



CULTIVATE

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS

STUDENT EDITION

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Shepherds Global Classroom exists to equip the body of Christ by providing curriculum for rising Christian leaders around the world. We aim to multiply indigenous training programs by placing a 20-course curriculum tool into the hands of spiritual trainers in every country of the world.

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Lead writer: Dr. Stephen K. Gibson

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CONTENTS

1. THE LIFE WORTH LIVING	5
2. THE SAVING ENCOUNTER	9
3. ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ACCEPTANCE	13
4. COMMUNICATING WITH GOD	15
5. READING WHAT GOD WROTE	19
6. SPREADING THE INVITATION	23
7. EXTENDING MY OBEDIENCE	27
8. DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY	29
9. PRAYING LIKE DAVID	33
10. THE REFINING OF FAITH	35
11. ESTABLISHING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	37
12. ACCEPTING SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY	41
13. BENEFITS OF PRAYER	45
14. PRAYING LIKE JESUS	47
15. THE PRIVILEGE OF VICTORY OVER SIN	51
16. PASSION FOR THE MISSION	55
17. FAITH THAT SURVIVES	57
18. WE NEED THE CHURCH	59
19. WINNING OVER TEMPTATION	61
20. GOD'S GUIDANCE	65
21. HINDRANCES TO PRAYER	69
22. RELATIONSHIPS	73
23. A CAREFUL CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE	75
24. A CHRISTIAN'S SPEECH	77
25. CHRISTIAN WORK ETHICS	79
26. MAKING RIGHT DECISIONS	81

LESSON 1

THE LIFE WORTH LIVING

BIG IDEA

“I find personal significance only in relationship with my Creator.”

GOD’S DESIGN FOR A FULFILLED LIFE

We know that we have purpose because we know that we were created. If God made us, he must have had a purpose for us.

» Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18

Relationships in three dimensions:

- Relationship between people and God
- Relationships among people
- Relationship between people and God’s world

The relationship with God is the one that sets the others right.

Try to imagine what the world would be like today if there were harmony in all three of these relationship dimensions.

The reason you and I exist is to be in relationship with God, his people, and his world. If I do not follow that purpose, I might as well not exist!

THE BIBLICAL RECORD OF MAN’S FALL

The explanation of the world’s present condition is in Genesis 3.

1. **The probation:** God’s original plan was interrupted by man’s sin.
2. **The temptation:** Satan tempted Adam and Eve with the prospect of being independent of God.

3. **The doubt:** Satan's questions were designed to make them doubt God's wisdom and sincerity. A person who sins doubts God—that he knows and intends the best.
4. **The rebellion:** By Adam and Eve's action, they rejected God as the authority and guide of their life.
5. **The separation:** Sin destroyed the harmony in all three relationship dimensions.

All future humanity would be born with a sinful tendency, commit acts of sin, and live with damaged relationships in all three dimensions.

FINDING THE WAY BACK

God desires reconciliation—renewal of the intended relationship.

God asks you the same question he asked Adam and Eve: “Where are you?”

The message of the whole Bible is that God wants to bring sinners back into relationship with himself.

The most important thing about you is your relationship with God.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I thank you for creating me, making me for the purpose of knowing you.

Thank you for bringing me back from my sin into a renewed relationship with you. Thank you for your forgiveness.

Because I want to live in the joy of knowing you, I will live in obedient love for you. Make my obedience possible by your Holy Spirit within me.

I pray in the name of Jesus, who died for me.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Genesis 1-3. Look for references to relationship. In chapter 3, look for the aspects described in this lesson in the section “The Biblical Record of Man’s Fall.” Write a few paragraphs about what you see.

LESSON 2

THE SAVING ENCOUNTER

BIG IDEA

“A saving encounter with God begins my relationship with him.”

INTRODUCTION

The very beginning of a relationship is a personal encounter.

What is necessary for reconciliation when someone has wronged someone else?

1. The wrongdoer must admit and repent. To repent means that he will not keep doing what is wrong against the other person.
2. The wronged one must be willing to forgive, even if it means that the wrongdoer cannot pay for his damage.

The first time we meet God, there is already a problem because we have done wrong against him. That problem must be solved before a relationship can begin.

THE CONDITION OF THE PERSON SEPARATED FROM GOD

» Ephesians 2:2-3

According to these verses, we were born enemies of God. We all once lived sinful lives. We were disobedient to God, and were following Satan. Unless something changed, we were going to experience God’s anger because of our sin.

» Isaiah 53:6

For a person to claim the right to choose his own way is to deny his Creator the right to direct him. This is the essence of sin. It is rebellion against the authority of God.

The Bible describes the unconverted person as blind, in darkness, in slavery, driven by depraved desires, and even dead. His condition would be hopeless if God had not reached out with the help the sinner needs.

GOD'S INTERVENING GRACE

God provided the sacrifice for our forgiveness and gives us the desire and ability to respond to his offer.

Without grace, a sinner could not even come to God.

» Ephesians 2:4-5

If a person is not saved, it is not because he never had grace, but because he would not respond to the grace that he had.

THE PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

A person becomes a Christian in a moment of encounter with God.

» Acts 26:18

The gospel has the power to open our eyes, to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God. Our sins are forgiven and we are given an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus.

A real Christian has had an encounter with God when he repented of his sins (Luke 13:5), by faith received forgiveness (Ephesians 2:8), and committed to a life of obedience to God's Word (1 John 3:6). This encounter begins his personal relationship with God (1 John 1:3).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for reaching out to me when I was lost and separated from you. Thank you for providing the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross so that I could be forgiven.

Thank you for showing me my guilt, for giving me the desire to be forgiven, and for making me able to respond to you.

Thank you for the great changes you have made in my life. I want always to live in obedient love for you.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Ephesians 2. Reflect on the great intervention God made in our lives. Verses 1-3 describe our previous condition; verse 4 begins describing the change God made. Notice the references to relationship throughout the chapter, especially in verses 4, 6, 7, 14, and 19. Write a few paragraphs about what you see.

LESSON 3

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S ACCEPTANCE

BIG IDEA

“God accepted me as his child when I repented and believed his promise.”

ASSURANCE

The Bible assures us that we can have confidence that God has accepted us (Romans 8:16).

This assurance is so complete that we can have boldness on Judgment Day, not wondering whether or not we will pass God's evaluation (1 John 4:17).

The believer can be sure of his salvation by knowing that he has followed the scriptural way to salvation.

Repentance means that a sinner sees himself as guilty and deserving punishment (1 John 1:9), and that he is willing to quit his sins (Isaiah 55:7).

If a person has not seen himself as truly guilty, without excuse, and deserving punishment, he has not repented.

Saving faith is necessary for salvation. To have saving faith means that a person believes certain things:

1. **He sees that he can do nothing to justify himself** (Ephesians 2:8-9).
2. **He believes that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for his forgiveness** (1 John 2:2).
3. **He believes that God promises to forgive him on the single requirement of faith** (1 John 1:9).

If he has truly repented and believed as the Bible directs, he has the right to believe that God forgives him.

There is a special confirmation that God gives to the repentant believer at the time that he repents and believes.

You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Romans 8:15-16).

If a person follows the scriptural way of salvation and depends on the scriptural means of immediate assurance, rather than some other kind of assurance, he is unlikely to be deceived. This assurance is based on God’s Word, which is absolutely reliable. God always keeps his promises.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for your promise to forgive a sinner who repents and believes. I have repented of my sins, and I believe your promise.

I know that the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is enough for my forgiveness.

I know that I don’t have to fear the judgment because my sins are forgiven.

Thank you for the witness of your Spirit that I am your child.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study Hebrews 10:11-25. What basis for personal assurance is given in this passage? What directions are given to us because we have this assurance? List the commands and consider how to fulfill them personally.

LESSON 4

COMMUNICATING WITH GOD

BIG IDEA

“I will know God better because I communicate with him in prayer.”

A CHRISTIAN SEEKS GOD’S WILL IN PRAYER

The practice of prayer is one of the marks of a Christian, though people of other religions also pray. An important distinctive of Christian prayer is that we submit to the will of God rather than just trying to get God to do what we want.

As Christians we trust the will of God to be better for us than our own desires. We know that because God has perfect wisdom and perfect love, the will of God is the best thing that can happen to us.

We leave the choice to God because we trust him.

Prayer is not just turning in a list of requests; it is interaction with God.

A CHRISTIAN SEEKS GOD IN PRAYER

A Christian values his relationship with God more than what he gets from God.

What we seek most in prayer is God himself.

Our time with God, and the priority we give it, are the true measurement of our love for him. – Bernard of Clairvaux

The best relationship has total honesty.

PRAYER IS A SIGN OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Prayer is the breath of the soul—a spiritual vital sign.

We breathe in spiritual life from God and breathe back praise and worship, expressed especially in our praying.

TIMES TO PRAY

- Pray when you are starting the day.
- Pray at a special time scheduled every day.
- Pray when you are especially tested.
- Pray when you have failed.
- Pray when you should thank God for something.

SUMMARY

1. Christian prayer differs from pagan prayer because we want God's will and we value knowing God more than we value what we get from him.
2. Prayer is a measurement of our love for God.
3. Prayer is a spiritual "vital sign" showing that we are spiritually alive.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the great privilege I have to talk to you. I'm glad that I can talk to you about my needs. But, most of all, I thank you for the privilege I have to know you.

Help me to show my love for you by talking to you often. Make my love for you grow because I am beginning to know you better.

Help me to make my time with you the greatest priority in my life.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Look at the statements that Jesus made about prayer in Matthew 6:5-18. List the references to personal needs and references to relationship with God.

LESSON 5

READING WHAT GOD WROTE

BIG IDEA

“God’s Word guides my relationship with him.”

INTRODUCTION

Psalm 119 shows us the importance of the Bible for the Christian.

Benefits of God’s Word:

- It gives life (50).
- It comforts (52).
- It is a lamp (105).
- It makes him part of a fellowship of worshippers of God (74, 79).

THE PSALMIST’S PASSION FOR SCRIPTURE

- He loved God’s Word and delighted in it (16, 24, 47, 48, 77, 92, 97, 103).
- He rejoiced about having it as if it were great riches (14, 72).
- He observed that those who have it and keep it are blessed (happy) (1, 2).

The psalmist had a passion for scripture because of his love for God. He loved it because he loved God. God’s Word is an expression of the nature of God. As he looked at God’s law and its requirements, he saw the justice and wisdom of God (137).

Scripture is a link between God and his worshipper—revealing God to the worshipper and guiding the worshipper’s response to God. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and fulfilled in the worshipper’s life by the power of God.

SCRIPTURE GUIDED THE PSALMIST'S RESPONSE TO GOD

The purpose of scripture is to reveal God so that we can enter a relationship with him. Therefore, scripture calls for a response from the reader.

The psalmist's response to scripture:

- He prayed that God would teach his own Word (12, 18, 27, 33, 34).
- He prayed that he would be able to live according to it (35-37, 5, 10).
- He prayed that even his heart would match God's will (32, 80).
- He knew that cleansing would occur through his interaction with God in his Word (9, 11).
- He claimed blessings from God on the basis of having kept God's laws (22, 121, 153)
- He promised to obey (8).
- He committed time for meditation on scripture throughout the day (15, 97, 147-148).

OUR RESPONSE TO SCRIPTURE

Start now to have right response to scripture:

- Realize the role of God's Word in your relationship with God.
- Get into right relationship with God if your repentance still is incomplete.
- Commit to time in God's Word. Start with Psalm 119, and pray these verses as you read. Philippians, Titus, and Ephesians could come next in your reading.
- Determine to continually respond to the work of God's Spirit through his Word.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving me the scripture, revealing yourself to me. Thank you for giving me understanding of it by your Holy Spirit working in my heart and mind.

Help me to understand more and more what you are like and what I should be in order to please you. Help me to always respond to your work in my heart as I read. Let your word continually change me into your image.

Lord, I commit to spending time daily meditating on your word. Give me a love for your word that comes from my love for you.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

This week meditate on Psalm 119. List some things the writer said he would do because of God's Word. Commit to do the same, and pray for fulfillment of it in your heart and life.

LESSON 6

SPREADING THE INVITATION

BIG IDEA

“I want to lead others to know God as I do.”

THE BRIDGE DIAGRAM FOR EXPLAINING THE GOSPEL

Part 1

“God created each person to be in fellowship with him and live a blessed life. He did not design life to be full of problems and suffering.”

[Write the word “God” and draw a person.]

Part 2

“Man is separated from God because of sin. The first people sinned, and every person since then has committed sin against God.”

[Draw the separation and write the word “sin.”]

Part 3

“God is a righteous Judge, and sinners will someday be condemned to eternity in hell unless they find mercy and come back into relationship with God.”

[Draw the arrow and write the word “hell.”]

Part 4

“Nothing that we can do brings us back to God or earns mercy – not good works, going to church, religious customs, giving money....”

[Draw arrows with each item in the list.]

Part 5

“Our situation would be hopeless if God had not made a way for us to come back to him. Jesus the Son of God died on a cross as a sacrifice so that we can be forgiven. After three days, he was raised from the dead.”

[Draw the cross.]

Part 6

“But it is not enough just to know this. Each person must individually make the choice to be saved and come back to God. A person must repent, which means to be sorry enough for sin to be willing to quit. A person who repents can receive forgiveness by asking God in prayer.”

[Draw the arrow and write the words “repent” and “receive.”]

Part 7

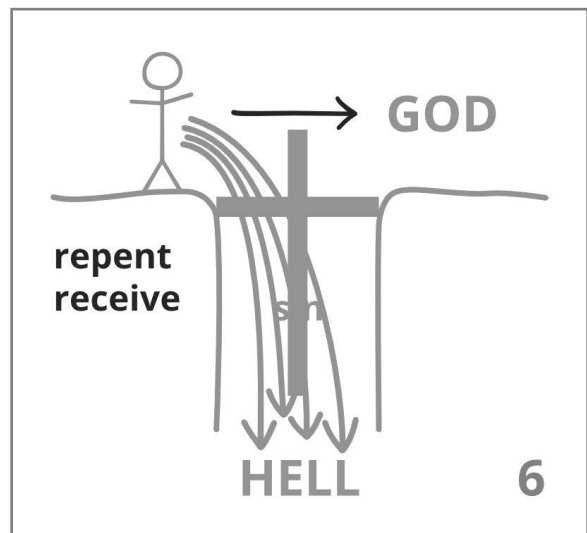
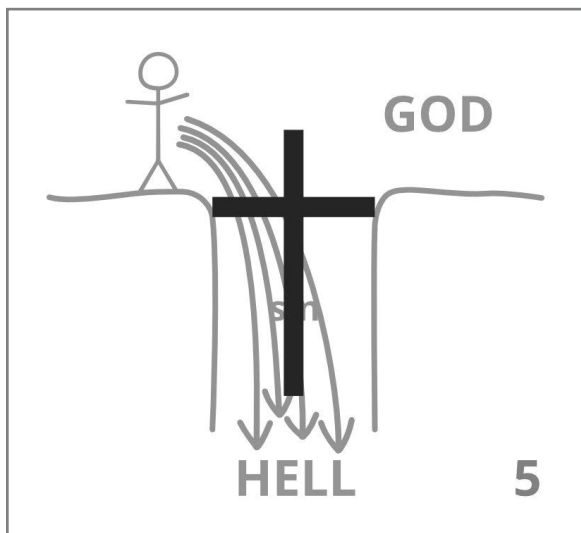
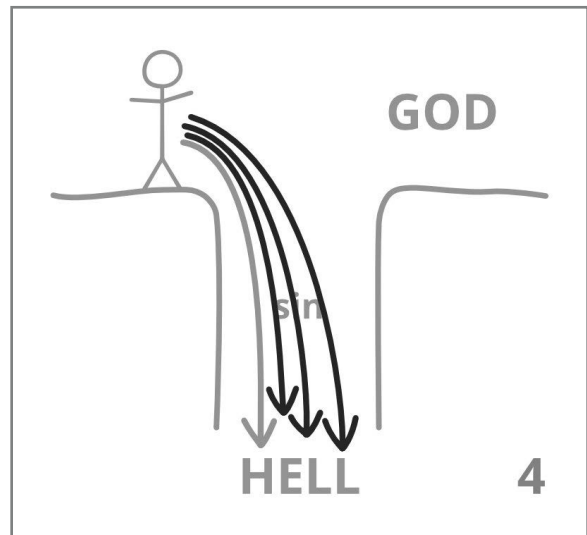
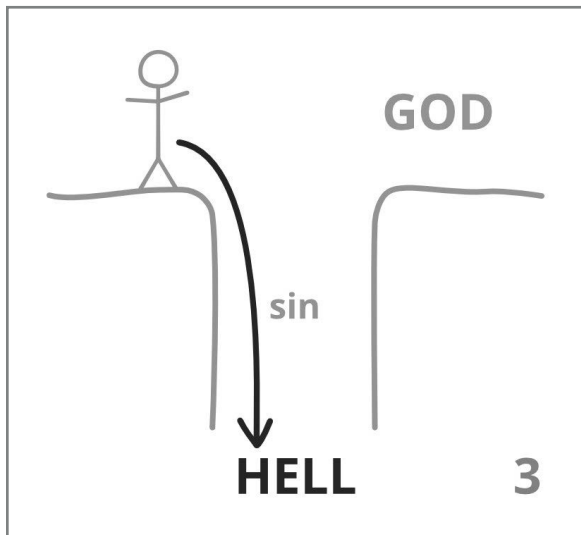
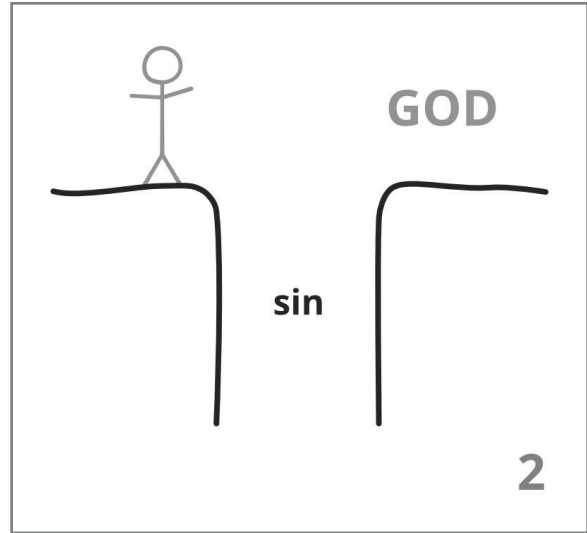
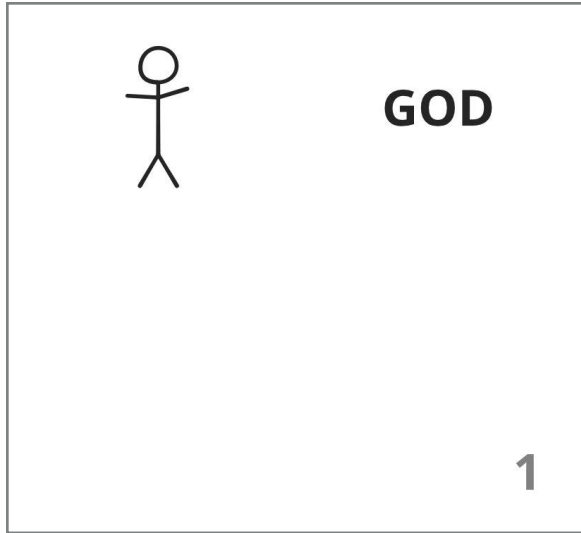
“Where do you think you are on this diagram? Has there been a special time in your life when you repented of your sins, received God’s forgiveness, and began to live for God; or, are you still separated from God by your sin?”

[Wait for an answer. Many people will admit that they are still separated from God.]

“Are you ready to make this step—to repent, receive forgiveness, and begin living for God? I would be glad to pray with you right now.”

[Pray something similar to the following.]

“Lord, I know I am a sinner and deserve eternal punishment. I am sorry for my sins and willing to quit them. I ask you to forgive me, not because I deserve it, but because Jesus died for me. Thank you for salvation. From this time on, I will live for you.”



PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I am glad that you want to save not only me, but also my family, my friends and neighbors, and every person in the world.

Thank you for providing salvation so that every person can be saved and enter this wonderful fellowship that we have with you and with other believers.

You loved the whole world enough to give your Son for them.

Father, help me to be faithful to spread your invitation.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Prepare to carry out your commitment to share the diagram this week.
2. Make a list of the unsaved people that you know you will be able to have conversation with this week. Plan to bring up a subject that will open the door for sharing the gospel.
3. Make a list of some Christians that you could show the diagram to with the goal of helping them feel more equipped to witness.

LESSON 7

EXTENDING MY OBEDIENCE

BIG IDEA

“I discern and follow God’s will better as my love for him grows.”

GROWING IN OBEDIENCE

» Philippians 1:9-11

Paul prayed that the Philippian Christians would keep loving God more and, by that love, be able to better understand God’s will.

We should expect to continually improve our lives as God gives discernment.

SOME AREAS IN WHICH A BELIEVER SHOULD IMPROVE

1. **Carefulness of influence.** Are there things you do that you would not want others to do?
2. **Self-control.** Do you control your feelings and desires enough to do what you should?
3. **Care of health.** Do you care for your body as a set of irreplaceable tools to work for God?
4. **Choice of entertainment.** Does your entertainment tend to bring you into struggles with temptation by causing wrong thoughts or attitudes? Beware of anything that presents sin as attractive or funny.
5. **Manners.** The people you are among have their customs for showing courtesy. You should learn to be courteous in a way that they recognize. Be kind even when someone doesn’t deserve it.
6. **Business ethics.** Are you completely honest in all dealings?
7. **Punctuality.** Do you put value on your time and others’ time by keeping a schedule when possible?

8. **Dress.** Does your clothing show the values of decency, humility, and thriftiness?
9. **Language.** Is your conversation pure and respectful of God and others?
10. **Reliability.** Do you keep commitments?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I want my love for you to continually increase. I want to better understand your will for me.

Help me to learn to discern what is most pleasing to you so that I can live a life that is pure and without offense.

Help me to see habits and attitudes that need to change and to gain habits and attitudes that glorify you.

I want to bear fruit for the glory of God.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study 1 Corinthians 13. This chapter describes the life of a person who has the love that he should have for others. Let God show you how he wants to change you to make your life more consistent with love. List some changes you would like to see.

LESSON 8

DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY

BIG IDEA

“God’s Word daily impacts my life and faith.”

REASONS TO STUDY THE BIBLE

1. **For a relationship with God.** Psalm 119 says that God’s Word is an expression of God’s own nature and, therefore, scripture is a means of knowing God.
2. **To know and believe the truth** (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible is our source of doctrine.
3. **To get directions for life** (2 Timothy 3:16).
4. **For effective ministry** (2 Timothy 3:16).
5. **For spiritual maturity** (Hebrews 5:12-13).

IMPROPER GOALS FOR DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY

1. **To invent new interpretations.** We should be creative in applying and communicating scripture, but not in interpreting it.
2. **To collect evidence for debate.** If a person reads the Bible only for argument, he gets distorted vision and may see only what he wants to see.
3. **To feel encouraged.** If a person always goes quickly through passages looking for verses that help his feelings, he is not letting the Bible speak its whole message.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE DEVOTIONALLY

1. **Begin by praying for understanding of the passage.**

Prepare your heart to receive the real message of the passage. You are not studying just to know God’s will, but to do it.

2. Interpret the passage.

What is the passage actually saying? Paraphrase and list statements. Make sure your conclusions don't contradict plain scriptural teaching elsewhere.

3. Apply the passage personally.

Is there a

- Sin to confess or shun?
- Promise to claim?
- Attitude to change?
- Command to obey?
- Example to follow?
- Prayer to pray?
- Error to shun?
- Temptation to avoid?
- Something to praise God for?

There may be several of these in a passage.

4. Pray for fulfillment of the truth in you.

Pray that God will make the needed change in your heart and life.

5. Prayerfully determine what you will change because of this application.

The specific change should be:

- **Personal** – something you yourself need to do.
- **Practical** – not just theoretical, but result in something actually to be done.
- **Accountable** – acted upon within a set time frame.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the treasure you have given us in the scriptures.

Thank you for revealing to us the truth about how to know you, how to live, and how to help others.

Help me to study your word diligently. Give me understanding of the truth you have revealed. Help me to live by it faithfully.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study 1 Thessalonians 5, following the steps of devotional Bible study listed in this lesson. Describe some personal applications you discovered.

LESSON 9

PRAYING LIKE DAVID

BIG IDEA

“Talking to God gives every part of my life the right meaning.”

PRAYER: TALKING TO GOD

Many of the psalms are prayers, and they tell us something important about prayer.

If you stop talking to God or don't want to talk about some things, it may be because you think you can't agree with him on those things.

The psalms demonstrate that we should be talking to God about everything in our lives and everything we feel.

What you talk about shows the scope of your relationship.

A relationship is sharing life.

Sometimes things happen in a relationship that put limits on it.

What about your relationship with God? It is shallow if there is not much to talk about.

We must be willing to keep being changed by our relationship with him.

Everything in our life gets its real meaning from God.

Everything gets its proper place and value by being brought to God for adjustment. Unless you are praying about everything,

- Things will not make sense.
- Feelings will be far out of proportion.
- Decisions will be misguided.
- Attitudes will be inconsistent.

A person who is worrying a lot is not praying a lot; a person who is praying a lot is not worrying a lot.

The Lord is near to those with a contrite spirit (Psalm 34:18). We must be humble and submissive, presenting all to God and letting him answer his way.

- » What are you talking to him about? What are some things you need to talk to him about?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I want you to set the proper value of everything I have and the meaning of everything that happens to me. I want to bring my feelings about everything to you for your adjustment.

Help me to open to you all the parts of my life.

I want to be completely devoted to you. I want my relationship with you to include everything about me.

Help me to keep being changed by knowing you better.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study Psalm 34. Write a paragraph about David's confidence that everything can be brought to the Lord. Notice especially verses 15 and 18.

LESSON 10

THE REFINING OF FAITH

BIG IDEA

“I grow spiritually as my faith endures trials.”

TRIALS OF FAITH

- » 1 Peter 1:6-7; Hebrews 11:1, 6

The most basic faith is to believe that God responds to those who seek him in the right way. It is to believe that God’s reward is attainable and worth more than anything else.

During trials, we are tempted to doubt that God will really give what is best for us. Every trial is a trial of faith. Faith is the victory over every trial.

- » 1 John 5:4

Trials allow a process that we need.

- » James 1:2-4

Trials of faith develop patience. To have patience means to endure by faith. The most important Christian virtues cannot be produced in a person who is failing to endure by faith.

TYPES OF TRIALS

- 1. Difficult circumstances.** The trial of faith is the temptation to
 - Yield to frustration or anger, accepting a wrong attitude
 - Act rashly to change circumstances
 - Disobey God to fix the problem your way
- 2. Injustice and mistreatment.** The trial of faith is the temptation to
 - Treat others wrongly because they did wrong
 - Be unwilling to wait for God to execute his justice
 - Refuse to forgive and love as Christ did

3. **Physical affliction.** The trial of faith is the temptation to
 - Yield to depression
 - Seek happiness or entertainment outside of God's will
4. **Tragedy.** The trial of faith is the temptation to
 - Doubt God's love and goodness
 - Doubt that God is in control
5. **Confusion.** The trial of faith is the temptation to yield to your own understanding against the known will of God.
6. **Persecution.** The trial of faith is the temptation to yield to avoid suffering.
7. **Temptation to sin.** The trial of faith is the temptation to yield to sin's attraction.
 - » 1 Corinthians 10:13

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for always being with me, helping in every trial. Help my faith to be strong. Help me remember that hard times are a challenge of faith, and that my faith must endure.

I want to keep trusting you no matter what happens. I will show my trust by obeying you all the time.

Thank you for the development of faith that happens as you take me victoriously through trials.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study James 5:7-11. Notice the reasons that are given for us to endure in faith. The prophets are mentioned as examples. What people have you known who endured hardship by faith? What if they had not?

LESSON 11

ESTABLISHING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

BIG IDEA

“I commit time and effort to develop my relationship with God.”

INTRODUCTION

Spiritual disciplines are voluntary practices that are scheduled and maintained for the purpose of keeping spiritual priorities and developing our relationship with God.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- They are means to a goal, not goals in themselves.
- They are not precise measurements of spiritual status.
- They do not substitute for obeying God.
- They must be voluntary for the best results.

A LIST OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1. Prayer
2. Bible study. Psalm 119 shows the work of God’s Word in a worshipper’s life.
3. Fasting (Matthew 9:15, Matthew 6:16-18).
4. Church attendance (Hebrews 10:25).
5. The Lord’s Supper/Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
6. Spiritual accountability (Hebrews 13:17, James 5:16, Galatians 6:2).
7. Giving (Hebrews 13:16, 1 Corinthians 16:2).
8. Ministry (1 Corinthians 12).
9. A spiritual diary (Psalm 78:11).
10. Devotional study

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to maintain my focus on spiritual priorities by making a place for these spiritual disciplines in my life. I want to give you the time that you deserve.

Help me to be faithful in my commitment. Guard me from pride in my spiritual progress.

Help me to remember that my spiritual disciplines are to express my love for you and my faith in you.

Thank you for your grace that works in me beyond all that I can do.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Look up the references that were given in the list of spiritual disciplines. Observe how these disciplines are spoken of as vital to the Christian life. (Psalm 119 was studied previously, so it is not necessary to review that whole chapter again this week.)

COMMITMENT TO PERSONAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1. **Prayer.** I will pray daily at _____ for _____ minutes.
2. **Bible study.** I will study the Bible daily at _____. I will measure my study by _____ (time or other means).
3. **Fasting.** I will fast each week on _____ for _____ (length of time).
4. **Church attendance.** I will attend the following church services and Bible studies regularly:

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____
5. **The Lord's Supper/Communion.** I will participate in the communion offered at my church, which is offered every _____ (estimate frequency).
6. **Spiritual accountability.** I will report my spiritual condition and receive spiritual direction from _____ (specific spiritual mentor) every _____ (time).
7. **Giving.** I will pay tithe at _____ (specify church).
8. **Ministry.** I will regularly minister in the following way:
9. **A spiritual diary.** I will maintain a journal which I will update ____ times per week.
10. **Devotional study.** I will do the following devotional reading:

Date of commitment: _____

To be maintained until: _____

Name: _____

LESSON 12

ACCEPTING SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

BIG IDEA

“God develops me in a close spiritual community.”

SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To have spiritual accountability is to establish a relationship with a person or group that gives spiritual direction.

A person with spiritual accountability reports

- His spiritual condition
- His successes and failures in spiritual disciplines
- His commitments for the future

Without spiritual accountability, we do not fulfill all of the commands of scripture; and we neglect a means that God has designed for giving us grace for victory and spiritual growth.

» James 5:16; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 13:17

Ask yourself these questions to determine whether or not spiritual accountability is established in your life.

What relationships do I have which make it possible that...

- Someone is helping me bear my most serious burdens?
- I am confessing my faults to someone?
- I am helping someone with his burdens?
- Someone is responding to my present spiritual condition?

Are there times that I feel the lack of this kind of relationship:

- Times when there is nobody I can lean on?
- Times when I am glad that nobody knows my condition?
- Times I would not want to report my spiritual disciplines?

Is there someone whose spiritual authority I accept?

- When have I submitted to his directions?
- Do I heed his warnings about spiritual dangers?

FORMING RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL ESTABLISH SPIRITUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Spiritual accountability works best when there is...

- Privacy
- Assurance that others accept you and care about you
- A scheduled time to share

To hold someone spiritually accountable means that you regularly ask...

- How are you doing in your spiritual disciplines?
- Do you have spiritual victory?
- Are you following through with the commitments you have made recently?
- What specific commitments do you need to make because of truth you have recently learned?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I want to be faithful to obey all of the commands of your Word. I want to help my brothers and sisters carry their burdens; I want to encourage them; I want to admit my failures to them so they can pray for me.

I want to accept the spiritual leaders that you have called to watch over me.

Give me the humility I need to admit my faults and the love I need to help others with their faults. Help me to not be angry when I am corrected or hurtful when I help correct others.

Thank you for the spiritual family you have given to help me grow spiritually.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Look at James 5:16; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 10:24, Hebrews 13:17. Read the passage surrounding each of these verses. Try to think of specific ways that you have recently obeyed those instructions. What are some actions that you could begin in order to better obey them?

LESSON 13

BENEFITS OF PRAYER

BIG IDEA

“Prayer is a channel for God’s blessings.”

REASONS WE SHOULD PRAY

We should pray:

1. To know God
2. To grow in Christlikeness/holiness
3. For family salvation and blessing
4. For personal anointing and extension of ministry
5. For wisdom, discernment, and guidance
6. For understanding of the Bible
7. For financial needs
8. For joy and fulfillment
9. For purpose and order in our lives
10. For specific answers and miracles
11. For extension of God’s kingdom through mission

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for helping me see that you want to bless me in ways that I had not thought of before.

Help my prayers to be a channel of your blessings to my family and others around me.

Most of all, I want to talk with you so that I can know you better.

Thank you, Father, for the privilege of prayer.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Psalms 141-146. These psalms are all prayers. Look for the kind of things prayed for there. Look for statements made about God as reasons for prayer.

LESSON 14

PRAYING LIKE JESUS

BIG IDEA

“I pray best when I see what God wants to do.”

THE LORD’S PRAYER – OUR MODEL

If we know what God wants to do, we can pray according to his will and know that he will answer.

If a person is ignorant of the principles that are the kindergarten of prayer, he cannot pray well.

All of our praying should be consistent with the principles Jesus taught in his model prayer.

» Matthew 6:9-13

We are to pray with God’s perspective, values, and purposes in mind.

To pray that God’s name be hallowed, or revered, implies first that we want to reverence him ourselves. We should want everything in our lives and hearts to be what can glorify God.

God’s kingdom is extended every time a rebel surrenders to God. We should first pray for his kingdom to come completely in our own hearts, then that it be extended by the surrender of those who oppose God.

It would hardly make sense to pray for God’s will, as if it is a good thing, while one’s own heart has not accepted God’s will. To pray this sincerely would be to start by praying for a holy heart.

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Do you really believe that God’s will is the best thing that could be done in the world, in the place where you live and work, in your home, and in your heart?

PRAYING FOR PERSONAL NEEDS IN THE LORD'S PRAYER

The fact that we are to pray for daily needs shows that God wants us to continually depend on him, rather than on resources we have accumulated.

The prayer for forgiveness admits that we fall short of the perfect will of God and need his daily grace.

Then comes a request that God protect us from harm from Satan, both spiritual and physical.

We want every aspect of our lives and ministries to be according to God's will, enabled by God, and glorifying to God. We pray for that and submit to that purpose.

The principle of praying like Jesus is this: Prayer causes us to see everything from God's perspective, so we can ask for what is good in God's eyes.

PRAYER

Our Heavenly Father,

We pray that your name would be honored; that your kingdom would be extended; that those who resist you would surrender to you.

We pray that your will would be done completely in our world, in the place where we live, and in our hearts.

Provide day by day what we need.

Forgive us for falling short of your perfect will, and help us to forgive those who fail us.

Protect us from falling to temptations, and protect us from anything that the evil one would bring against us.

Because it is your kingdom; it is your power; and it is your glory forever.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Write out the Lord's Prayer, leaving space under each line. Go through the prayer and list under each request the specific requests that you could be praying for in order to apply the Lord's Prayer personally.

LESSON 15

THE PRIVILEGE OF VICTORY OVER SIN

BIG IDEA

“Sin cannot conquer me while I let God’s power work in me.”

VICTORY OVER SIN

Our worst enemy is sin.

God promises to deliver us from the power of enemies that would keep us from serving him in righteousness and holiness every day of our lives (Luke 1:68-75).

The epistle of 1 John emphasizes that the main characteristic of a true believer is victory over sin.

The apostle knew that there will be times when a believer needs assurance. He showed that it is proper for a believer to look for evidence on which to base his assurance. Repeatedly he uses the phrase, “This is how we know.”

» 1 John 3:19

The criterion that is most emphasized throughout this epistle is victory over sin. The normal condition of a believer is freedom from sin.

» 1 John 2:1-2

John recognizes that sin may occur, though it is not necessary.

The following verses from 1 John show his emphasis that the great distinction of a believer is victory over sin. The phrases in brackets are added comments.

And by this we know [this is an evidence] that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (2:3-4).

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning [whether he was a believer before or not] also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him (3:4-6).

Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. [Righteousness is real, not pretended—the person who actually does what is right is righteous.] Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (3:7-8).

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God (3:9).

Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. [If he stops abiding in Christ, he will sin. If he sins, he has stopped abiding in Christ.] And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us (3:24).

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments (5:2-3). [Real love motivates obedience. Disobedience shows a lack of love.]

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world [its temptations and spirit]. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith (5:4).

From these verses, it seems obvious that the distinctive characteristic of the believer is that he lives in obedience to God.

» 1 Corinthians 10:13, James 1:12

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for deliverance from the enemies that would keep me from serving you, and from the greatest enemy, sin.

Thank you for helping me to reject sin when I repented and came to you.

Help me remember to depend on you for grace every day. I know that with your help I can endure temptation and live in victory over sin.

Thank you for the privilege of living in victory. I want to be faithful and receive the crown of life you have promised to those who love you.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study Romans 6. Look for the statements that imply that a believer should have complete deliverance from sin.

LESSON 16

PASSION FOR THE MISSION

BIG IDEA

“I have zeal for the salvation of sinners.”

EVANGELISM IS A SCRIPTURAL PRIORITY

- » Matthew 9:36-38, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 4:29, Acts 11:18, Philippians 1:18, Ephesians 6:19, Romans 10:13-15

REASONS A BELIEVER SHOULD DESIRE THE CONVERSION OF THE LOST

- He should desire to follow the example of Jesus, who left heaven to live and die for the salvation of the lost.
- He should desire that God be glorified by the conversion of a rebel into a worshipper of God.
- He should see the spread of the gospel as a triumph of Christ and his atonement.
- He should want to participate in the work that is God’s priority.
- He should have compassion for the lost who are facing eternal judgment for their sins.

REASONS SOME CHRISTIANS DON’T EVANGELIZE

- A lack of general spiritual zeal
- Not feeling personally responsible for evangelism
- Not knowing how to begin a spiritual conversation
- Not knowing how to present the Gospel in an acceptable way
- Fear of being unable to answer objections
- Embarrassment at being different from the world
- Doubt that his efforts will be effective

BEGINNING TO EVANGELIZE

If a believer has no spiritual zeal, he needs personal revival.

Every believer needs

1. Faith – He needs to realize what God does to make the gospel powerful.
 2. Preparation – He needs to be equipped to communicate the gospel.
- » What do you need to get you started?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

You loved the world so much that you sent your Son to die for our salvation. I want to love you enough to share your desire to save the lost. I know it pleases you for me to carry the message to sinners.

I want you to be glorified by sinners' repenting and becoming worshippers of you.

I want to feel the compassion that Jesus felt for the lost.

I ask you to guide and empower my efforts. Help me to cooperate with the work of your Holy Spirit drawing the lost to you.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Review the gospel presentation that is taught in Lesson 6 or another method of presenting the gospel that you prefer. Consider your recent incidents of presenting the gospel and try to determine what additional study or training would increase your effectiveness. Make a specific commitment for that preparation.

LESSON 17

FAITH THAT SURVIVES

BIG IDEA

“My trust in God does not depend on exemption from suffering.”

FAITH FOR REAL LIFE

If our faith depends on a happy ending to every story, our faith doesn't match real life, because bad things happen to people who don't seem to deserve them.

Christian faith is not:

- Irrational optimism (“Don't worry. Everything will be okay.”)
- Stern stoicism (“Life isn't fair so you have to be tough.”)
- Mindless escapism (“Don't remind me... I don't want to think about it.”)

The most basic and most important kind of faith is a basic trust for God that endures no matter what is happening. A person with this enduring faith keeps obeying God.

We have the record of spiritual heroes who suffered, not because they lacked faith, but because they had it. Their faith made them willing to suffer.

Faith in the justice of God helps us to endure the circumstances that do not always work out right in the short term.

An evidence of faith is when the believer endures and keeps trusting God in all circumstances.

God does not always take away problems with a miracle.

Real life seems to have many sad stories, but Christian faith is the confidence that God is writing the real end of the story.

Faith is not a guarantee that we will be exempt from suffering. Faith is a confidence in the character of God that sustains us during times of suffering that we cannot explain.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I want to trust you even when things happen that I don't understand. I know that you are always taking care of me.

Help me to have the faith that endures so that I can keep following you in all circumstances.

Thank you for your faithfulness to me.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Hebrews 11. Notice how various people of faith persistently followed God's directions because they trusted him.

LESSON 18

WE NEED THE CHURCH

BIG IDEA

“I cannot fulfill all of God’s purpose for me acting alone.”

INTRODUCTION

The church is one and universal...

- » Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 4:4

...yet the church is also local.

SOME PURPOSES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Worship and edification in a congregation (1 Corinthians 14:12).
2. Teaching established doctrine (1 Timothy 3:15).
3. Sending people to evangelize and disciple (Matthew 28:19-20).
4. Financial support of pastors (1 Timothy 5:17-18).
5. Sending and supporting missionaries (Acts 13:2-4, Romans 15:24).
6. Financial help for members in need (1 Timothy 5:3).
7. Discipline of members who fall into sin (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).
8. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
9. Nurture of believers in a Christian community (Acts 2:42).

These purposes cannot be fulfilled by individuals acting independently. God has a plan of operations for a local body of believers. He gives what is needed and requires commitment from us.

Here are some examples of how the local body works:

NECESSARY ELEMENT	GOD'S ACTION	MEMBER RESPONSE NEEDED
leadership	calls pastors	submit to shepherding
finances	commands support	commit financial support
spiritual gifts	gives spiritual gifts	use gifts to serve in harmony
cooperation	design of "body"	recognize interdependence

Every Christian should commit himself, his resources, and his abilities to helping a local church accomplish its biblical purposes. Unless he does, he is not fulfilling his purpose as a Christian.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving me a spiritual family that shares life with me. Thank you for making me part of the body that is doing your will on earth.

Help me to remember that I need the church and that the church needs me. Help me to make the commitments that the local church needs from its members so that it can fulfill its purposes.

Help us together to be a temple where the Holy Spirit lives and gives life to your people.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study 1 Corinthians 12. Meditate on the description that is given of the interdependence of members of the body.

LESSON 19

WINNING OVER TEMPTATION

BIG IDEA

“I can win over temptation by the Holy Spirit’s guidance and power.”

TEMPTATION

» 1 Corinthians 10:13

This verse tells us several important things:

1. Every temptation is common to humanity.
2. God knows our limits.
3. God intends that we live in victory.
4. God provides what we need to live in victory.

Grace for victorious living is given in response to faith (1 John 5:4).

» James 1:14-15

John Wesley observed that the steps to sin usually occur as follows.¹

1. A temptation arises.
2. The Spirit warns the believer to be watchful.
3. The person gives attention to the temptation, and it becomes more attractive to him. (This is where the person makes his first mistake in this process.)
4. The Spirit is grieved, the person’s faith is weakened, and his love for God grows cold.
5. The Spirit reproves sharply.

¹ Paraphrased in *A Timeless Faith: John Wesley for the 21st Century*, edited by Stephen Gibson.

6. The person turns from the *painful* voice of the Spirit and listens to the *attractive* voice of the tempter.
7. Evil desire begins and fills his heart; faith and love vanish; he is ready to commit outward sin.

Temptation is a challenge to our faith, for temptation gives us the opportunity to doubt that obedience to God is the best way at that moment.

If a believer cannot seem to live in victory over sin, it is probably because of one or more of the following problems.

1. He does not see that God requires obedience.
2. He does not see or believe God's promise of enabling grace.
3. He does not depend on God's enabling grace instead of personal strength.
4. He serves God with selective obedience, instead of complete, unconditional obedience.
5. He has not sought by grace to have a single motive to do the will of God (Philippians 3:13-15).
6. He does not maintain spiritual disciplines that keep strong his faith-building relationship with God.

God has already made the supreme investment for our salvation, in the sacrifice of Jesus. He is not going to let that investment be wasted by failing to give us the grace we need to continue.

» Romans 8:32, Jude 1:24-25

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I am thankful that you understand all about me. You know my limits and weaknesses. Thank you for limiting the temptations that come to me and giving grace so that I can live in victory.

Help me to always follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Help me always to reject sin as soon as I recognize it.

Help me to remember that only you can satisfy my heart.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Revelation 2-3. These chapters contain letters to seven churches. They were facing many different temptations and challenges. Notice at the end of each letter the promise that is given to the one who overcomes.

LESSON 20

GOD'S GUIDANCE

BIG IDEA

“I win life’s battles only with directions from my commander.”

PRAYER - COMMUNICATION IN WAR

Communication is essential to winning a battle. We are in a spiritual war. Prayer is our means of communicating with our commander.

- » Ephesians 6:18

God has promised guidance for those who will listen and trust him.

- » Proverbs 3:5-6, Psalm 37:23

Times when we especially need to seek God’s direction:

1. **When making life-changing decisions:** marriage, occupation, education, commitment to a local church.
2. **When making practical decisions:** job opportunities, where to live, large purchases.
3. **When planning and doing ministry:** personal calling, where and with whom to minister, themes to preach and teach.
4. **When participating in the life of the church:** how to worship, what to learn, what to give, how to be a part of the body of Christ on the earth.

WAYS TO BETTER DISCERN GOD'S GUIDANCE

1. **Stay close to God in prayer.** If much of your life becomes disconnected from your conversations with God, you are following your own inclinations and limited perceptions.

2. **Don't trust your own reasoning more than definite scriptural truth.** As Proverbs 3:5 says, "... do not lean on your own understanding."
3. **Always obey what you know for certain to be God's will.** That will improve your perception. If you obey only part of what you know of God's will for you, you will get more confused—the light will turn to darkness (Luke 11:35).
4. **Don't postpone obedience to the will of God.** Don't wait for circumstances to change before you obey God. You will not experience God's best unless you stay in his time.
5. **Be patient.** You may need to wait while God opens doors and prepares situations for you. Don't take matters in your own hands because of impatience. "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7). Never do something you know is wrong because of a sense of urgency.
6. **Listen to good advice** (Proverbs 24:6). When God wants you to make a big decision, he will often show that to other important people in your life. If there are godly, older people who know you and care about you, you should not easily decide to do something they think is a mistake.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

I'm glad that you know what the results will be of any choice I make. Thank you for planning good things for me. I know that you are guiding my steps even more than I can see.

Help me learn to better follow your guidance. Help me to stay close to you in prayer. Help me to pay attention to the truth that you show me. Help me to patiently wait for your direction.

I want to trust you in every decision. I want to follow your will with wholehearted obedience.

Thank you for wanting the best for me.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study Proverbs 3:1-12. What values, attitudes, and character are described here that would be typical of a life that God guides and blesses? How can you personally develop those?

LESSON 21

HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

BIG IDEA

“I must avoid the errors that would hinder my prayers.”

HINDRANCES IN PRAYER

1. Lack of Motivation

» Mark 1:35

A busy person neglects prayer because he feels that what he is doing is more important than what God is doing.

When you have prayed, you can do more than pray, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.

2. Pride of Spirituality

» Matthew 6:5-6

3. Impersonal Prayer

» Matthew 6:7

God is not moved mechanically by our prayers. He is a Person.

4. Unforgiveness

» Matthew 6:15, 1 Timothy 2:8

Without the grace of forgiveness, we cannot continue in a relationship with God.

5. Unconfessed Wrong toward Others

» Matthew 5:23-24

If we want our worship to be acceptable to him, we must confess any wrong we have done to others.

» 1 Peter 3:7

If you are unkind, oppressive, and inconsiderate of someone's feelings and rights, God is not pleased with you, and it will be difficult for you to pray.

6. Failure to Persist

» Matthew 7:7

Persist in prayer by using a list to remember needs you have resolved to pray about.

7. Disobedience

» 1 John 3:22

Obedience is a basis for faith.

8. Sinful Motives

» James 4:3

9. Unbelief

» Hebrews 11:6

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for giving me the privilege of talking to you.

I want to please you in my actions toward others. I want to be humble and forgiving. I want to persist in prayer until you show me what you want to do about my request.

I want my motives to be honest and pure. I want to pray in faith for your will to be done.

Father, I value my time with you. Help me avoid the things that would hinder my relationship with you. Teach me how to pray.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8. From this passage, how would you describe the character of a person who can pray like God wants him to?

LESSON 22

RELATIONSHIPS

BIG IDEA

“God’s principles guide and fulfill my relationships.”

THE PRINCIPLE OF PEACE

» Hebrews 12:14

To pursue peace, you will at least give every person the treatment that you owe him. But to pursue peace requires *more* than giving what you owe. It includes giving the love and kindness you do *not* owe.

If you want peace you will seek reconciliation when there is a conflict. You will be willing to forgive and to be forgiven.

When a person refuses to forgive, he puts an area of his life in resistance to God’s authority, for God requires us to forgive.

Since God has redeemed us, we belong to him, and our rights belong to him. We must consciously yield our rights to God.

THE PRINCIPLE OF LOVE

The person to whom we owe nothing we still must treat with love (Romans 13:8).

Love is evidence that a person is a real Christian (1 John 4:20).

Jesus takes personally your actions and attitudes toward other believers (Matthew 25:40).

Christian love must also be expressed towards our enemies (Matthew 5:44-45).

There is never an excuse to be rude. We are not to treat people as they deserve.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RESPECT

The image of God gives every person inherent value.

Respect should be demonstrated in every contact between people. Courtesy is the minimum. Manipulation and deception are wrong.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to live by the scriptural principles of peace, love, and respect in all my relationships.

I want to be forgiving to those who do wrong against me. Help me to seek reconciliation with those who are in conflict with me.

I want to have love for others that is beyond ordinary human patience.

Help me to respect every person as someone made in your image.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Ephesians 5:22–6:9 for specific directions for behavior in various relationships. List what you should do differently in your relationships.

LESSON 23

A CAREFUL CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

BIG IDEA

“My daily life shows that I am serious about pleasing God.”

PRINCIPLES FOR LIFESTYLE DECISIONS

Behavior, choices of entertainment, and clothing all show something about the inclinations of the heart.

1. **We must obey all of the Bible’s commands to Christians** (Matthew 5:19).
2. **God’s commands are for our benefit** (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). God does not keep from us something that is good, nor command something that is harmful for us.
3. **Christian freedom is not freedom from obeying God** (1 Corinthians 9:21, Romans 6:18).
4. **If we love God we want to know his will, not avoid it** (1 John 5:2-3). A person who loves God will not first ask, “Will God condemn me for doing this?” but, “What would God be most pleased with?” (Colossians 1:10).
5. **Scripture gives a basis for establishing specific rules for our lives.** Some passages are listed in the study assignment that provide a basis for careful Christian living. Some of them give specific directions for the Christian lifestyle.
6. **Rules about details of life are not our most important beliefs** (Matthew 23:23).
7. **Keeping rules is not enough to prove our obedience or love for God** (Matthew 23:25).
8. **Our confidence in the testimony of others does not depend on the small details of their lifestyle** (Romans 14:10).

9. **Tolerance of diverse opinions does not excuse personal carelessness** (Romans 14:5, 23). There are disastrous results when one violates his conscience. If a person decides to do something that he thinks is wrong, he is guilty of sin. There are blessings when one walks in the light God has given him (1 John 1:7).

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to live consistently by the commands of your Word. I know that everything you command is important.

Help me to be faithful to my conscience, whatever others do. Help me to have a Christian attitude toward those who disagree with me.

I want my faith to show in all that I do. Help me in every area of life to make the choices that will make my life a good example of your grace.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study the following scriptures that provide a basis for careful Christian behavior:

- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
- 1 Corinthians 10:31
- 1 Corinthians 11:14-15
- 1 Timothy 2:9-10
- 1 Peter 3:3-4
- Deuteronomy 22:5
- Psalm 19:14
- Psalm 101:3

What personal standards should you base on those scriptures?

LESSON 24

A CHRISTIAN'S SPEECH

BIG IDEA

“There are biblical principles for my conversation.”

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONVERSATION

How can we use our words to accomplish good and avoid harm? The Bible gives some principles.

1. **Don't talk too much** (Ecclesiastes 10:14, Proverbs 10:19).
2. **Don't speak before you think** (James 1:19, Proverbs 29:11).
3. **Don't judge a situation at first sight** (Proverbs 18:13).
4. **Be careful with humor** (Proverbs 26:18-19).
5. **Don't say anything to the wrong person** (Proverbs 11:13). There are times when something may need to be said, but you may not be the right person to say it (Proverbs 25:9).
6. **Be careful with criticism.** There is a right time and way to criticize (Proverbs 27:5-6a). Make sure your criticism is intended to build, and not to destroy.
7. **Don't deceive** (Colossians 3:9). Deception fits in the sinful life, not in the Christian life.
8. **Keep your speech pure** (Ephesians 5:4). Don't tell about past or present scandals except when appropriate to officially deal with a situation. Don't tell jokes that you must tell secretly. People of the world commonly use sexual terms or terms for private body parts in their exclamations, but that is not appropriate for a Christian. It is irreverent to use terms referring to God or Jesus as an exclamation in a time of stress, unless you are sincerely calling upon God for help.
9. **Don't divide people with your words** (Proverbs 16:28). Before speaking, consider not only “Is it true?” but also “Why should I say it?”

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me to remember the effects that my conversation can have, and to take responsibility for my words. I want my words to accomplish good and not harm.

I want my testimony for you to be respected.

Help me to be pure, honest, kind, and careful.

Thank you for the privilege of communicating your truth.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study James 3. Observe the great potential of conversation described here. In verses 13-18 notice how speech flows naturally from the person's spiritual condition.

LESSON 25

CHRISTIAN WORK ETHICS

BIG IDEA

“I do my best at work because God is my employer.”

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON WORK

A Christian should work because he has responsibility for himself and others (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

A person should not expect others to take care of him if he is not willing to do what he can.

A believer has responsibility for his own family (1 Timothy 5:8).

A Christian also works to meet the needs of others (Ephesians 4:28).

THE PRINCIPLE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Principles from Ephesians 6:5-8:

1. A worker is to obey his employer, not only when watched, but always.
2. A worker should maintain the quality and diligence of his work as if working for God.
3. A worker will be blessed by God for faithfulness in his work.

THE PRINCIPLE OF HONESTY

Principles from Titus 2:9-10:

1. A worker should be respectful in his response to his employer's directions.
2. A worker should not steal from his employer, even if he thinks he deserves more pay.
3. Faithful work is a testimony for the gospel; unfaithfulness is a reproach on the gospel.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for the ability to work and the privilege of working.

Help me to work well for my employer, showing respect for him, understanding what he needs from my work, and doing well even when my work will not be inspected.

I want to be faithful with what I earn, taking responsibility for my needs and giving to help others.

Help me to remember that I am working for you and that the best reward is from you.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Study these verses on the subject of work and laziness:

- Proverbs 6:6-11
- Proverbs 10:4-5
- Proverbs 12:11
- Proverbs 12:24
- Proverbs 12:27
- Proverbs 13:4
- Proverbs 13:11
- Proverbs 14:23
- Proverbs 18:9
- Proverbs 20:13
- Proverbs 22:29
- Proverbs 24:30-34
- Proverbs 26:13-16

LESSON 26

MAKING RIGHT DECISIONS

BIG IDEA

“Eternal values direct my decisions.”

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

John Wesley said that God’s general will for us is that we be holy and that we accomplish good. Therefore, **to make a specific decision, we must consider which option will most enable us to be holy and accomplish the most good.**

God expects us to apply scriptural principles as we reason carefully and examine the circumstances.

People who claim special direction from God sometimes become angry when people question their decisions. They show pride and stubbornness rather than humility. A person should not usually reject the advice of others by claiming that he has a special knowledge of God’s will.

Besides the principles Wesley gave, when thinking about your options, consider:

1. Is it consistent with clear scriptural commands?
2. Is it consistent with scriptural priorities?
3. Is it consistent with a realistic view of the circumstances?
4. Is it reasonable?
5. Is it Christian behavior?
6. Is it consistent with loving others as yourself?
7. Will it have a good influence?
8. Is it confirmed by godly advisors?

When God’s will is something very unusual, he is able to make it known to you beyond doubt. But when no clear message from God has been received, you should follow reliable principles for discerning the right option. Don’t expect to receive special revelation for every decision. If you sincerely and prayerfully reason with the right priorities, God will be faithful to guide your decision.

» Romans 12:1-2

To find the will of God, one must first devote himself completely to God. Motives are the most important factor in discerning God's direction.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

Help me learn how to listen to you. I want to be holy and to accomplish as much good for your glory as I can.

Make my motives pure, so that they don't lead me away from your will. Guide me through the wise counselors that you have placed in my life.

Help me to see things as they really are and to make the right choices.

Amen

STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Examine James 4:13-17. Notice God's sovereignty over circumstances. What is the evil, the arrogance that is referred to in verse 16? What is this passage telling us about planning for the future?

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