or method to help you organize and function to accomplish what He purposes. He will call on you to use your money, resources, skills, and abilities. But, in everything you must depend on God’s guidance, provision, gifts, and power if you hope to bear lasting fruit. Without Him, you can do nothing (John 15:5). His presence creates and maintains fellowship, and He bears lasting spiritual fruit through

an obedient and trusting people.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.” —**John 15:5**

What is the fourth essential of Koinonia?

1. We must love God with our total beings.
2. We must submit to God’s sovereign rule.
3. We must experience God in a real and personal way.
4. _____

Name one thing you have been tempted to place your trust in rather than in God.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **I must experience God in a real and personal way.**
- **I must trust completely in God.**

LESSON 4; UNIT 12

HELPING EACH OTHER

We must help each other learn to obey everything Christ commanded.

Christians need each other. That is why God places us in a church—the body of Christ. As we experience God at work in the body of believers, we know God in ways we would not know Him apart from the body. Christ dwells in every believer (**John 17:23, 26; Col. 1:27**), and believers are in Christ (**John 17:21; 2 Cor. 5:17**). We need to help each other continue in right fellowship with God and with each other.

You can experience God through relationships with other believers as He works in and through their lives. God can speak to me through you. He can speak through any member of the church at any time He chooses. That is why we need each other. Since we were created to function as a body, we cannot be healthy apart from an intimate relationship with other believers. Outside the body you do not have access to all the parts of the body that are necessary to help you become a complete person. Fellowship with the body of Christ is an important part of fellowship with God.

Helping Each Other in Discipleship

In Jesus’ commission to His church He said, “Go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (**Matt. 28:19-20**). Jesus didn’t say

“teach them what I commanded.” He said, “teach them to obey everything I have commanded.” What an assignment! Our role as a church in the life of a new believer is not complete until we help him or her learn to obey everything Christ commanded.

A person could learn WHAT Christ commanded by reading the Bible. Certainly he needs to do that. But learning to OBEY everything is a different matter. God knew that new believers would have a hard time practicing and obeying everything. That is why He puts believers into a body of Christ. Learning to follow Christ is a life-long process. You do not learn to follow Him all by yourself.

Paul said to Timothy, “The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul taught in a group setting. His relationship with Timothy was not primarily one-on-one discipleship training. Paul taught in the context of the body.

No one can become the kind of complete believer he ought to be outside the functioning body of a New Testament church. Why? Because God has set the discipling process in a body. A person who is saved is called out and added to a spiritual body where Christ is the Head. A person is only one part of the body, and he absolutely needs every other part of the body to help him function properly.

Read the following list of reasons why learning to follow Christ within the body of Christ is better than trying to grow into maturity by yourself.

- ☐ 1. When I get discouraged, others in the body can encourage me to go on.
- ☐ 2. Closely observing a godly Christian’s life challenges me to want to live close to the Lord too.
- ☐ 3. I can best learn how to live as a Christian when I see someone else giving me an example to follow.
- ☐ 4. When I stray from truth or yield to false teaching, God can correct me through His Word, the Holy Spirit, and the church.
- ☐ 5. When I fall into sin, Christian brothers and sisters can lovingly correct me and call me to repent and return to the Lord.
- ☐ 6. When God gives spiritual understanding to a fellow believer, I can learn that same truth as the person shares it and the Holy Spirit affirms it.
- ☐ 7. I can come to know God’s will for my role in the body of Christ through the affirmation of other members in the body.
- ☐ 8. I get excited when I experience God working through me to touch deeply the life of another believer.
- ☐ 9. I feel fulfilled when God uses me in a way that builds up the body and helps others grow toward maturity.

List any other reasons you can think of that explain why learning to follow Christ

in a body of believers is better than trying to follow Him alone.

God wants every believer to grow into maturity and become like Christ. Any ministry, spiritual gift, or equipping of service that God gives to a believer is for the body of Christ **(Eph. 4:11-13)**. Apart from the body, a gift or a ministry is out of context. But, when all parts of the body function where God puts them in the body, the whole body grows up in love to experience the fullness of Christ.

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” —**Ephesians 4:11-13**

Your Scripture memory verses for this week tell some ways we can help each other. What does Hebrews 10:24-25 say?

What is one way you can “spur” other believers on toward loving God, each other, and the lost world?

What is one way you can “spur” other believers on toward good deeds?

What are two ways you can “encourage” other believers as you meet together for worship, study, and fellowship?

Helping Each Other in Worship

You have learned that one essential of Koinonia with God is that we must experience God in a real and personal way. To continue in this fellowship with God, your worship of Him must be real and personal encounters with Him.

Read the following passages on the worship of the New Testament churches. Note the things they did in their worship services.

Acts 2:42, 46-47—“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Ephesians 5:19-20—“Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Corinthians 14:26, 29-33—“When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”

Since the New Testament church functioned as a Koinonia of the Spirit, no member of the early churches had an exclusive monopoly on any of the gifts given to the church. On the contrary, when the congregation assembled for worship, each member was a potential contributor to the service. The primary requirement was that each contribution help build up the life of the total Christian community.

If worship experiences are going to improve your fellowship with God, they must lead you to experience Him in real and personal ways. When worship services encourage passive response, when they encourage you to be a spectator rather than a participant, when they focus on people and programs rather than God, they may lead to coldness, apathy, doubt, conflict, and a host of other problems.

Helping Each Other Obey

[Once I visited in the home of a couple that had a three-year-old child. When the parents said, “Come here,” the little girl would run the opposite way. The parents and grandparents would just say, “Isn’t that cute.”

One day the little girl was playing in the front yard. The gate was open, and she ran out between two parked cars. The mother, seeing a car coming down the street, shouted to the little girl, “Come here!” The little girl laughed and walked straight out in front of the oncoming car and was killed. That was the very first funeral I ever had to conduct.]

If you see your children doing something wrong, do you ever correct them or punish them? If you love them, you do. Hebrews 12:6 describes God’s discipline as love. Correction, discipline, and punishment can be expressions of perfect love. We must help each other learn to obey everything Christ commanded.

If you see a Christian brother or sister doing something that is going to hurt him or her, which of the following would be an expression of God-like love? Check your response.

- ☐ 1. I would never say anything in the way of correction that might offend him.
- ☐ 2. I want to be open-minded, so I would tolerate her wrong behavior.
- ☐ 3. I would give a subtle hint and hope that he gets the message.

- ☐ 4. I would go to her privately and share my concern for her well being, and I would share a Scripture that gives a word of correction.
- ☐ 5. I would go straight to the church and suggest we kick him out of the church.

Many modern day churches have shied away from discipline in the church. One reason is that sometimes church discipline was abused in years past. Churches used discipline in frivolous or vindictive ways that did not demonstrate a loving and caring spirit (like #5 above). .

When God disciplines His children, He is demonstrating perfect love for them (**Heb. 12:6**). If we love our brothers and sisters we will discipline them in a loving manner to help them return to fellowship with God. This is a way we can help each other, but it must be done only out of a spirit of love. The Bible gives us some guidelines about loving discipline:

“The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”
—**Hebrews 12:6**

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’

If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (**Matt. 18:15-17**).

In Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus gave four stages for trying to restore a wayward brother. What are the four stages?

Do you remember the instructions of 1 Corinthians 13 about godly love? Love will be patient and kind. Some who have strayed may require much loving before they return. Loving discipline requires that you first approach a person privately. Any discipline should only come at God’s direction. Loving discipline will call for much fervent prayer. Do not be hasty in moving to stages two, three, or four. You, too, are a sinner saved by God’s grace. Someday you may need the loving correction of a Christian friend. Treat others as you would want to be treated. In so doing you may win the lasting friendship of your Christian brother or sister.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS

- **Christians need each other.**
- **We must help each other learn to obey everything Christ commanded.**
- **Worship of God must be real and personal encounters with Him.**

LESSON 5; UNIT 12

YOUR SPIRITUAL INVENTORY

What God has begun in your life, He Himself will bring to perfect completion!

Briefly review the past 12 units and identify what God has been doing in your life. Then, spend time with the Lord taking a spiritual inventory of your present walk with Him. If God has been working in your life through these studies, He has been preparing you for more intimate fellowship with Himself and for assignments in His kingdom. Hopefully you have come to this time with a deep sense of God's presence and activity in your life. What God has begun in your life He Himself will bring to perfect completion!

“He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” —**Philippians 1:6**

A. Using the hints below, in your own words write the seven realities of experiencing God.

1. God's work— _____
2. Love relationship— _____
3. God invites— _____
4. God speaks— _____
5. Crisis of belief— _____
6. Major adjustments— _____
7. Obey Him— _____

B. Which of these realities has been the most meaningful to you and why?

C. Review your 12 memory verses. Which one has been the most meaningful to you and why?

D. Describe your most meaningful experience of God during your study of Experiencing God.

E. What name of God has become the most meaningful to you and how?

F. What is your greatest spiritual challenge?

G. What would be the most meaningful thing your partners in class could pray about for your spiritual growth and walk with the Lord?

H. What do you sense God would have you do next to continue your training as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

I. What, if any, specific assignment(s) do you sense God has called you to join Him in doing?

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

○ FOLLOW ME

Notice that the first and last words Jesus said to his dear friend and disciple, Peter, were “follow Me”.

Everything in between, and everything after those words was Peter’s life of discipleship.

Mark 1:16 through Mark 1:18 ¹⁶As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” ¹⁸At once they left their nets and followed him.

John 21:21 through John 21:22 ²¹When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”

²²Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

You will be blessed when God does a special, God-sized work through you.

When you obey God, He will accomplish through you what He has purposed to do. When God does something through your life that only He can do, you will come to know Him more intimately. If you do not obey, you will miss out on some of the most exciting experiences of your life.

When God purposes to do something through you, the assignment will have God-sized dimensions. This is because God wants to reveal Himself to you and those around you. If you can do the work in your own strength, people will not come to know God. However, if God works through you to do what only He can do, you and those around you will come to know Him.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

NAMES, TITLES, AND DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

(see below)

NAMES, TITLES, AND DESCRIPTIONS OF GOD

The following are representative names, titles, and descriptions of God found in the New International Version of the Bible.

FATHER

a faithful God—Deut. 32:4
a forgiving God—Neh. 9:17
a fortress of salvation—Ps. 28:8
a glorious crown—Isa. 28:5
a jealous and avenging God—Nah. 1:2
a Master in heaven—Col. 4:1
a refuge for his people—Joel 3:16
a refuge for the oppressed—Ps. 9:9
a refuge for the poor—Isa. 25:4
a sanctuary—Isa. 8:14
a shade from the heat—Isa. 25:4
a shelter from the storm—Isa. 25:4
a source of strength—Isa. 28:6
a stronghold in times of trouble—Ps. 9:9
an ever-present help in trouble—Ps. 46:1
architect and builder—Heb. 11:10
builder of everything—Heb. 3:4
commander of the Lord's army—Josh. 5:14
Creator of heaven and earth—Gen. 14:19
defender of widows—Ps. 68:5
eternal King—Jer. 10:10
Father—Isa. 9:6; 63:16; Matt. 5:16
Father of compassion—2 Cor. 1:3
Father of our spirits—Heb. 12:9
Father of the heavenly lights—Jas. 1:17
father to the fatherless—Ps. 68:5
God—Gen. 1:2
God Almighty (El Shaddai)—Gen. 17:1
God and Father of Jesus Christ—1 Pet. 1:3
God Most High—Gen. 14:18-22
God my Maker—Job 35:10
God my Rock—Ps. 42:9
God my Savior—Ps. 18:46; 27:9
God my stronghold—Ps. 144:2; 2 Sam. 22:3
God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob—Ex. 3:16
God of all comfort—2 Cor. 1:3
God of all mankind—Jer. 32:27
God of glory—Ps. 29:3
God of gods—Deut. 10:17; Ps. 136:2
God of grace—1 Pet. 5:10

God of peace—1 Thess. 5:23
 God of retribution—Jer. 51:56
 God of the living—Matt. 22:32
 God of the spirits—Num. 16:22
 God of truth—Ps. 31:5
 God our Father—Col. 1:2
 God our strength—Ps. 18:2
 God over all the kingdoms—Dan. 4:17
 God the Father—Col. 3:17
 God who avenges me—Ps. 18:47; 94:1
 God who relents from sending calamity—Joel 2:13
 great and awesome God—Deut. 7:21
 great and powerful God—Jer. 32:18
 great, mighty, awesome God—Deut. 10:17
 he who blots out your transgressions—Isa. 43:25
 he who comforts you—Isa. 66:13
 he who forms the hearts of all—Ps. 33:15
 he who raised Christ from the dead—Rom. 8:11
 he who reveals His thoughts to man—Amos 4:13
 Helper of the fatherless—Ps. 10:14
 him who is able to do more than all we ask or imagine—Eph. 3:20
 him who is able to keep you from falling—Jude 24
 him who is ready to judge the living and the dead—2 Tim. 4:1
 Holy Father—John 17:11
 Holy One—Rev. 16:5
 Holy One among you—Hos. 11:9
 I AM WHO I AM—Ex. 3:14
 Jealous—Ex. 20:5
 Judge of all the earth—Gen. 18:25
 King of glory—Ps. 24:7-10
 King of heaven—Dan. 4:37
 living and true God—1 Thess. 1:9
 Lord Almighty—2 Cor. 6:18
 Lord God Almighty—Rev. 4:8; 16:7; 21:22
 Lord is Peace—Judg. 6:24
 Lord Most High—Ps. 7:17
 Lord is my Banner—Ex. 17:15
 Lord my Rock—Ps. 28:1
 Lord of all the earth—Mic. 4:13; Zech. 4:14
 Lord of kings—Dan. 2:47
 Lord our God—Deut. 1:6,10
 Lord our Maker—Ps. 95:6
 Lord our shield—Ps. 33:20
 Lord who heals you—Ex. 15:26
 Lord who is there—Ezek. 48:35
 Lord who makes you holy—Heb. 2:11
 Lord who strikes the blow—Ezek. 7:9
 Lord will provide—Gen. 22:14
 love—1 John 4:8
 Maker of all things—Eccl. 11:5; Jer. 10:16
 Most High—Gen. 14:18-22
 my advocate—Job 16:19
 my Comforter in sorrow—Jer. 8:18
 my confidence—Ps. 71:5
 my helper—Ps. 118:7; Heb. 13:6
 my hiding place—Ps. 32:7
 my hope—Ps. 25:5, 21
 my light—Ps. 27:1
 my mighty rock—Ps. 62:7
 my refuge in times of trouble—Ps. 59:16

my song—Ex. 15:2
 my strong deliverer—Ps. 140:7
 my support—2 Sam. 22:19
 One to be feared—1 Chron. 16:25
 only wise God—Rom. 16:27
 our dwelling place—Ps. 90:1
 our judge—1 Sam. 24:15
 our lawgiver—Isa. 33:22
 our leader—2 Chron. 13:12
 our Mighty One—Isa. 33:21
 our Redeemer—Isa. 47:4; 63:16
 our refuge and strength—Ps. 46:1
 Righteous Father—John 17:25
 Rock of our salvation—Ps. 95:1
 Shepherd—Ps. 23:1
 Sovereign Lord—Acts 4:24
 the Almighty—Gen. 49:25; Ruth 1:20
 the compassionate and gracious God—Ex. 34:6
 the Eternal God—Gen. 21:33
 the consuming fire—Isa. 33:14
 the everlasting God—Isa. 40:28
 the exalted God—Mic. 6:6
 the faithful God—Deut. 7:9
 the gardener (husbandman)—John 15:1
 the glorious Father—Eph. 1:17
 the glory of Israel—Mic. 1:15
 the God who saves me—Ps. 88:1
 the God who sees me—Gen. 16:13
 the great King above all gods—Ps. 95:3
 the just and mighty One—Job 34:17
 the living Father—John 6:57
 the Majestic Glory—2 Pet. 1:17
 the Majesty in heaven—Heb. 1:3
 the one who sustains me—Ps. 54:4
 the only God—Jude 1:25
 the potter—Jer. 18:6
 the rock in whom I take refuge—Ps. 18:2
 the spring of living water—Jer. 2:13
 the strength of my heart—Ps. 73:26
 the true God—1 Thess. 1:9
 you who judge righteously and test the heart and mind—Jer. 11:20
 you who love the people—Deut. 33:3
 your glory—Ps. 57:11
 your praise—Isa. 38:18; Ps. 71:8; 138:1
 your very great reward—Gen. 15:1

SON (JESUS)

a Nazarene—Matt. 2:23; Mark 14:67
 all—Col. 3:11
 Alpha and Omega—Rev. 1:8
 Anointed One—Acts 4:26; Ps. 2:2
 apostle and high priest—Heb. 3:1
 author and perfecter of our faith—Heb. 12:2
 author of life—Acts. 3:15
 author of their salvation—Heb. 2:10
 Branch of the Lord—Isa. 4:2
 bread of God—John 6:33
 bread of life—John 6:48

bridegroom—Luke 5:34-35
 chief cornerstone—Eph. 2:20
 Chief Shepherd—1 Pet. 5:4
 chosen and precious cornerstone—1 Pet. 2:6
 Christ Jesus my Lord—Phil. 3:8
 Christ Jesus our hope—1 Tim. 1:1
 Christ of God—Luke 9:20
 consolation of Israel—Luke 2:25
 crown of splendor—Isa. 62:3
 eternal life—1 John 5:20
 Faithful and True—Rev. 19:11
 faithful and true witness—Rev. 3:14
 first to rise from the dead—Acts 26:23
 firstborn from among the dead—Col. 1:18
 firstborn over all creation—Col. 1:15
 firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep—1 Cor. 15:20
 fragrant offering and sacrifice to God—Eph. 5:2
 friend of tax collectors and “sinners”—Matt. 11:19
 God over all—Rom. 9:5
 God’s Son—John 11:4
 great high priest—Heb. 4:14
 great light—Matt. 4:16
 great Shepherd of the sheep—Heb. 13:20
 guarantee of a better covenant—Heb. 7:22
 he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world—John 6:33
 he who searches hearts and minds—Rev. 2:23
 head of every man—1 Cor. 11:3
 head of the body, the church—Col. 1:18
 head of the church—Eph. 5:23
 head over every power and authority—Col. 2:10
 heir of all things—Heb. 1:2
 him ... who died and came to life again—Rev. 2:8
 him who loves us and has freed us from our sins—Rev. 1:5
 his one and only Son—1 John 4:9
 Holy and Righteous One—Acts 3:14
 Holy One of God—John 6:69
 holy servant Jesus—Acts 4:27,30
 hope of Israel—Jer. 17:13
 horn of salvation—Luke 1:69
 image of the invisible God—Col. 1:15
 Immanuel (God with us)—Matt. 1:23
 indescribable gift—2 Cor. 9:15
 Jesus—Matt. 1:21
 Jesus Christ—John 1:17
 Jesus Christ our Lord—Rom. 1:4; 5:21
 Jesus Christ our Savior—Titus 3:6
 Jesus of Nazareth—Mark 1:24; Matt. 26:71
 judge of the living and the dead—Acts 10:42
 KING OF KINGS—Rev. 19:16
 King of the ages—Rev. 15:3
 Lamb of God—John 1:29; 1:36
 light for revelation to the Gentiles—Luke 2:32
 light of men—John 1:4
 light of the world—John 8:12
 living bread that came down from heaven—John 6:51
 Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—2 Pet 3:18
 Lord (Kurios)—Josh. 3:11,13
 Lord of glory—1 Cor. 2:8
 LORD OF LORDS—Rev. 19:16
 Lord of peace—2 Thess. 3:16

Lord of the harvest—Matt. 9:38
 Lord of the Sabbath—Matt. 12:8
 Lord (Rabboni)—John 20:16
 man accredited by God—Acts 2:22
 man of sorrows—Isa. 53:3
 Master—Luke 8:24; 9:33; Col. 4:1
 Mediator of a new covenant—Heb. 9:15; 12:24
 merciful and faithful high priest—Heb. 2:17
 messenger of the covenant—Mal. 3:1
 Messiah—John 1:41
 morning star—Rev. 2:28
 my friend—Jer. 3:4
 my intercessor—Job 16:20
 one who makes men holy—Heb. 2:11
 one who speaks to the Father in our defense—1 John 2:1
 one who will arise to rule over the nations—Rom. 15:12
 our glorious Lord Jesus Christ—Jas. 2:1
 our God and Savior Jesus Christ—2 Pet. 1:1
 our only Sovereign and Lord—Jude 1:4
 our Passover lamb—1 Cor. 5:7
 our peace—Eph. 2:14
 our righteousness, holiness and redemption—1 Cor. 1:30
 Physician—Luke 4:23
 Prince and Savior—Acts 5:31
 Prince of Peace—Isa. 9:6
 Prince of princes—Dan. 8:25
 Prince of the hosts—Dan. 8:11
 ransom for all men—1 Tim. 2:6
 refiner and purifier—Mal. 3:3
 resurrection and the life—John 11:25
 righteous Judge—2 Tim. 4:8
 Righteous One—Acts 3:14; 7:52
 Rock eternal (rock of ages)—Isa. 26:4
 ruler of God's creation—Rev. 3:14
 ruler of the kings of the earth—Rev. 1:5
 Savior of the world—John 4:42
 second man—1 Cor. 15:47
 Shepherd and Overseer of your souls—1 Pet. 2:25
 Son of Man—John 3:13-14; 5:27; 6:27
 Son of the Blessed One—Mark 14:61
 Son of the living God—Matt. 16:16
 Son of the Most High God—Luke 8:28
 source of eternal salvation—Heb. 5:9
 sure foundation—Isa. 33:6
 Teacher—Matt. 23:10
 the Amen—2 Cor. 1:20
 the Beginning and the End—Rev. 21:6
 the bright Morning Star—Rev. 22:16
 the exact representation of His God's
 being—Heb. 1:3
 the First and the Last—Rev. 1:17
 the gate (door)—John 10:7,9
 the good shepherd—John 10:11
 the Head—Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19
 the last Adam—1 Cor. 15:45
 the life—John 14:6
 the Living One—Rev. 1:18
 the living Stone—1 Pet. 2:4
 the Lord Our Righteousness—Jer. 23:6
 the man from heaven—1 Cor. 15:49

the man Christ Jesus—1 Tim. 2:5
 the most holy—Dan. 9:24
 the One and Only—John 1:14,18
 the only God our Savior—Jude 1:25
 the radiance of God's glory—Heb. 1:3
 the rising of the sun—Isa. 59:19
 the stone the builders rejected—1 Pet. 2:7
 the testimony given in its proper time—1 Tim. 2:6
 the true light—John 1:9
 the true vine—John 15:1
 the truth—John 14:6
 the way—John 14:6
 the Word (logos)—John 1:1
 true bread from heaven—John 6:32
 wisdom from God—1 Cor. 1:30
 Wonderful Counselor—Isa. 9:6
 Word of God—Rev. 19:13
 Word of life—1 John 1:1
 your life—Col. 3:3
 your salvation—Isa. 30:15; Eph. 1:13

HOLY SPIRIT

a deposit (earnest)—2 Cor. 5:5
 another Counselor—John 14:16,26
 breath of the Almighty—Job 32:8
 Holy One—1 John 2:20
 Holy Spirit—John 1:33
 Holy Spirit of God—Eph. 4:30
 seal—2 Cor. 1:22
 Spirit of Christ—1 Pet. 1:11
 Spirit of counsel and of power—Isa 11:2
 spirit of faith—2 Cor. 4:13
 spirit of fire—Isa. 4:4
 Spirit of glory—1 Pet. 4:14
 spirit of grace and supplication—Zech. 12:10
 Spirit of his Son—Gal. 4:6
 Spirit of holiness—Rom. 1:4
 Spirit of Jesus Christ—Phil. 1:19
 spirit of judgment—Isa. 4:4
 spirit of justice—Isa. 28:6
 Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—Isa. 11:2
 Spirit of life—Rom. 8:2
 Spirit of our God—1 Cor. 6:11
 Spirit of sonship (adoption)—Rom. 8:15
 Spirit of the living God—2 Cor. 3:3
 Spirit of the Lord—Isa. 63:14; Luke 4:18
 Spirit of the Sovereign Lord—Isa. 61:1
 Spirit of truth—John 14:17; 1 John 4:6
 Spirit of wisdom and of understanding—Isa. 11:2
 Spirit of wisdom and revelation—Eph. 1:17
 the gift—Acts 2:38; 10:45
 the promised Holy Spirit—Acts 2:33
 the same gift—Acts 11:17
 Voice of the Almighty—Ezek. 1:24
 Voice of the Lord—Hag. 1:12; Isa. 30:31

Memory Verses

John 15:5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Psalms 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.

Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment."

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

John 8:47 He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

John 5:19 Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Luke 14:33 Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.

Romans 12:5 In Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

1 John 1:7 If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Class # 1

Book by Henry Blackaby

Meant to be “interactive” (but with interpreter?????)

Take notes on meaningful ideas and on significant points

Discussion ??? As able with time

After class: personal review, assignments, Bible study, meditation, prayer, journaling...

**Memory verses
God’s word to you
Decision-making
Life-changing**

No quizzes or tests!!!!

Grading based on attendance, participation, involvement...

This course is about PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP with the LORD ALMIGHTY

**With Jesus, your Lord, Savior, Friend
He is your example
The Holy Spirit is your guide and enabler**

About how to know and do God’s Will, and experience the joy of knowing Him ever more intimately; and being a partner with Him in what He is doing.

%%%

WHAT IS “DISCIPLESHIP”??

WHAT IS A “DISCIPLE”???

One who learns a “discipline”, a way, a system..

One who follows another, studies and learns to be like another

A “relationship” of the follower and the leader

Does discipleship require salvation?

Does salvation require discipleship?

Can we be Christians without being disciples?

SEVEN REALITIES OF SERVING GOD

1. GOD IS WORKING EVERYWHERE AROUND YOU.
2. GOD PURSUES A LOVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU
3. GOD INVITES YOU TO JOIN HIM IN HIS WORK
4. GOD SPEAKS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, BY THE BIBLE, PRAYER, CIRCUMSTANCES, CHURCH.
5. CRISIS OF BELIEF → DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO BELIEVE GOD WILL DO WHAT HE SAYS HE WILL DO.
6. TO FOLLOW HIM, WE MUST ADJUST OUR LIFE TO HIS WILL AND WAY
7. WE OBEY HIS WILL, THEN EXPERIENCE HIM AND KNOW HIM MORE.

(LESSON 2.)

GOD-CENTERED LIVING (instead of self-centered)

Humble, deny self, seek God's Kingdom, holy, godly

GOD ALWAYS TELLS SOMEONE WHAT HE IS GOING TO DO

We must listen & wait to hear & adjust

When God opens our eyes to see Him working, assume we are to get involved

GOD SPEAKS BY HOLY SPIRIT

Through Bible, prayer, circumstances, church

To reveal Himself, His purposes, His ways

KEY TO HEARING HIS VOICE IS RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM

BE CAREFUL ABOUT CLAIMING A "PROPHETIC WORD" FROM GOD

WHEN GOD SHOWS YOU AN ASSIGNMENT, HE WILL DEAL WITH YOUR CHARACTER IN ORDER TO PREPARE YOU FOR IT.

Be faithful in small and large tasks

BELIEVE AND TRUST IN GOD'S LOVE

LOVE = CHOOSING GOD ABOVE ALL ELSE. -→ DECIDING TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR OTHERS AT YOUR OWN EXPENSE

ALL EARTHLY LIFE IS PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY FUTURE

GOD BEGINS & MAINTAINS THE "LOVE RELATIONSHIP" (COVENANT FOR ETERNITY)

GOD BEGINS TO REVEAL HIS WILL TO YOU.

(LESSON 3.)

EXPERIENCE WITH GOD → KNOWING HIS NATURE → LOVING HIS NAMES

WORSHIP GOD BY DECLARING & HONORING HIS NAME

LOVE GOD BY KEEPING HIS COMMANDS (ROYAL LAW, James....)

They will bring blessings to life

HE INVITES ME TO JOIN HIM

JESUS' EXAMPLE

--increases the love relationship

watch, see where God is working

TO KNOW WHERE HE'S WORKING

SEE SOMETHING ONLY GOD COULD DO

(LESSON 4.)

WHEN GOD REVEALS HIS WILL, I MAY HAVE A CRISIS OF FAITH

What do I believe about God???

What will I do???

GOD REQUIRES FAITH

God wishes to do impossible things on the earth

To show His glory & power

To draw the world to him

LET CHRIST BE LIFTED UP

By our word & by our deeds

(LESSON # 5)

YOU CANNOT STAY WHERE YOU ARE AND GO WITH GOD.

FAITH = OBEDIENCE (ACTION) + ADJUSTMENTS

OBEDIENCE IS COSTLY TO YOU & TO THOSE AROUND YOU

OBEDIENCE REQUIRES TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON GOD

(LESSON # 6)

BEARING THE CROSS OF CHRIST

ALWAYS INVOLVES SUFFERING & REJECTION

- i. Abandon attachments to the world
- ii. Bear the burdens of others' sins – by forgiving
- iii. Endure the troubles and pain of life faithfully
- iv. Persecution
- v. Martyrdom

CHRIST IS VICTOR & IS LIFE ETERNAL