

Matthew 22:37-39

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. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

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Welcome!



It is with great joy and excitement that we welcome you to Haven Christian Ministries! We are aware that you could have chosen one of the other ministries in the area to call your home. Therefore, we are honored that you have made us your choice. We do not take that selection lightly believing that you were led in that decision by the Spirit of God for we believe that it is He that gives us favor and adds to our body (Acts 2:47).
It is our belief that you are the fruit of answered prayer, sent to us by God to remind us that He hears us and supplies what we need. As such, we understand that you are uniquely and wonderfully made, fashioned by God with perfect craftsmanship to do what only you can do. He saw a hole in our ministry that could only be filled by you; there is a void in our relationships that can only be satisfied by your presence. Our church is not complete without you. What an awesome reality!

Over the next few months you will be ushered into what is life in New Covenant Full Gospel Church. We are not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. However, together we are moving towards transforming the hearts and minds of this community by the power of the Spirit of the Living God! This New Members Manual is intended to assist you in:

- Understanding Who God is and what His expectations are of you
- Understanding what it means to be a Christian and how to grow in your reliance upon Christ
- Understanding what it means to be a part of a fellowship of believers and grow in your relationships with them.

We are excited to be on this life long journey with you. We know like with any relationship there will be highs and lows. However, with the understanding that we all want the same thing, God to be glorified and Christ to be revealed in us, it is our belief that we can overcome the challenges and together become all we can be in Christ Jesus.

Again, we welcome you to New Covenant Full Gospel Church and look forward to growing with you.

Grace and Peace,

Pastor John W. Thompson Sr.

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Pastor John Thompson, born in Chicago, IL, was raised by his grandparents alongside his aunts and uncles in Belzoni, Mississippi. There, his worldview was shaped by the wisdom of his guardians, instilling in him what he affectionately calls an “old soul”.

In the 80’s he would return to the Chicago area with his family, where he would complete his early education. He attended Triton College in search of himself, part of which led him to join the Nation of Islam, where he spent three and half years in training as a Junior FOI (Fruit of Islam) and a Junior Minister. Eventually he would leave the Nation due to conflicting belief systems that were fundamentally different than his Christian upbringing.

A wanderer for the next few years, a young lady would come into his life (Rena), whose family’s commitment to Christ kept Him before Pastor Thompson. One day he would find himself listening to a message preached by Rev. Evelyn Crawford, and yielding to the invitation, walking down a path of lifelong dedication.

Since that day In April of 1997 he has served in Christian ministry in some capacity. Leveraging his early childhood training and life experiences Pastor Thompson has faithfully served at God’s Heritage Full Gospel Ministries of Maywood, IL (Pastor James C. Williams, Sr.) and Triumph Community Church. Having done everything from breaking down the church sound system weekly to becoming an Associate Pastor, Pastor Thompson utilizes his gift of administration and preaching, to impact people’s lives.

Pastor Thompson (M. Min. 2015, Christian Bible Institute & Seminary) is married to Rena, the love of his life, and they have 5 sons, Tre (wife Antoinette), Jaylen (wife Jasmine), John, Jr., Jeremiah, James and 2 grandsons, Caleb & Isaiah, and 2 granddaughters, Naomi & Savannah. He brings an “old school” common sense to a 21st century generation with practical, simplified biblical teaching that enlightens, edifies, and empowers the hearer to achieve all they can for God’s glory.

Lesson 1: Welcome to the Family

Objective:

For you to fully appreciate being part of the family of God by understanding:

- What it means to be saved
- The concepts of "sonship" and "adoption" and how they should shape your worldview
- What grace is and what it means to walk in forgiveness
- How fellowship with Christ should transform your life.

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

Introduction:

You've made the choice to become part of this ministry. Great! Something compelled you that this was where you are supposed to be – an old or new relationship, the message preached, a song sang or just something "different". Whatever it was now you have started on this journey of discovery with us. Whether you are new to the faith or have been a Christian for years, the success of your walk with Christ depends upon the foundation that has been established. As the text brings out there are three things we need to remember:

- There is no other foundation apart from Christ.
- All things done in this life will be revealed for their motivations
- Only what is done for Christ will last.

Because of this, it is incumbent upon us to build a sure foundation, one that enables you to be all you can be in Christ so that when your works are tried in this life they will be found to be of kingdom value.

Part One: Salvation
Text: Romans 3:21-26

What does it mean to be saved? The concept of salvation is central to the Christian faith. Yet, to truly understand what it means to be saved one first must understand what it means to be lost. The answer to that question is found in Genesis. There it is recorded that God created the heavens and the earth. After ensuring that it was habitable by supplying everything essential for life, the Bible says that God created man (Adam) and woman (Eve) (Genesis 2:4-23). Placing the couple in the Garden of Eden, they were given but one command: do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17). Soon after, the Bible says that the couple disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit introducing sin into their lives, dying spiritually and from that point forward being separated from God (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12-14). Because of sin and spiritual death, we cannot please God, our best actions being tainted by our broken nature (Romans 3:10-18, Isaiah 64:6).

Sin devastates. There is no easy way to say it. Although it may seem pleasant for a season, its long-term impact leads to pain and destruction. The tendency is to underestimate it. The Bible makes it clear that among other things, that those who commit sin are in bondage or are a slave to it (John 8:34, Romans 3:10-17) and that sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2a).

Salvation is deliverance from the power of sin and death. To be saved means that you do not have to pay the penalty for the sins that you have committed, but instead you have received forgiveness of your sins through Jesus Christ. Our text brings out several aspects of salvation:

- **Salvation is apart from the Law (verse 21). We cannot obtain it by following a list of do's and don'ts.**
- **This righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (verse 22). It is not based on works but instead by faith.**
- **Sin and salvation are the great equalizer; everyone sins and everyone must access God's salvation in the same way (verses 23, 24).**
- **This salvation we have is because Christ lived a sinless life and made atonement for us by shedding His blood (verses 25-26). This was planned by God.**

Salvation is the single most glorious demonstration of God's love towards us. God sent His Son to pay a penalty we could not pay in order that we might have eternal fellowship with Him (John 3:16, 1 John 3:1). And the beautiful thing about salvation it is free. The Bible makes it very clear that to receive this gift all one has to do is:

1. Recognize that you are a sinner
2. Understand that the penalty for sinning is death
3. Realize that Jesus died, taking your place and paying the penalty for your sins

4. Confess your sins and ask God for forgiveness

5. Accept the sacrifice that Jesus Christ made on their behalf

Part Two: Sonship & Adoption
Text: Galatians 4:1-7

One of the most debilitating aspects of sin is that it separates us from God. The Bible states that because of sin we were enemies of God (Colossians 1:21, James 4:4). This is a sobering thought - the Creator and Sustainer of all life views those who are lost in sin as an enemy. Jesus suggested that those who sin were children of the devil (John 8:42-47), in short, declaring that they were not part of the family of God.

Thus, we have established three things:

1) Sin makes us enemies of God

2) Sin separates us from God.

3) Sin puts us in collaboration with the devil.

The power of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is revealed in the fact that because of His great work we are no longer slaves of sin but have been ushered into the family of God. The term "adoption" fits perfectly. An adopted child is one who is born under a set of parents but has been legally brought into a new family with different parents. There are several aspects that make this a glorious undertaking:

- The child being adopted has no say in the matter; it is a decision solely made by the adopting parents.
- The child is ***chosen*** by the adopting parents. Unlike birth where we have no choice, with adoption choice is 100% involved.
- The child receives full rights as a family member once the adoption takes place, including the changing of their name.

Paul understood this when he outlined how we have been adopted into the family of God. In our text he reveals that:

- We were once slaves to sin
- God sent Christ to redeem us from our bondage
- God has adopted us into His family.

Paul concludes this by declaring that we are God's children. This is what is meant by sonship. As the children of God, we have full rights as sons and daughters of God. Our relationship with Him has been transformed from being one of enmity to one of peace (Romans 5:1). As part of the family of God we now live our lives in accordance with that reality (1 John 3:1-3).

Part Three: Grace & Forgiveness
Text: Ephesians 2:1-10

How can this be that we are adopted into the family of God and declared to be His children? We don't deserve this. Yet, the Bible says it is ours. How have we come into such a great and wonderful place?

The answer is simple: because God has extended grace and forgiveness to us**.**

What is grace and forgiveness? Forgiveness is easy to answer. It is pardon or remission for an offense committed. As it relates to our spiritual life it pertains to our sins and the penalty related to them. Our sins are an affront to God and viewed as detestable to Him (Proverbs 6:16-19). As a result, God has declared that the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:20). This is the penalty or the price for sin (Romans 3:23). Forgiveness is God not holding our sins against us.

Grace, on the other hand, is a little more difficult. Properly, grace is unmerited or undeserved favor. The dictionary throws out other terms to emphasize its meaning: mercy, clemency, pardon, favor, especially by a superior. Grace is receiving what you do not deserve for something you did not do. It is not grace if you did something that earn it. Instead it would be earnings. The best example I can think of is a Christmas gift and our children. We have all told our children to be good or they would not get anything for Christmas. Yet, no matter how they misbehave throughout the year, come December 25th there is always something waiting for them under the tree. Not because they deserve it. Instead, because of the goodness of our hearts. That is grace.

Paul understood the power of grace when communicating to the Ephesians reminding them that they were dead in their sins, doing whatever evil came to their minds no different than the rest of us (Ephesians 2:1-3). Yet, God, "who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ" despite the fact that we were disobedient and rebellious. And it is here that he drives home the true power of grace:

- By it our sins have been forgiven through faith (Ephesians 2:5b, 8)
- It was not because of anything that we have done; there is nothing we could do to acquire God's favor (Ephesians 2:9)
- God has wrought this miracle in our life for purpose; He has a divine plan for us (Ephesians 2:10).

Grace is the foundation of the Christian faith. It is because of grace that we can have a relationship with God. He didn't have to do it…

…but He did.

Now ask yourself:

1) When you hear the term "saved" what does it mean to you?

Part Four: Fellowship with Christ
Text: 1 Corinthians 1:4-9

Hebrews 2:3 asks the question, "…how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation…?" This salvation that we have been privileged to receive is transformative: no longer are our wrongs held against us, but instead we have been ushered into the family of God! The power of this new reality is because the sacrifice of Christ has purchased for us eternal fellowship with Him. Paul reminds the Corinthian church that, as a result, of what Christ has done, we have fellowship with Him (verse 9). What does it mean to be in fellowship with Christ? Simply put:

- Our lives better (verse 5). Just like in life it's not what you know but who you know, because we are in relationship with Jesus our lives are better (John 10:10). Better does not mean that we are not without our own set of trials and tribulations. Better instead means that we are in a better place today because we are in Him. He has enriched our lives.

- We are equipped to accomplish His will (verse 7). Paul reminds us that we do not lack any spiritual gifts, but instead have been equipped for the work that God has prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10, 3:1, John 14:12).

- We will be kept until He returns (verse 8). The work of salvation is worked out in us, itself being a work of the Holy Spirit to keep us in the will of God. Fellowship with Christ ensures that we stay the course laid out for us (Philippians 2:13, 3:10)

Now ask yourself:

1) When you hear the term "saved" what does it mean to you?

1 Cor. 1:4-9

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge — 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lesson 2: All About God

Objective:

To lay the foundation for you to begin a lifelong journey in understanding Who God is by discussing:

- The Trinity
- Attributes of God

Lesson Text: Jeremiah 9:23-24

Introduction:

If you are like most of us there is something within you that whispers there must be more to life than what is before us. Living life from day-to-day, the excitement of the possible in our lives that filled our youth with the hopes and dreams of what we could be has faded into the common monotony of everyday living. Going through the motions, we attempt to find purpose in everything we do, only to find that all we have striven for is meaningless (Ecclesiastes 2:26). What is the meaning of life? Why are we here? These are questions all of us have asked at one time or another only not to find answers. What I have come to believe is that life is about one thing and one thing alone - knowing GOD. Only the knowledge of the One and True God can fill the void that exists within our souls. Only He can satisfy the longing that we have. Only He can provide for us the purpose that we long for and the sense of accomplishment that we all seek.

Jeremiah was informed of this reality. In chapter 9 the LORD remarks:

> **23 "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom**
> **or the strong boast of their strength**
> **or the rich boast of their riches,**
> **24 but let the one who boasts boast about this:**
> **that they have the understanding to know me,**
> **that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness,**
> **justice and righteousness on earth,**
> **for in these I delight,"**
> **declares the Lord**

The reasoning is obvious: wisdom, strength and riches can do nothing for you when your life is in the balance, nor can they provide comfort in the midst of the human tragedies of life. The old cliché is true, "Only what you do for Christ will last."

Therefore, our life aim should be to know God and understand Who He is. This only provides lasting value to our lives. Yet, God can only be comprehended if He reveals Himself to us; He is not grasped by human means (Judges 13:18; 1 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10; John 14:26).

This lesson is about ensuring that you have a foundational understanding of Who God is and begin on the lifelong journey of knowing Him. Together we will begin to understand that He is unfathomable and embrace what it means to know Him.

Part One: The Trinity
Text: Matthew 3:16-17

Our passage in Matthew is a recounting of Christ's baptism by John. The text tells us that as Christ ascended from the water, the Holy Spirit descends upon Him and a voice is heard from Heaven declaring this is His Son. We know this to be the voice of the Father. This is a vivid image of three distinct persons in existence, and with it comes the first introduction of the biblical doctrine of the Trinity.

The Trinity is one of the foundational truths about God. The Bible reveals that God is a Triune God. What is meant by this is that He is three separate and distinct Persons but only One God. This is a confusing concept to our human minds. How three persons be one? To begin to understand this, we must first view the two distinct concepts separately.

The Bible teaches that there is only one true and living God. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; Jeremiah 10:10; 1 John 5:20). This belief made the ancient Israelites unique amongst their pagan neighbors who were polytheistic, serving gods such as Baal, Asherah, Chemosh and Dagon. Their zeal in serving Him was fueled by special revelation, instances throughout the Old Testament where He revealed and declared Himself to His people making sure that they understood this fact. The LORD made it known that there is no other God with Him nor was there any god before Him or after Him (Deuteronomy 32:39, Isaiah 43:10). This firmly establishes Him as the only God.

Even though the Old Testament tells us that God is the only one true and living God, the New Testament provides further revelation concerning His Person. In the Old Testament God is called by His name the LORD (in capital letters), yet in the New Testament we are first introduced to Him as the Father in John 1:14. We later understand the Father to be God (John 1:18), which becomes obvious as the gospels unfold. In the same place Jesus is declared to be God, He being the Living Word. Throughout Christ's ministry He speaks of the Father frequently, informing us that He and the Father are one (John 10:30), that the Father has placed everything in His hands (John 3:35) and that He and the Father are always at work (John 5:17). He also introduces us to the Holy Spirit Who He tells us is the Source of truth (John 14:15ff), our Advocate (John 15:26ff), and our Comforter (John 14:26). Verbiage is used to specifically tell us that each is a Person Who does specific things. Christ clearly establishes that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are Persons. Their Divine identity is confirmed in other passages where they each are clearly declared to be God (Ephesians 4:6, John 6:27, Hebrews 1:8, Titus 2:13, Acts 5:3-4).

What the doctrine of the Trinity reveals to us is that God is the perfect group - perfected unity in that He is One God and perfected individuals, three Divine Persons. By stating that God is a Triune God we are not stating that we have three Gods but instead:

- There is only one God Who Exists
- There are three distinct Persons Who Exist
- Each of these Persons is called God
- The Three Persons are the One God

Part One: The Attributes of God
Text: Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 11:33-36

As if the concept of the Trinity were not enough, to fully understand God is impossible. God has revealed to us that He is completely and totally different than us. As Isaiah reveals, His thoughts and ways are not like ours. Yet, even though we cannot fully comprehend God, we can fully know Him. Part of knowing God is understanding His attributes. Attributes are nothing more than the qualities or characteristics of a person. They are the traits that define who a person is and how they respond. The color of a person's skin is an attribute as well a person's personality, like whether they are gregarious or somber.

When speaking of God's attributes, they are typically classified into two categories, communicable and incommunicable. By incommunicable we simply mean these are attributes that are only possessed by God. Communicable, on the other hand, are those attributes that humans possess to a degree. When discussing God, it must be understood that we will only be limited in our understanding of the magnitude to which God possesses these attributes because that which He possesses He does so in complete perfection.

To discuss all the attributes of God would take a full volume. However, for our study we will briefly go over some of them.

Incommunicable Attributes

- Eternal - God exists into the everlasting future but also into the infinite past. He has no beginning or end. Unlike people who have a definite point in time where we came into existence, the same is not true about God. In short time does not constrain God (Psalm 90:1-2; Psalm 102:12; Hebrews 13:8; Revelation 1:8).

- Omnipotent - God has unlimited power to accomplish all that He desires. There is nothing He cannot do or bring into being. That which He does, does not require effort, nor is there a level of difficulty. The things He does are either done or not done (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17; Psalm 115:3; Matthew 19:26; Hebrews 1:3).

- Omnipresent - God is everywhere present in the fullness of His being. This is not to say that God is in everything. Instead, it means that there is no place that you can God and escape from the presence of God. He is always at all locations at the same time. In short, space does not constrain God (1 Kings 8:27; Job 11:7-9; Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psalm 139:7-10; Proverbs 15:3; Acts 17:24).

- Omniscience - God knows all. There is nothing outside of His conception, understanding or attention. God neither studies nor learns because He cannot increase His knowledge. He is the source of all knowledge (Psalm 147:5; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 15:18; Romans 11:33; 1 John 3:20; Hebrews 4:13).

- Self-Existing - God exists eternally and will always exist. God does not owe His existence to anything or anyone. Unlike us who owe our existence to our mother and father and an act of God, and unlike all things in existence that owe their existence to the act of someone else, God exists because He is God. He is the Uncaused Cause (Exodus 3:14; Psalm 50:2; Psalm 90:2; John 1:15; John 5:26; Acts 17:24-25; Colossians 1:15-17).

- Immutable - God does not change. Who God is today, He was yesterday, He will be tomorrow. He is Who He is forever (Malachi 3:6; James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8)

- Sovereignty - God has divine control over everything that happens. There is nothing that can happen outside of His control. There is no act on the behalf of evil men, natural disaster, working of demons nor my own free will that can act apart from the control of God (Genesis 14:19; Exodus 18:11; Psalm 115:3; Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:9-11; Matthew 10:29; Romans 8:28, 38-39, 9:15; Ephesians 1:11; 1 Philippians 2:13; Peter 3:17).

Communicable Attributes

- Goodness - God is intrinsically good. He is not good because it is attractive for Him to be so, nor is He good because it is the right thing to do. God is good because He is the source of goodness and acts as the rule for what goodness is (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 25:8; James 1:17).

- Grace - God is the Giver of blessings that are earned and not earned. Typically, when we speak of God's grace we are referring to salvation, which no man deserves. Yet His grace goes beyond that. There is His common grace, which are the blessings He gives to everyone without merit - health, prosperity, good weather, etc. Then there is His special grace that He gives only to those whom He chooses, His elect, also without merit, but isolated only to those who are His - salvation, godly peace, etc. (Psalm 145:17; Romans 1:5; Romans 3:24; Romans 5:15, 20; Ephesians 4:7; Hebrews 4:16).

- Holiness - God is totally pure and separated from the rest of creation. He is the epitome of moral purity and is completely incorruptible (Exodus 3:5-6 15:11; Leviticus 19:2;1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:2-3; Job 34:10; Isaiah 6:3; Luke 1:49; Revelation 4:8).

- Just - God is just. He is the ultimate judge who judges uprightly without favoritism. He sees the actions of all creatures and judges them accordingly. He is not influenced nor persuaded by the devices of others but instead will judge each man according to his heart (Genesis 18:25; Exodus 13:6-7; Numbers 14:18: Nehemiah 9:32-33; Romans 9:14-33; Psalm 99:4; Romans 1:32; 1 Peter 1:17).

- Love - God is love. He defines our understanding of what love is. He is the source of all love and it is by Him that we experience love. God loves His creation and God loves His people. He does not love for reason. He loves because it is Who He is (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Jeremiah 31:3; John 14:31; Romans 5:5, 8; 8:35, 39; 1 John 4:8, 16).

- Mercy - God is the source of all mercy. Mercy is withholding what is deserved to the benefit of another. God does not give to any man all that they deserve but to some degree withholds the just results of our sinfulness from us (Psalm 6:4; Hebrews 4:16; Romans 9:23-24; Ephesians 2:4; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3).

- Righteous - Righteousness is similar to goodness and holiness except that it requires works to establish it. The good works that follow a per on is what makes them righteous. God is righteous not because He does good works. He is righteous because all He does is good (Genesis 18:25; Psalm 19:7-9; Psalm 145:17; Jeremiah 9:24).

- Faithful - God is faithful which means He can be depended upon. He does what He says He will do. He never fails (Deuteronomy 7:9; Lamentations 3:22-23; 2 Timothy 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24; Hebrews 10:23; Psalm 77:8).

Lesson 3: Christian Foundation

Objective:

To lay the foundation for you to understand what it means to be a Christian by discussing:

- How you can know that you are saved - John 6:35-40
- What holiness is and how it impacts your daily living - Colossians 3:1-17
- Growing daily through discipleship 2 Tim 2:1-2
- The excitement that can be experienced through sharing your faith
- Experiencing the grace of God in your life through baptism and the Lord's Supper

Lesson Text: 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

Introduction:

We live in a time when "generic" is viewed as not only acceptable but desirable. Stores have arisen with the onus of providing "knock offs" of the original. Everything from popular handbags, to cars, to breakfast cereal have had their generic alternatives introduced and often passed off as the original. Just go to Times Square in New York and you will see street corner peddlers pushing "authentic" Rolex watches. And, unless you are a savvy consumer you can be duped into believing the fake is the real thing.

The same is true with our faith. To the unwary viewer the various brands of spirituality being peddled by our celebrities and airwaves looks and feels like the real thing. After all, it got them where they are. However, when you peel back the layers you will soon discover that what many what we have professed as being the truth is, in reality, a lie.

Paul understood this. He admonished the believers in Corinth that there is only one sure foundation to build on - Jesus Christ (verse 11). Whatever does not first begin with Him and end with Him has no staying power in the lives of those who believe. Any other foundation shall be tried for its validity and revealed for what it is (verses 12-15).

The focus of this lesson is to ensure that you have built your hope on a sure foundation and that in the end you can have the confidence that what you do for Christ will truly last.

Part One: Assurance
Text: John 6:37-40, 44

So you have accepted Christ into your heart and have started on this journey we call the Christian life. In the beginning it was all easy, the excitement of this new life providing for you the momentum to pursue the things of God. However, one day you find yourself confronted with your old desires and before you know it you have slipped back into your past lifestyle. Seeing it for what is, you feel guilty and ashamed. Then the thought creeps in, "You weren't really saved in the first place."

This is not an uncommon scenario. Every believer has struggled both with sin and with questions related to their salvation. Paul declared, "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." (Romans 7:15). This internal struggle left the apostle in a state of total despair decrying, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?" (Romans 7:24)

In this state many find themselves questioning their relationship with Christ. They wonder how could they do what they have done if they loved the Lord. Doubts creep in and a cycle of second guessing takes hold. It is at this moment, especially, that the believer needs to have a solid sense of assurance.

Assurance is simply the knowledge that what you have you have. As it relates to our salvation it is the knowledge that you are saved even when you don't feel saved. What can make a person know this? Facts. Salvation is not a feeling. Salvation is a fact established on the reality that Jesus Christ died for sinners. The confidence we have comes from Christ's words Himself where He declares:

1) Your salvation is not the result of your choosing Christ; it is the result of the Father choosing you. (verse 44).

2) Christ's came to save those the Father has chosen (verse 39)

3) It is the Father's will that all He has chosen shall be saved (verse 40)

When a person is saved a transformation takes place within them. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. He changes them from the inside out making them a new creation. This result provides the foundation for our assurance, for the presence of these emotions/feelings becomes evidence that something has indeed taken place within our hearts. Of them are these basic responses:

- Your desires are different; you don't want to do, or you are uncomfortable doing the things you used to do (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- You have a strong conviction of wrongdoing in your life (John 16:7-11).
- A quiet passion wells up within you when you are discussing the things of God with others (Mark 13:11, Acts 1:8).

It is God's desire that we know and are confident that He is LORD (Deuteronomy 4:35; 1 John 1:1-4). The Holy Spirit makes this clear to us.

Part Two: Holiness
Text: Colossians 3:1-17

I remember the days and weeks following my acceptance of Christ into my life. What an exciting time! I understood for the first time in my life that there was more to life than what I saw; that living for myself was empty. I embraced the reality that I would spend eternity with Jesus. How glorious! I ravenously consumed the Bible, reading anything I could (primarily from the New Testament), desiring to know everything I could about the Lover of my soul. I had little time for anything else.

What no one prepared me for was the day when that newbie zeal would subside, and I would be faced with the "grind" of the Christian life. My friends and relationships loomed in the background while I found myself slowly being sucked back into living as I had lived for the first 20 years of my life. Soon I was back doing what I used to do, all the while struggling with an inner battle that raged within me. It was against this backdrop that I began to learn and understand what holiness is all about.

Holiness is from the Greek word hagios (ἅγιος) which means "different" or "other". As it relates to the LORD it speaks of how He is different from the world. He is unlike anything in the world and calls Himself out as Holy. The significance of this should not be lost. It is of singular importance that the name of the Third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. The LORD declared repeatedly, "Be holy for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 45, 19:2, 20:7, 1 Peter 1:15). Paul reminds us that we have been chosen by God before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless (Ephesians 1:4), thus Hebrews admonishes us to make every effort to be holy (Hebrews 12:14). When we speak of being holy we are speaking of not being like the world, but instead being like God. When God says be holy because I am Holy, He is saying be different because I am different.

So, what does this difference look like? Paul gives us a glimmer in his challenge to the church at Colossae. From our passage we can conclude X things:

- Holiness requires a mind change on the part of the believer (verses 1-4). You must set your mind to do so.
- Holiness requires an act of will on the part of the believer (verses 5-7). You must resist what may seem to be natural inclinations, both those that come from internal struggles.
- Holiness requires a pursuit of integrity with others (verses 8-11). You must overcome the natural desire to have an advantage over others. It recognizes that we are all one in Christ.
- Holiness requires that we drive to look like Christ (verses 12-14). Holiness is about Christlikeness. It recognizes where we are short and seeks to compensate for it through the Holy Spirit to look like Christ.

Part Three: Discipleship
Text: 2 Timothy 2:1-2, Luke 14:25-35

As a child my father gave me my first basketball and basketball rim. I remember him setting the rim on an old, round table painted white and placing it on the back of the garage facing the alley. Still in my head is the dust I kicked up as I tried to learn the sport. Soon, he would sign me up for a pee wee basketball league where I, and other 3rd graders would fight it out on the hardwood. I never scored a point. I can't remember ever getting a chance to shoot the ball. Yet I wanted to play that game. It wasn't because I found it fun. Nor was it because I was particularly good at it (although I eventually would excel in that arena). No. As I think back fondly on those days, my love for the sport came because my father loved it. I learned to play the game because my father before me was a student of the game and he passed on to me the same love he had acquired from childhood.

As Christians when we begin the journey that we call the Christian life, we all walk that path driven by an unseen zeal that we cannot rightfully put to words, but it is one that compels us to continue.

Unfortunately, that fire will soon be extinguished as the issues of life and our old life creep back into the forefront. It is only as we find someone who has a love for the walk, who nurtures us and guides us, can we ever hope to be able to grow as believers in Christ. This is called discipleship. Discipleship is the process of making someone a disciple, i.e. a pupil or an adherent of the doctrines of another. When we say that we are disciples of Christ, we are saying that we are students of His ways, that we are following Him, emulating His life that we might be like Him.

Christ is looking for disciples. In Matthew 28:18ff as He was departing, Christ stated to the Eleven,

> [18]… "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you

The call was clear: make disciples. These disciples were to be baptized and taught to obey. This would become the primary mission of the church.

So, what is required to be a disciple of Christ? In Luke, Jesus answers this very question. He was at a Pharisee's house one Sabbath day having dinner and the text says He was being watched very carefully (Luke 14:1). There in front of Him was a man who was suffering, and Christ posed the question, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" When no one answered Him, Christ healed the man and sent him on his way (Luke 14:3-4). Sensing their indignation Jesus begins to teach about righteousness. In His lesson He first talks about taking the place of honor and the call to humility. From there, He speaks of the Great Banquet where all the invited guests have excuses why they cannot make it. Both parables were directed at the Pharisees. Then in verse 25 the text says,

> [25] Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said…

He then begins to discuss the requirement of being His disciple. Looking at the text, several things become evident:

- Discipleship requires that we love God more than anyone else (vs 26). No other relationship or how others view you can come in the way of your relationship with Christ. Your relationship with Christ is the most important relationship in the life of a disciple.

- Discipleship requires self-denial and association with Christ's suffering (vs 27). It is not enough to sacrifice for Christ. That is the "deny yourself" part. Taking up your cross is completing in your body the afflictions of Christ (Colossians 1:24), associating yourself with His suffering.

- Discipleship requires that you understand the costs and find it most precious (vs 28). Christ admonishes us to count the costs. The significance of this in the life of the disciple is that counting the costs implies that you understand the value of what you are giving up and what you are gaining, and you place more value on what you gain. This is not a "one and done" assessment but a daily inventory on what is the cost.

- Discipleship requires that you sacrifice everything for Christ (vs 33). Jesus will not be number two in your life. He will not compete with our jobs, our family, our possessions, nothing. Jesus demands to be number one in the lives of His disciples.

Discipleship is the salt in the life of the believer that preserves them during conflicting priorities. As I have heard, every disciple is a believer, but not every believer is a disciple.

Part Four: Evangelism
Text: Acts 1:7-8, 2:1-40

What is awesome about giving your life to Christ is that you realize that there is more to life than what meets the eye. You discover that God has a plan for your life and you begin to embrace the mindset that everything you do on this side of eternity is in preparation for life everlasting with Him. There is an excitement that wells up within you, a joy, that becomes almost unbearable. You have new life and it is good.

What is universal amongst people is that we are wired to spread good news. Whether it's a great deal that we got for car insurance or an awesome stage performance that we have seen downtown, when we come across something that moves us with excitement we cannot keep it to ourselves but are compelled to tell somebody. This is natural.

Evangelism is nothing more than telling somebody about good news. Derived from the compound Greek word "euangelizo" (εὐαγγελίζω) that means to announce good news, it is the outward communication of glad tidings. It is a declaration of something that everyone should be happy to hear. What evangelism isn't, is that it is not conversion. Conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:4-7 reminds us:

> [4] But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Jesus Himself said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them…" (John 6:44). Paul reminds us that no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3). Only He can awaken the faith in our hearts by which we can be saved.

Why then is evangelism important? The reason is that evangelism, or the proclamation of the good news to others, has been ordained by God to be the vehicle whereby people are saved. Romans 10:14-15 states,

> [14] How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? [15] And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."

Without people excited about what God has done declaring His good deeds salvation will not move forward. It is through the sharing of our faith that individuals come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

As Christ was preparing to depart from His disciples, He announces to them that they would be given power. He then tells them that they would be His witnesses. Fast forward, these same disciples were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit descended upon them and filled them. Moved by His power, they began to speak in foreign tongues. Witnessing this, a crowd gathered, and the Bible tells us that Peter stood up amongst them and gave the first "sermon."

What is interesting about this message was that:

1) Peter spoke about what he knew - he was an eyewitness and testified to his personal experience with Jesus

2) He let the crowd know specifically what Christ had done - that He died and rose from the grave to forgive our sins

3) He challenged them to give their lives to Christ.

Evangelism is just that: speaking to what you know concerning Christ, letting people know that Jesus indeed died for them, and reminding them of His standing offer. It is not a sophisticated formula or polished script. It is a heartfelt appeal to another's heart concerning the goodness of the LORD. This is what we have been created to do.

Part Five: Baptism
Text: Matthew 28:19-20

Before Christ departed, He gave an explicit command to His disciples: go baptize. In this command He is directing them out of their comfort zones with the aim of reaching others.

Baptism was not a foreign concept to them. The New Testament tells us that several of the disciples were former disciples of John the Baptist who spent his career by the bodies of water in Israel baptizing people (John 1:35ff). Yet, the Bible tells us that the baptism of John was different than the baptism of Christ (Acts 19:1-5).

Baptism as instituted by Christ is a sacrament meaning there is sacramental union (or spiritual relationship) between the sign and the thing signified. In this case, the thing signified is association with Christ's sacrifice. There is a real and effectual promise attached to the performance of baptism. This promise, one of which is the promise of Christ's real presence (verse 20) is realized in the life of the individual who faithfully undergoes this sacrament. The realization of the promise is a work of God and is realized by faith, not the carrying out of the action. That is not say that a person is saved by being baptized. Instead, a person is blessed because they are baptized.

Baptism, then, has two very distinct roles in the life of the church:

1) It is an outward testimony that an individual is a part of the visible Church (1 Corinthians 12:13). As such, those who are baptized are considered members of the local body.

2) It is to the sign and seal of the covenant of grace for the individual being baptized. What is meant is that it acts as the sign to the individual that they belong to God and they are sealed, pending the work of the Holy Spirit, by God for God. In short, they are now associated with Christ.

The Greek term translated baptism "baptizo" (βαπτίζω) means simply to wash. Depending upon the context of the word it can signify immersion or pouring or sprinkling. These three different ways are called "modes" and they have been the source of a great deal of controversy in the church. Yet, the fact

is the mode is not as important as the method. The method, as prescribed in the lesson text, is that the individual being baptized should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, by a minister of the Gospel.

Part Six: The LORD's Table
Text: Luke 22:14-21

On the night when Christ was betrayed He instituted the sacrament of the LORD's Table also known as the LORD's Supper. Commanding us to observe this until His return, Jesus stated that by doing this we remember the sacrifice that He made for us. This act of obedience seals all the benefits that are ours due to our relationship with Him, and acts as a bond and pledge of our communion with Him, with each other, and with the body of Christ.

In this sacrament, Christ is not offered up to His Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins. On the contrary, what Christ did for us on Calvary He did once and for all. Instead, this is a commemoration of that sacrifice and an offering of praise to God for what He has done for us through Him.

The elements have historically been bread and wine. They were administered as a loaf and a common cup. Individuals would come up and tear off a piece of the bread and either dip the bread in the wine or eat the bread and drink from the cup. Today, the elements can take the form of wafers, matzah, or bread with wine or grape juice. Believers usually no longer share a common cup, but instead small, disposable cups are utilized. Regardless of what is used or how you partake, what is of importance is how it is administered versus these nuances.

In the administration, Christ provided very clear directions. Properly there should be prayer, a blessing of the elements to set them apart from a common use to a holy use, and then a distribution of these elements to the believers. We do not believe that the elements are transformed, only that they take on a spiritual significance and by partaking of them in a worthy manner grace is realized in the life of the believer (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Because of this, this sacrament should only be exercised by those who have made a heartfelt profession of Christ's Lordship in their lives. Once everyone has been given the elements, everyone is admonished to consume them together in keeping with the guidance provided in 1 Corinthians. Afterwards, typically no benediction is given in keeping with how the LORD ended the supper that night. In doing so in this manner, we do the most honor to God for what Christ has done.

Lesson 4: Real Christianity

Objective:

For you to understand what Christian living looks like by discussing:

- Faith in God
- Loving God and others
- Obedient living
- Worship as a way of life
- Evangelizing the others through sharing
- Repentance as a regular practice
- Sanctification through daily

Lesson Text: Matthew 5:14-18

Introduction:

In a world where everyone professes to be a Christian and gives credit to God for their exploits, it becomes very difficult to identify what a real Christian looks like. When an artist receives a music award he famously says, "I wanna thank God, my family, and I wanna thank you, regardless of how vulgar his art may be. Some may laugh at this most likely due to its simplicity. Yet, it reflects his theology; he believes that the art he has created was enabled by God. The challenge, however, is that such kudos to the Almighty can quickly become mistaken as professions of faith. As a result, we are challenged in identifying what a "real Christian" looks like. The airwaves are full of people who profess their faith. However, when you peel back the layers you quickly see that they may very well be wolves in sheep's clothing.

When reviewing the lesson text Christ makes it very clear that Christians are called to be "the light of the world". Three major conclusions can be drawn from this passage:

1. We have been positioned by God to be seen by others; we are viewed as both a town built on a hill and a lamp placed on a stand.
2. The intent of this Divine positioning is so our lives can be evaluated by others; in both instances the intent is to be seen for glorifying the Father.
3. We should enthusiastically welcome this evaluation because it was for this purpose that we have been

If being recognized by the world as a child of God is the call of the Christian, the governing question is, "What does a real Christian look like?" Like all of the lessons, there is no exhaustive answer to this question. This is a life long journey. However, there are some basics that are evident in the lives of everyone who professes to be a Christian that can be summarized by the acronym F.L.O.W.E.R.S. (see the Objective).

The remainder of this lesson is focused on what each element of that acronym means in the life the believer.

Part One: "F" is for faith in God - Hope in Action

Text: Hebrews 10:19-25

Real Christians have faith. A simple statement packed with a lot of meaning. In a world where churches have risen to be declared "faith ministries" it is important to identify what faith is not.

Faith is not:

1. Belief in God (James 2:19)
2. A tool for obtaining divine blessings

If this is the case, what is "faith"? The best verse for answering that question is Hebrews 11:1:

> [1] Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Here, faith is viewed as having both a substantive and evidential properties. Faith is the tangible aspect of something that you hope for. It is the confidence that what you are hoping for will indeed be yours. The second aspect, the certainty of something despite it not being yet evident, is the evidential aspect. It is being convinced that regardless of what you see that what you have hoped for will indeed be realized and you demonstrate it by your actions. The focus of this faith is the promises of God.

Faith is the belief, confidence or trust in a person or thing not necessarily supported by revealed fact. It is the unwavering belief and trust in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ resulting in transformed living. Faith is believing in Christ's sacrifice and living a life that demonstrates that belief.

- If you have true faith you will have an ever-increasing relationship with God (verse 22). Your life will be focused on purifying yourself to please God.
- If you have true faith your will, will be built on Christ (verse 22). Faith holds unswervingly to Christ.
- If you have true faith you will be other focused (verse 24). Faith is manifested in my actions towards others.
- If you have true faith you will seek to fellowship with likeminded people (verse 25). Faith is encouraged by more faith.

Part Two: "L" is for love - Faith in action

Section Text: John 13:34-35, 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Real Christians love. Love is the very essence of what it means to be a Christian. The LORD makes it clear that we are to love even as He has loved. The passage in John brings out two points:

1. Loving is a command. Love for the Christian is not optional.
2. Love is the sign of discipleship. He says by this all men will know that we are His disciples. Its presence or lack is evidence of our relationship with Christ.

So, what does it mean to love? In the Greek there are three primary words for love:

1. Eros (ἐρός) or sexual love, where we get our word erotic; this word is not used in the Bible.

2. Phileo (φιλέω) or brotherly love. It is an affectionate love, familial in nature. We get our words philanthropy or Philadelphia from it.
3. Agapao (ἀγαπάω) love is not a feeling, but instead has social and moral implications. It speaks of a commitment. It is defined as a committed surrender of my life to someone else. It is this love that God demonstrated for us in Christ Jesus.

The passage that clearly defines what love is is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, which outlines 16 aspects of love:

- Love is patient; it is willing to wait on God's timing in others. Therefore, it will exercise self-restraint and self-control.
- Love is kind. Love demonstrates itself in a compassion and caring for others. It seeks to communicate itself in pleasantness, not conflict.
- Love does not envy. Love is content with what it has and is happy for others for what they have. Love does not want to begrudge others of their blessings.
- Love does not boast. Love does not seek to elevate itself at the expense of others. As a result, it does not brag but is humble and gives credit to others, looking to lift others for what they have done.
- Love is not proud. Love does not believe that you are better than others, but instead is modest. Love is not arrogant or overbearing.
- Love is not rude. Love is courteous and gracious. It exercises social decorum and good manners.
- Love is not self-seeking. Love puts others first. It gives way to first choice in others. It is not greedy or selfish.
- Love is not easily angered. It thinks the best of people. Believes in positive intent and therefore does not jump to conclusions. It asks questions and listens.
- Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love forgives. Love remembers the "rights" not the "wrongs."
- Love does not delight in evil. Love turns away from what is not right. Love takes no pleasure in the downfall of others.
- Love rejoices in the truth. Love is happy about good things. Love spreads the good news. Love tells the truth. Authenticity.

Then there are the ALWAYS aspects of love.

- Love always protects. Love defends the helpless and the weak. Love protects oneself and others.
- Love always trusts. Love trusts and believes God's promises. Love makes itself vulnerable to betrayal.
- Love always hopes. Love never gives up. Love remembers God does not give up on us, so we don't give up on others.
- Love always perseveres. Love is persistent. Love is faithful and can be depended upon.
- Love never fails. Love will win in the end.

Loving the way God calls us to love is taxing and we cannot do it. We are enabled to do so only because Christ first loved us (1 John 3:16). As a result, love is faith in action.

Part Three: "O" is for obedience - Christ in me revealed

Section Text: 1 Samuel 15:12-23

Real Christians are obedient. Christians are compliant or submissive to authority. This implies that we understand that someone else is in charge, they have given a directive, whether spoken or implied, and there is an expectation that I carry it out. Like love, obedience is not an option.

God has called us to various levels of obedience. In the 10 Commandments children are instructed to obey their parents. In Romans 13 God tells us to obey governing authorities. In Ephesians 6 and 1 Peter 2 God instructs servants to obey their masters. In Hebrews 13 we are instructed to obey our pastors. Everywhere we turn we are instructed to obey someone else.

Obedience is Christ in me revealed. When I obey I am reflecting the humility of Christ in me. The Bible states that Christ…

> [6] **…being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,** [7] **but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** [8] **And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:6-8)**

So, as Christ is manifested in me, I should resemble Him, being obedient even as He is obedient!

The text outlines several points related to obedience that we should note:

- We fail to obey when we allow others to own the results we are responsible for. When challenged why he did not obey Saul answered that the soldiers took them (verse 15). We are responsible for our obedience.
- What we believe to be obedience is often short of full obedience. Saul answered Samuel that he did obey God (verse 20); however, upon closer evaluation he actually did not fully comply (compare his results to verse 3). God is not satisfied with intentions; He requires obedience.
- When we fail to obey we justify or rationalize our lack of obedience by other priorities. Saul then rationalizes the actions by stating that the best of the plunder was devoted to God (verse 21). We will twist God's Word to support our actions; this does not please God.

It was at this point that Samuel revealed to Saul that God had rejected him due to his disobedience and declared:

> [22] …**To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.**

What we learn from this is simple:

- Obedience is not an option
- Obedience is something we cannot do
- Christ became our obedience
- Through Christ's obedience we can walk in obedience

Part Four: "W" is for worship - Christ in me revered

Section Text: Luke 24:50-53

Real Christians worship Jesus Christ. Worship means to declare worth or attribute worth. It is defined as reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage, or to any object regarded as sacred. Everyone worships a "god." Each of us has something that we hold in the highest esteem. Yet, what makes a Christian a Christian is that they worship Jesus Christ.

The context of the text is after the resurrection of Jesus. He has appeared to His disciples several times. He has proven by show of His wounds that it is indeed Him and that He is indeed alive. After eating with them, the text says He takes them out to Bethany and lifted His hands to bless them. And while doing so the text says He left them and was taken into heaven at which time:

> **52 …they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.**

This was not the first instance of Christ being worshipped. We see it in several other passages:

- Matthew 2:11 the wise men worshipped Jesus
- Matthew 14:33 the disciples worshipped Jesus
- John 9:38 the blind man worshipped Jesus
- Hebrews 1:6 tells us the angels worship Jesus

The worship of Christ provides definitive proof that Jesus Christ is God because to worship Him and He not be God would be sin (Deuteronomy 6:14, Luke 4:8).

What we should walk away understanding is:

- We were created to worship (Revelations 4:9-11, Isaiah 6:2-4)
- Worship must be taught (John 4:22)
- Worship is a way of living (Ephesians 5:19-20)
- Worship is contagious (Nehemiah 8:5-6, Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Part Five: "E" is for evangelize - Christ in me declared

Section Text: Acts 1:1-11

Real Christians evangelize. When we think of the term "evangelize" we typically think of conversion. Associated with this term is the belief that we must persuade individuals to surrender their lives to Christ. However, the term simply means to proclaim good news. It is not about "guilting" people into confessing Christ, bringing them under pressure to "get their lives right with God", nor is it an elaborate theological argument put together to convince someone they need to be converted to Christianity. Instead it focuses on the message of what Christ has done in your life to change you. It is not about making disciples, although the result will be convincing conversion; it is about telling the world about how good God is.

In our text Luke is building on the gospel account that he has previously recorded. Here he begins to evangelize the reader, Theophilus, communicating two basics that an individual must have to share their faith:

- A basic understanding of the teachings and miracles of Christ (verses 1-2)
- First-hand knowledge of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection (verses 3-4)

He then provides the account of one instance when Christ appeared to His disciples. In this recollection the disciples are commissioned to be Christ's witnesses. In this commissioning the three elements necessary for effective evangelism are given:

- All evangelism is empowered by God through the Holy Spirit (verses 4-5, 8a)
- All evangelism is a first-person communication of the impact of Jesus Christ in your life (verse 8b)
- All evangelism is fueled by a passion to reach people outside of your sphere of influence (verse 8c).

What is of utmost importance is that Jesus said, "You will be my witnesses." What is clear is that we will be witnesses to Christ's works in our life.

Part Six: "R" is for repentance - Sin in me sorrowed

Section Text: Luke 15:17-20

Real Christians live lives of repentance. Repentance is turning from sin to Christ. It is a complete change of thought and attitude towards sin. It is not a one a week or in the morning thing. It is an everyday habit that is the result of a mind transformation. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit our minds begin to comprehend the magnitude and impact of our sinfulness. This produces in us a godly sorrow that in turn results in a turning from sin and turning to Christ. When we sin, we cease to be who we were created to be.

Nowhere is this depicted more eloquently than in the story of the prodigal son. As the parable is told, a young man came to his father and demanded that his father give him his inheritance. Obliging the son, the father gave him his share, at which time the son took it and went to a faraway land where he squandered it in wild living. It was when he had reached the bottom that all the elements essential for repentance that is pleasing to God were revealed in the boy's life:

- Repentance is the result of a complete mind transformation from God (verse 17). To have repentance, you must have a change of mind.
- Repentance has a true understanding of the magnitude my sin (verse 18). It is only when you understand that your sin not only impacts your life, but your loved ones' and God's can true repentance manifest itself in your life.
- Repentance comprehends the total impact of sin (verse 19). It understands the full impact of my sinfulness and what are the full ramifications.
- Repentance leads to actions that support we have changed (verse 20). Repentance means nothing without supporting actions that demonstrate something has changed.

Part Seven: "S" is for sanctified - Christ in me growing

Section Text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

Real Christians live sanctified lives. Sanctification is the process of being set apart for God's work and being conformed to the image of Christ. It is not that we are totally free of sin nor that sin is neutralized, but instead sanctification means that there is a character change from God that frees us from sinful habits and forms in us Christlike affections, dispositions, and virtues. In short sanctification is holiness.

Sanctification has an already/not yet aspect to it. We have been sanctified or made holy by God (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10). This is a past event wrought in our lives by the work of the Holy Spirit and the past satisfaction of God's wrath by Jesus Christ on the cross. However, there is a not yet aspect (Romans 8:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18) to be completed upon the return of Christ. We are, with ever increasing glory, being transformed in the likeness of Him. God is not through with us yet!

Sanctification is commenced or started following regeneration. Regeneration is the new birth. It is the salvation act. During the regeneration process, God transforms our desires such that we no longer desire what we used to, but instead are imbued with a desire for God, holiness and a passion to glorify God's name. With this comes a focus on prayer, worship, loving others and service to others to please Him. Whereas regeneration is the new birth, sanctification is new growth. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in us resulting in good works performed by us. These good works are the evidence of a changed life.

There are a several things we need to understand about sanctification in the life of the believer that comes out in the lesson passage:

- Sanctification is a heart condition. It can only take place if you have a heart for God and pleasing Him (verses 1a & 8).
- Sanctification is a continual process. It is not something that you can declare one day, "My work is done; I'm sanctified." Instead it is an everyday growth thing (verse 1b).
- Sanctification is tangible. You should see evidence of sanctification in your life and the lives of those who are saved around you (verse 3-6).

Sanctification is about striving for purity in your life. Sanctification is the revelation of my moral compass. It reflects in how I act and how I respond to others.

Lesson 5: Spiritual Growth, Part 1

Objective:

To assist you on your lifelong spiritual growth journey by discussing what it takes to grow in the Christian life by exercising the disciplines of abstinence:

- Solitude – practice of spending time without distractions
- Silence – practice of no noise or conversations
- Fasting – practice of abstaining
- Frugality – practice of financial denial
- Chastity – practice of relational denial
- Secrecy – practice of private deeds
- Sacrifice – practice of self-denial

Lesson Text: Matthew 16:21-28

Introduction: Mark 9:28-29

There was bedlam in the area. Shouts from the crowd rang out, "Fraud!" "Fake!" "Imposters!" People pressed against the nine, demanding that they provide the remedy that they had promised. After all, they had previously boasted of the power that was at their disposal, many of the onlookers themselves having witnessed it firsthand. However, this case seemed different. And try all they could, they could not manage to remedy the lad of the spirits that vexed him.

Suddenly a calm swept over the crowd as a figure approached. His gentle face and peaceful demeanor made way for the despair and anguish of the bystander to a sense that everything was going to be all right. Rushing to greet Him, they were met by His words, "What are you arguing with them about?" The man at the center of the controversy began to explain how he had brought his ailing son to the nine in hopes that could heal him, yet they could not. The Man then beckoned for the boy to be brought to Him and with a few words the boy was healed, the evil spirits having been driven out.

In private the nine who had failed to accomplish what the man was able to do in a few words asked why they could not. And the Man, Jesus, simply said to them, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

This story as told in Mark 9, is a poignant example of the need of prayer. Yet, there is an underlying message that should be embraced by us all: being in the presence of Christ is not enough to ensure victory in every area of our lives. These nine had experienced the power of being with Christ. The Bible tells us that they had been sent off two-by-two and performed many miracles. Yet, there was still more that they needed to have victory in this matter. When asked what was missing, Jesus simply responded prayer.

This next lesson focuses on spiritual growth. The intent is to expose the believer to the disciplines that will ensure that you grow to be all that God has intended for you to be in order that you may fulfill Christ's promise from John 14:12.

Let's go to do greater works!

Part One: Solitude
Section Text: Mark 1:35

SOLITUDE can be defined as being by yourself, away from where things are going on. Giving up contact with people. Choosing to be alone. Choosing not to interact with other human beings. Removing yourself from companionship with other human beings. A state of mind and heart resulting in inner fulfillment, not a place.

Many believe that solitude requires silence. Silence removes audible distractions. Solitude can remove visual distractions. It can remove emotional and physical distractions.

In Mark 1:35, it says that Jesus "went into a solitary place and prayed."

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of solitude?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to be alone with God?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid solitude?

Part Two: Silence
Section Text: Matthew 26:63

SILENCE can be defined as a condition of saying nothing or making no sound. Giving up sound. Choosing to remove sound (noise, music, or words) from our lives.

Quiet = less noise than usual

Silence = no sound

Voluntarily and temporarily giving up speaking so spiritual goals can be pursued.

If you have never tried to practice the discipline of silence, you will be amazed at how difficult it is. First, it's hard to find a silent place. I have been in the Rocky Mountains, miles from roads, house, towns, and still I could hear planes over head. You can find complete silence, but it's not easy.

The second difficulty is the shock that complete silence brings to your system. We are trained to have constant background noise. It might be the radio, the television, the sound of people working around us. Fast food restaurants have it. Grocery stores have it.

When you find complete silence, you will know it. And the first few times, you might find it terrifying. But silence is an acquired discipline and with enough practice you can enjoy it. In fact, you will be

looking forward to the times you have set aside to practice silence. Whether they be extended planned times, or unplanned opportunities that arise you can take advantage of.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of silence?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to be in silence before God?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid silence?

Part Three: Fasting
Section Text: Matthew 6:16

FASTING can be defined as going without food or water or something else. Giving up food or water. Choosing not to eat and, possibly, not to drink. A voluntarily abstaining from food or water for spiritual purposes.

Fasting is one of the most referenced disciplines of abstinence mentioned in the Bible. It's mentioned over 40 times in the Old Testament and over 20 times in the New Testament.

Some people believe spiritual awareness can be improved by removing food and drink from their lives for a period. Extreme examples in the Bible are Moses and Jesus existing for 40 days and nights without food or water. Other Biblical references suggest fasting for a few days or a week.

Fasting is also believed to have a positive impact on physical health, as well as spiritual health. Advice on healthy fasting can be gained from spiritual and medical resources.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of fasting?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to fast?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid fasting?

Part Four: Frugality
Section Text: Ephesians 5:15-16

FRUGALITY can be defined as using little food or money, doing things inexpensively. Giving op using money and resources for self-gain. Choosing not to use money or goods at our disposal in ways that merely gratify our desires or our hunger for status, glamour, or luxury.

Frugality is similar to poverty. Instead of giving up all your material wealth and possessions, you cut back on satisfying you own needs, wants, and desires. Often the objective is to make more resources available for giving and serving others.

Frugality can be accompanied by a simpler lifestyle. A simpler lifestyle leads to less stuff. Less stuff requires less storage, less maintenance, less clutter, less emotional baggage. Less can result in tangible financial savings which is the hallmark of frugality.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of frugality?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to be frugal?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid frugality?

Part Five: Chastity
Section Text: 1 Corinthians 7:5

CHASTITY can be defined as not having sexual relationships. Giving up sex. Choosing not to dwell upon or engage in the sexual dimension of our relationship to others-even our husbands or wives. (As pointed out in the passage above, 1 Corinthians 7:5)

Chastity is not just for Catholic priests and nuns. That's celibacy. Celibacy is when you choose chastity as a permanent lifestyle.

Chastity is when you choose to not engage in sexual behavior for a time. If you are not married, that time should be until you get married.

If you are married, you might choose chastity for a period. Chastity should be engaged in by mutual consent of both marriage partners. It should be for an agreed upon time. It should be for the expressed purpose of drawing close to God.

However, it can have the opposite effect. People who chose not to engage in sexual activity often find that's all they can think about. A commitment to chastity will require the supernatural help of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God to be done correctly.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of chastity?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to be alone with God?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid chastity?

Part Six: Secrecy/Anonymity
Section Text: Matthew 6:6

SECRECY can be defined as keeping things from common knowledge or view. Giving up credit or praise. Choosing not to let our good deeds and qualities be known to others.

Secrecy allows you to do acts of live, kindness, sacrifice, and service for others in the name of Jesus Christ without taking credit for it. You do things, but nobody gets to know about it except God. Your reward is in heaven.

Secrecy can include any act, not just giving money. You can clean the snow off some one's car, rake their leaves, and mow their yard. Of course, you have to do it when no one is watching you.

Anonymous notes of encouragement. Large tips for the waitress left on someone else's table. The opportunities to do good for others in secrecy are endless. Think about the surprises you have encountered in life. With a little bit of brainstorming, you can develop an impressive list of actions you can perform in secret.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of secrecy/anonymity?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to do something in secrecy/anonymity?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid secrecy/anonymity?

Part Seven: Solitude
Section Text: Matthew 8:19-20

Sacrifice can be defined as giving up something for a person or purpose. Giving up ownership. Choosing not to possess or enjoy what is necessary for our living. Giving up the security of meeting our needs with what is in our hands.

The original concept of a sacrifice was outlined in the Old Testament. Killing an animal, splashing blood on the altar and burning parts of the carcass were part of the sacrificial process. Killing an animal was a real loss to the owner in an agricultural society.

Wealth was measured by the number of animals you owned. Animals were capital. They could reproduce and provide you more animals. They could pull heavy loads. Today, most of us don't have animals to sacrifice. So, we must sacrifice something else of value. It must be costly.

One person can give $10,000 and it's not a big deal. Another person can give $10,000 and it's a huge cost. It might be all they have. For one it's a sacrifice. For another it's not. One person can give away their car and it's a sacrifice. Another person can give away their car and it's no big deal.

One person's sacrifice is another person's "no big deal." Sacrifice is a personal issue between you and God.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of sacrifice?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to sacrifice for others or God?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid sacrifice?

Lesson 6: Spiritual Growth, Part 2

Objective:

To assist you on your lifelong spiritual growth journey by discussing what it takes to grow in the Christian life by exercising the disciplines of engagement:

- Study – immersion in Scriptures
- Worship –corporate and private worship
- Celebration – practice of gratitude
- Service – practice of giving yourself to others
- Prayer – practice of communicating with God
- Fellowship – practice of being with others
- Confession – practice of confessing to God and others
- Submission – practice of submitting to others

Part One: Study
Section Text: 2 Timothy 2:15

BIBLE STUDY can be defined as giving time and thought to getting knowledge of the Bible; enabling the mind to move in a certain direction through careful attention to the reality of the Bible.

Most Bible study methods require personal observation of what the Bible says. Next, attempts are made to understand what those observations mean. Finally, attention is given to determining the personal implications of the Bible for your life.

After listening to the Bible, Bible study is the most popular method of group Bible intake. Groups of people gather together regularly to discuss what God has revealed to them. Individually they study the Bible. Mutual encouragement comes when they meet. The meeting is used for hearing what others have learned, asking questions about concepts which you did not understand, and providing insights where others seem to be struggling.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of bible study?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to study God's Word (not just read)?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid bible study?

Part Two: Worship
Section Text: John 4:24

WORSHIP can be defined as the forms used as a sign of love and respect to God. Choosing to dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals, and symbols. To know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ during gathered community. It's human response to divine initiative. Our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father.

Worship is a misunderstood discipline today. In church, we have a "worship" service. Coming together with other Christians to worship the God of the universe is a good thing. Sometimes it's referred to as corporate worship because we do it with other people.

But worship can and should be done anywhere at any time. Any activity we engage in for the glory and praise of God is worship. I can do household chores as acts of worship. I can perform tasks at my job as an act of worship. I can show kindness to strangers as an act of worship.

When I do anything to please God, it's an act of worship. A life of worship is a life lived for an audience of one, God.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of worship?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to worship God?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid worship?

Part Three: Celebration
Section Text: Nehemiah 8:10

CELEBRATION can be defined as an act that completes worship; enjoying ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God's greatness, beauty, and goodness. It helps make the goodness of God real to us. Celebration demonstrates a carefree spirit of joyous festivity; carefree gaiety with a sense of thanksgiving; celebration leads to joy which leads to strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

Today's Christian communities seem to socialize rather than celebrate. Socializing focuses on the people involved. True celebration includes many of the same activities as socializing; meeting together, eating, drinking, laughter, mutual encouragement, but the focus is on God.

Celebration revolves around what God has and is doing. Socialization revolves around what people have been and are doing.

Celebration revolves around the character and attributes of who God it. Socialization tends to focus on circumstance, problems and opportunities surrounding people.

If the participants do not have a personal, intimate relationship with God it can be hard to truly celebrate Him. He is more of a distant acquaintance. They feel like they should attend the party. But they don't really know what they would say if asked to toast the guest of honor.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of celebration?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to be celebrate what God has done or is doing?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid celebration?

Part Four: Service
Section Text: Mark 10:45

SERVICE can be defined as doing work for another person's benefit. Choosing to use our gifts, goods, and strength in the active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world.

I once heard someone say, "you can call me a servant, just don't treat me like one." Service allows for both. You can call me a servant and you can treat me like one. In Mark 10:45, Jesus said, "for even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to server and to give His life as a ransom for many." If Jesus came to serve, how can my mission on earth be any different if I aspire to Christlikeness?

It takes a pretty mature Christian to perform acts of service for others without expecting anything in return. The work must be done for the benefit of the other person, not for the recognition or payment received by the servant.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of service?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to render service to another?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid service?

Part Five: Prayer
Section Text: Matthew 7:7-8

PRAYER can be defined as talking to God. Conversing, communicating with God.

Prayer is probably the simplest and most powerful spiritual discipline available to a Christian. It can be the east thing to do. Or it can be the most difficult thing to do.

We pray when we speak to God from our heart. Yet, we need to be trained to pray. The Lord's Prayer is an example of Jesus Christ teaching His disciples to pray.

Prayer is a powerful discipline to transform our lives and the lives of those we are willing to pray for. Most Christians barely scratch the surface of the power of prayer.

Several specific types of praying are suggested in the Bible.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of prayer?
2) What can you do to this into practice this week?
3) When was the last time you purposed to converse with God?
4) What was the result of that experience?
5) Why do we avoid prayer?

Part Six: Fellowship
Section Text: Hebrews 10:24-25

FELLOWSHIP can be defined as taking part in something together. It includes: Accountability-helping each other to be responsible to do what God wants us to do; and Encouragement- giving hope to and taking fear from one another. Choosing to engage in common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration and service with other disciples, few or many.

Fellowship is "seeking to share in what God has made known of Himself to others, as a means of finding strength, refreshment, and instruction for one's own soul," according to J.I. Packer.

Fellowship may be one of the most misunderstood concepts in the Christian church today. Fellowship is not a bunch Christians socializing together. Christians can socialize together, but it's not fellowship. Christians cannot fellowship with non-believes, but they can socialize with them.

Christians can socialize with anyone, but we can only fellowship with other Christians.

Biblical fellowship offers variety of activities. Foremost are teaching, helping, admonishing, and encouraging others to live a life worthy of God, all done with patience in a spirit of love.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted from fellowship?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to fellowship with others?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid fellowship?

Part Seven: Confession
Section Text: 1 John 1:9

CONFESSION can be defined as to make a statement of your wrongdoing to God.

Within fellowship, it can be defined as choosing to let trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures.

We all do things that are wrong, things that are against God's plan for us. When we mess up, we need tell God that we have done wrong and ask Him to forgive us.

Forgiveness is a powerful component of the Christian life. By nature, we are sinful people. We screw up. When we do, we need to tell God and as Him to forgive us. While He knows when we wrong, whether we tell Him or not, He likes to hear it from us. The process of confession can be done several times a day, if needed.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of confession?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to confess your faults to someone?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid confession? Section Eight: Submission

Part Seven: Submission
Section Text: 1 Peter 5:5

SUBMISSION can be defined as giving away authority to another. Giving up control, choosing to be helped by those with greater depth of experience and Christlikeness.

They know more than I do. I want to learn from them.

It's self-denial to learn from the other disciples of Jesus Christ.

Submission is a misunderstood discipline. When someone insists that you submit to them because they are the authority, then you can be pretty sure a misuse of submission is being used.

Submission is a voluntary choice made by a person to the authority of another. Godly men and women realize that other have gone before them. These folks have more experience and more wisdom is following Jesus Christ. They server as worthy mentors and the future wise and godly Christian willingly submits to their teachings and suggestions.

Now ask yourself:

1) How can your life be benefitted with the practice of submission?

2) What can you do to this into practice this week?

3) When was the last time you purposed to submit to the authority of another?

4) What was the result of that experience?

5) Why do we avoid submission?

Lesson 7: Fruit of the Spirit

Objective:

Discuss the fruit of the Spirit and understand how they provide evidence of your relationship with Jesus Christ. For you to understand what should be the results of your living by discussing:

- Love
- Patience
- Peace
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control

Lesson Text: Matthew 7:15-21

Introduction:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Christ makes clear to His disciples that our fruit, or the results of our living, will reveal whether someone is a disciple or not. It is not what you say but what you do. This is an axiom that we have historically lived by. Yet, when it comes to Christianity, we have generally relied primarily upon a person's profession as opposed to their walk. However, this principle applies across the board related to everything we do. The results of our living speak volumes related to who we are and what we stand for than anything. For example, our words can profess that we believe in generosity yet if we don't have a track record of giving sacrificially, the words we speak are empty at best and without life. In this lesson we answer the question what acts follow the life of a believer. In short, what is the fruit that should be evident in all our lives…

Part One: Love

Section Text: 1 John 3:11-18

Love is about seeing and understanding God's love for us and how He gives of Himself to others with the intent of modeling that response to those around us. This love is unconditional as it looks to God response to what Christ did for us, recognizing His sacrifice with our trust and obedience that produces self-denial and self-giving. As the passage brings out, it is not focused on what we can obtain in return, motivated by posturing to get ahead in the world. Instead, it is driven by a deep-seeded realization that something miraculous was done on our behalf that deserves a like response (1 John 3:16). Because of what He has done we are charitable, selfless and altruistic. Jesus modeled this in all that He did

Love enables us to appreciate our brothers and sisters in the Lord and, of course, our family and others around us. We observe them in their present state/condition and surrender ourselves to them. It compels us to take the initiative to build up and meet the needs of others without expecting anything in return. As a result, love desires to seek and apply what God has to say in the lives of others.

Because the English term “love” runs the full spectrum from romanticism and the quest for personal satisfaction, we must embrace what it means related to God, and how it shapes the meaning of life. To miss this can result in your having the wrong idea and definition of love. That is why it’s Biblical authority is crucial. Not having real love will leave you empty and alone.

Now ask yourself:

1) How do I exhibit love in my daily life?
2) What can I do to develop a more loving attitude?
3) What blocks love from being expressed in me?
4) How can I make love function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?
5) How would you define Love?
6) Look at 1 Corinthians 13:3. How does your practice of love compare to this passage?
7) What issue is in your life that would improve with more love?

Part Two: Patience
Section Text: Hebrews 6:12

Patience. The ability to wait and often endure until your desired result comes. It is the tenacity that enables an individual to “stick to it” despite the odds or the challenges confronting them, fueled by something typically unseen beyond themselves. In the Bible it is expressed by several words: forbearance, perseverance, endurance, etc. The list goes on. Underneath all of these words is the fact of persecution, difficulties and trials acting as barriers to the prize within the individual’s purview, and the idea that if I hold on and hold out I will get that for which I am striving. It is implied that the individual is going through. Our passage brings this out, culminating with the truth that if I endure I will be blessed.

Patience shows tolerance and fortitude toward others, even accepting difficult situations from them and God, without making demands or conditions. Patience allows us to endure a less than desirable situation to make us better and more useful, optimistically and prudently. It allows us to put up with others who get on our nerves without losing grace.

Here are positive examples from Scripture

- Gen. 39:19-23
- Job 1:13-22
- Matt. 27:11-14
- James 5:7-11

Here are negative examples from Scripture

- Num. 20:1-12
- 1 Sam. 13:8-14

- 2 Kings 6:33
- Luke 10:38-42.

As this is a fruit of the Spirit of God, it begs the question is the character of patience working in you?

Now ask yourself:

1) How is Patience exhibited in my daily life?
2) What can I do to develop a more Patient attitude?
3) What blocks the practice of Patience in my life?
4) How can I make Patience function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?
5) When have you most been filled with Patience?
6) In what situation did you fail to have Patience when you should have?
7) What issue in your life would improve with more Patience?

Part Three: Peace
Section Text: John 14:27

When Christ was departing from His disciples, it was important for Him to leave them with peace. Although He challenged them to love, as our passage brings out, He gave them peace. Why was this important? We live in a world where challenges continually put us on edge, causing us to wonder whether we have what it takes to make it. Many are so harrowing that they can persuade us to give up. It is only as we have peace can we ever hope to endure and move beyond today into the promises of tomorrow. Peace is foundational to the Christian life.

What is peace? Peace is surrendering and yielding ourselves to the Lord to be in His control, for He is our ultimate peace! Allowing tranquility to be our tone and control our composure, this is fueled from our harmonious relationship with God handing over to Him control of our heart, will and mind. Once we have real peace with God we will be able to have and maintain peace with others (Isa. 26:3; Matthew 5:9; Luke 19:42; John 14:27; 16:33; Rom. 5:1; 12:18; Colossians 3:15; Philippians 4:7; 2 Thess. 3:16).

Chaos and turmoil are the opposites. This can range from seeking destruction and chaos to being a distrustful and impatient person, which will bring you despair in all of your relationships. They prevent you from building positive relationships or handling difficult situations. You will have an "I must have control" orientated personality and be unable or unwilling to give yourself to God and others.

Peace results in serenity due to the realization that God is in charge enabling us to relax because in this truth. Peace is the recognition that our biggest problem has been resolved! It is the stillness we have when our trust is upon Christ as Lord (Psalm 46:10).

Peace is a great enabler. It enables us first to yield our will to God, allowing Him to have His Sovereign way. It then enables us to be moved from the stronghold of fear and trepidation into a life of harmony (Isa. 26:3; 2 Tim. 1:7) because of the established in our trust. Finally, it enables us to hold fast to hope during trials for it becomes our anchor, holding us to His path and providing us the confidence to keep moving on. The Peace that Jesus gives is not the absence of trouble, but is rather the confidence that He is always there with us.

Following are positive examples of peace from the Scriptures:

- Psalm 27:1-6
- Luke 1:26-38; 2:25-32
- John 14:25-31
- Acts 27:21-25

Like any positive example, the Scriptures are also full of negative ones:

- II Sam. 15:1-13
- Matthew 2:13-18; 26:69-75; 27:1-7
- Luke 8:22-25

Is the Character of Peace working in you?

Now ask yourself:

1) How do I exhibit Peace in my daily life?
2) What can I do to develop a more Peaceful attitude?
3) What blocks the practice of peace in my life?
4) How can I make Peace function better, stronger and faster even in times of uncertainly and stress?
5) How would you define Peace?
6) What are the things that cause despair for you?
7) How does despair counteract Peace?
8) Do you cooperate with Christ as your Lord; to allow His peace to rein in you, if not what is in the way
9) What issue is in your life that would improve with more Peace?

Part Four: Kindness
Section Text: 2 Samuel 9:1-3

Sitting in an airport hundreds of people pass you, eyes peeled ahead and lost in the confines of their own thoughts. As you make your way to your gate if you are anything like me, you look for that one friendly face in the crowd that offers to you a gentle smile amidst the see of indifference to remind you of the sweeter side of human nature. That smile, small though it may be, is a show of kindness.

Kindness is nothing more than doing good to others. It is a show of charitable benevolence to someone not based upon anything except a deep-seeded desire to do so. Its motivation comes from within and is directed towards someone without. One cannot be kind to one self. Kindness must be exhibited towards another. Our passage is a supreme example of kindness. David, having no obligation whatsoever to the house of Saul, having the right to execute judgement against those who remained from his lineage, sought out Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan. And until the day he died, granted that this man, who should have been declared his enemy, at his table as one of his family all because he wanted to show kindness to his departed friend Jonathan!

Christian kindness (Rom. 2:1-4; 12:9-21; Ephesians 4:32; Col. 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-23) is the medium through which Christ's love becomes tangible through us. It is practicing benevolence and a loving attitude towards others. Kindness is the essence that shows the world that we are a Christian, like the fragrance coming from a flower. It flows from conviction by God's Word, and then manifests itself actions towards others. Kindness makes us attractive and is the subject to the object of who we are in Christ!

Cruelty, spitefulness, being mean spirited, and holding grudges are the opposites. This can include seeking to harm someone, being cruel and rude, or just ignoring people you do not like. God created us for relationships, and when we ignore this, we fail in the most important aspect in life outside of our relationship with Him!

Now ask yourself:

1) How do I exhibit kindness in my daily life?

2) What can I do to develop more of a kindness attitude?

3) What blocks the practice of kindness in my life?

4) How can I make kindness function better, stronger, and faster, even in times of uncertainty and stress?

5) How would you define Kindness?

6) What are the things that cause you to be cruel or rude?

7) In what situation did you fail to have kindness when you should have?

8) What issue is in your life that would improve with more kindness?

Part Five: Goodness
Section Text: Genesis 39

Goodness (Amos 5:15; Prov. 25:22; Matthew 19:16; Rom. 12:17; II Cor. 5:20; Eph. 5:8-9; I Pet. 3:11; II Pet. 1:3-8) displays integrity, honesty and compassion to others. It is doing the right thing even when (and especially when) we don't want to. Goodness seeks to maintain integrity despite your circumstances, believing that in the end God will reward those who do. Take Joseph, who was betrayed and sold as a slave, he chose to take the path of goodness and help and treat others better than he may

have wanted to or than circumstances dictated. Despite the opportunity to advance his life through sordid means, he chose the high road, recognizing that his actions reflected not only what he thought of his master, but also what he thought concerning God (Genesis 39:8-10). Even though the future was uncertain based upon this difficult choice, he chose it anyway leaving his life in the hands of God.

Badness is the opposite of goodness, manifesting itself in callousness, mercilessness and unscrupulousness. When we fight against each other especially in the church, we can see first-hand how hurtful and even pathetic these traits can be in the eyes of God.

Is the Character of Goodness working in you? Take a careful look at this character by examining the following passages:

Here are positive examples:

- Genesis 39
- Luke 10:30-37
- Acts 7:60; 9:36
- Luke 23:34
- Galatians 6:10
- II Thessalonians 1:11

Here are some negative examples:

- Genesis 4:8
- Deuteronomy 25:17-19
- Joshua 7
- Luke 9:54

Now ask yourself:

1) How would you define Goodness?
2) How do I exhibit Goodness in my daily life?
3) What can I do to develop a better attitude of Goodness?
4) What blocks goodness from working and being exhibited in me?
5) How can I make Goodness function better, stronger and faster even in times of uncertainly and stress?

Part Six: Faithfulness
Section Text: Proverbs 20:6

My dog has taught me a lot about God and myself. Where ever I am in the house he is right there. When I make my way to the bathroom, he is standing outside the door. When I make my way to bed he is right there beside me. So, you can imagine my surprise when I went to bed and he chose not to follow along. He has always been right there with me. Yet now, he opted to stay downstairs as opposed to being in my midst. Something must have been wrong because he is faithful.

Faithfulness means to be steady in allegiance or affection. It is to be loyal or constant, reliable and trusted. Faithfulness is about being able to be depended upon. It is about knowing that you will be where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there. Proverbs 20:6 reminds us that people have no problem declaring their love and commitment. However, the challenge is faithfulness. Can you be counted on?

Faithfulness (Psalm 119: 89-90; Matthew 17:19; 25:21; Rom. 1:17; 5:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:9; Hebrews 11:1; 1 Thess. 5:24) is the "gluing" fruit that will preserve our faith and the other characters of the Spirit. It identifies God's will clearly for us so that we can be dependable, demonstrating the reality that we are trusting God and others. It is the one fruit that we give to God, whereas the others are from the Spirit working in us! Faithfulness is authenticity, the power and motivation for Christian living. Because God is trustworthy we can be faith-worthy in Him.

Doubt and distrust are the opposite manifesting itself in losing our trust and hope that God is in control. When we do this, we will lose or miss out on God coming through with His promises.

In the Scriptures there are several positive examples of faithfulness:

- II Kings 5:8-14
- Matthew 15:21-28; 21:18-22
- Luke 7:1-10
- Acts 3:1-10
- Hebrews11: 1-40

Like everything else, there are negative examples of faithfulness in the Scriptures:

- Matthew 6:25-34; 14:22-33; 17: 14-20
- Mark 6:1-6
- James 1:5-8

Now ask yourself:

1) How do I exhibit Faithfulness in my daily life?

2) What can I do to develop a better attitude of Faith?

3) What blocks Faithfulness from working and being exhibited in me?

4) How can I make Faithfulness function better, stronger and faster even in times of uncertainly and stress?

5) In what situation did you fail to have Faithfulness in which you should have?

6) What issue is in your life that would improve with more Faithfulness?

Part Seven: Gentleness
Section Text: Gal. 6:1

Gentleness (Isa. 40:11; 42:2-3; Philp. 4: 5; Matt. 5:5; 11:29; 12:15; Eph. 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24; 1 Thessalonians 2:7); is the character that will show calmness, personal care and tenderness in meeting the needs of others. It is to be more than just a personality; it is to be who we are from the work of the Sprit within us. Roughness and violence are the opposite! When we have the mindset to just see what we can get out of life and make a name for ourselves we miss out on what is best for our benefit. Then it causes us to run over others and we end up being like the men who built the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9). Their downfall was not the building project but the pride and arrogance. To seek significance outside of glorifying God by their achievements alone, ignoring God's love, care, plan, and providence for a cheap and temporary substitute.

- Here are positive examples from Scripture (Isa. 40:11; 42:1-3; Matt. 11:28-29; Luke 7:36-50; 10:38-42; John 8: 1-11; I Thess. 2:7-8)

- Here is are negative examples from Scripture (Num. 20:2-13; II Sam. 18:1015; 19:1-8; I Kings 21: 5-14; Luke 9:51-56

Now ask yourself:

1) How do I exhibit Gentleness in my daily life?

2) What can I do to develop a better attitude of Gentleness?

3) What blocks Gentleness from working and being exhibited in me?

4) How can I make Gentleness function better, stronger and faster even in times of uncertainly and stress?

Part Eight: Self-Control
Section Text: Mark 15:1-15

Driving will challenge your walk with God! It is not unusual to have individuals cut you off in your lane, pass you to slow down in front of you, or prevent you from making a right turn on red! And when these things happen it takes everything in you (or maybe it is only me) not to react and let them know they have violated you. When the road rage rises it is easy to find yourself in a place where you want to

respond and let them know how they have impacted you. It is at this time, when you feel as if you have been wronged, where self-control is critical in your life.

Self-control is the ability to be able to keep at bay your impulses and drives and focus your efforts on actions that are more productive. In it are two very real aspects - prevention and action. When out of control we tend to over react or respond in a way that is not productive, resulting in damage to ourselves or others. When under control, our action tends to result in blessings. When looking at Christ, He demonstrated a level of self-control that is beyond our comprehension. How could He resist defending Himself against false accusations and stating His case for acquittal while being falsely accused? It only can happen if you are firmly convinced that where you are is where God wants you to be, that you understand that nothing will transpire in your life that does not first pass through God's hands first, and that you are convinced that in the end all will work out for you. It is about knowing and understanding where you are in respects to God.

When we speak of self-control related to our walk with God it is nothing more than allowing God to be in control of your will and heart, seeking the Holy Spirit to enable you. It is about, as the cliché goes, "letting go and letting God" - letting God move in your life to control how you respond to the world and putting your personal unction to the side. When self-control is in place in our lives, we then know what to do and what not to do and begin to guard the areas we are weak in. Self-control allows us to have discipline and restraint, living in obedience to God and others. It prevents distractions from derailing us from His plan for our lives.

The opposite of self-control is self-indulgence. Self-indulgence is everything from eating a pound of chocolate at once or partying your way to oblivion. Too much excess will leave you empty and alone. It will at best result weight gain or disrupted relationships. At worst a lack of self-control could cost someone to miss out on a blessing, their life or their heavenly reward. Self-indulgence seeks what is fleeting when we as a Christian are made for eternity.

In the Bible there are some positive examples of self-control:

- Genesis 39:6-18
- II Samuel 16:5-13
- Daniel 1:8-16

Like all other good examples, there are negative ones:

- Genesis 3:1-7
- Numbers 20:7-12
- II Samuel 13:1-19
- I Kings 21:1-7

Now ask yourself:

1) What are the things that lure you to be self-indulgent?

2) How does the excess of life counteract Self-Control?

3) What happens to our relationships with God and others when we relinquish self-control?

4) When have you been filled with Self-Control the most?

5) In what situation did you fail to have Self-Control in which you should have?

Lesson 8: Church Membership

Objective:

To help you understand what it means to be a member of a church in general and Haven Christian Ministries and the expectations of membership including:

- What is the church and why do we need to attend - Hebrews 10:19-25
- Who We Are - the mission and vision of Haven Christian Ministries
- What We Believe - the Core Values of Haven Christian Ministries
- What is expected - Stewardship at Haven Christian Ministries

Lesson Text: Ephesians 5:15-20, 1 Peter 4:8-9

Introduction:

How are you living? That's not a common question we ask each other; doesn't roll off the tongue easy. Yet, it is probably one of the best questions to ask someone you are in relationship with, a person you are concerned about their eternal existence. The fact is, how you live reflects where you are heading. Think about it. If you are "destined" to be the CEO of a company then you probably concern yourself with strategy and profit/loss statements, etc. The same can be said about practically anything else in life. What you consume yourself with will set the course of your future.

The same can be said of our spiritual future. What you pour yourself into reflects where your commitments are. In Matthew 6:21 Jesus said, "…where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The converse is most definitely true: your heart is where your treasure is. Where you spend your time, talent and treasure (we will speak more on this later) reveals your passions.

Understanding this Paul challenges, us to "…be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity…" (Ephesians 5:15-16). This lesson is about just that, identifying what it means to be live carefully. The fact is our passage for this lesson reminds us that the enemy is roaming seeking whom he may devour. It is our call to resist him and stand firm, understanding one central fact: the entire church is undergoing the same struggles.

Part One: What is the Church and why go?
Section Text: Hebrews 10:24-25

When my father turned me on to the sport of basketball I just could not get enough of it! He set up a little "court" for me out back on the side of the garage. I remember early on going out and shooting baskets by myself. Set. Shoot. Score. The rhythm is still in my head! Yet, soon I found that working out in this fashion was boring. I struggled finding the excitement in it. Eventually, as with all things where you attempt to go at it alone, I found myself playing less and less, until I eventually quit playing altogether. It wasn't until I began to play two years later the basketball team that my love for the game rekindled.

With everything in life, we cannot be successful alone. Whether it is an individual sport, working on an experiment in isolation, or writing a novel, although we can carry out individual tasks in isolation, it takes contact with other people to experience growth.

Nowhere is this more evident than in your spiritual life. Isolation is the antithesis to spiritual growth and development. Since the Fall when Adam and Eve realized their nakedness and attempted to hide from God and each other, we have all been driven to try to grow in isolation from the world and others. However, if you desire to grow in your spiritual life it cannot happen in a vacuum; you need others.

In Hebrews 10:24-25 the author admonishes just that, highlighting that our focus should be figuring out how we may "spur one another on toward love and good deeds," this because each of us needs someone who will help keep us focused (see also 2 Corinthians 13:11, 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11-15). The place where this is made real and alive is when we fellowship with likeminded believers. This is done at church. Hence, in verse 25 we are admonished not to give up meeting for that purpose.

What is the church? The Bible speaks of two "churches". The first is the physical gathering together of believers for worship and encouragement. It is not the building but instead the people. It is there that we learn the things of God, where we are encouraged, built up and discipled (Ephesians 4:11-18).

The Bible speaks of a second Church, not physical but spiritual. It is this Church that makes up the Body of Christ, for which He died (Ephesians 5:23, 25ff, Colossians 1:18). It is this Church that comprises the true believers. Those of us who love Him and seek to grow in a lasting relationship with Him comprise this church. The evidence of our relationship with Him is demonstrated in our living and in our works.

It is not lost on us that everyone who attends the physical church is not in relationship with Christ. As a result, Jesus let us know that these two churches live alongside each other until He returns (Matthew 13:25-30, 25:31-33).

Part Two: Who is Haven Christian Ministries?
Section Text: Romans 8:14-17

So, you have decided to make The Haven ***YOUR*** church. What was it? A sermon? A new relationship? Or maybe just something felt right about it. Whatever it was, now it is important to understand a little about this ministry. The best way to begin is to understand the vision and mission of the church.

The mission of a church answers the question, "What are we supposed to be doing?" It identifies the priorities of the ministry and summarizes everything the ministry believes it should be doing. The vision of a church, on the contrary, answers the question, "What will the world look like if we are successful in our mission?" It is the big picture of the church. New Covenant Full Gospel Church vision and mission can be summarized by two words: discipleship and adoption.

Vision

Discipleship: Make people desire to be like God

To bring the world into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ, equipping them to go to their homes, communities, country and world with the life changing message of God's love.

Mission

Adoption: Make people a part of the family of God

New Covenant Full Gospel Church seeks to demonstrate the love of God disclosed in the Person of Jesus Christ in a tangible way in order that God would be pleased, and the world would see Him through us and be drawn to Him.

Our passage shows both concepts in full clarity. In speaking of believers Paul illuminates the reality that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. Discipleship, as we brought out earlier, is to be a follower of God, being led by His Spirit. Included in this is the reality that with this close affinity comes the adoption into the family of God that we might cry out and declare that God is our Father. Our passion is to bring people into a saving knowledge of Christ and lead them into a richer, more rewarding life with Him.

Part Three: What does The Haven believe?
Section Text: Psalm 143:10

So, what is important to us? When looking at any organization their core values will reveal their true being to you. Cores values are the priories of the ministry. They govern everything a ministry does. Whereas the vision and mission set the direction, the core values spell out how you are going to get there. If the vision and mission are the roadmap, the core values are the vehicle. Without them the ministry does not move.

Our passage states:

> [10]Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

The psalmist is looking for God to provide the stability that he needs in his life. His request, teach me Your will. He understands that if he knows God's way it will provide the stability he needs in his life. By knowing how God wants him to live it provides the confidence that he needs to live life to the fullest. The same is true of core values. By understanding how God wants us to fulfill our vision and mission it provides for us the stability that we need to be all we can be in Him. By have clearly defined core values it enables us to say no to those things that do not line up with our values and embrace those things that do. Core values shape how we walk into the future.

So, what are the core values at The Haven? We have four (4) core values and in summary they are:

- Worship
- Fellowship/Relationship
- Evangelism and Discipleship
- Missions

Looking at them in-depth and our statement of them, we understand that:

WORSHIP

Worship is the logical and fitting response of a created and redeemed people to an uncreated and redeeming God (2 Samuel 7:18-26; Psalm 71:22-24; Psalm 77:11-15; Psalm 107:1-9; Romans 11:30-36). We are commanded to worship God (Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalm 29:1-2; Psalm 95:6; Psalm 96:8-9; Psalm 99:1-9; Psalm 100:1-5; Revelation 14:7).

We worship the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). We worship with singing (Psalm 9:2, Psalm 9:11; Psalm 59:16; Psalm 81:1), audible praise (Psalm 34:1; Psalm 103:1), shouting (Psalm 47:1; Psalm 63:1-3), clapping (Psalm 47:1), dancing (Psalm 149:3), lifted hands (Psalm 63:4; Psalm 134:2; 1 Timothy 2:8), bowing, and kneeling (Psalm 95:6; Ezra 9:5)

FELLOWSHIP/RELATIONSHIP

Like believers in the early church, we devote ourselves to fellowship (Acts 2:42). In this way we encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25), share our lives with each other (1 Thessalonians 2:8), and meet one another's needs (Galatians 6:2; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-20).

In association with our core value of fellowship we embrace the following core practices:

- Mutual Submission - As followers of Jesus Christ we submit to each other (Eph. 5:21).
- Unity / Agreement - We practice unity (Psalm 133) and agreement (Matthew 18:19; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 4:2-3) because these have always been Jesus' intention for the church (John 17:20-23) through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:3). Our agreement is first and foremost with Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:15-18) as revealed in God's Word (1 Corinthians 3:10-13).
- Submission to Spiritual Authority - We submit to the spiritual authorities that God has established in our lives (Acts 16:4; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Heb. 13:7,17). By doing this we promote unity in the faith (Ephesians 4:1-16).

We also build caring relationships with those who don't yet follow Jesus Christ (Mat 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; 1Cor 9:19-23; 2Cor 5:11-6:2; 1Pet 3:15).

We receive important blessings from God through our brothers and sisters:

- Material assistance - Acts 2:44-47; Acts 4: 32-37; 1Pet 4:9
- Confession - James 5:16; 1John 1:5-10
- Spiritual assistance (e.g. encouragement, insight, counseling, etc.) – Eph. 4:16; 1Pet 4:10-11
- Discipline - Mat 18:15-20; Gal 6:1-2; 1Pet 4:10-11

EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we practice evangelism by sharing the good news about salvation through Jesus Christ with the people we know.

We don't force Jesus on others, but when people respond to the message we embrace them and obey Jesus' command (Matthew 28:19-20) by mentoring them in their new faith. We pass along the “whole will of God” (Acts 20:25-27) to new believers - teaching them to teach others to teach (2 Timothy 2:2) to reach an ever-expanding audience (Mark 16:14-16)

MISSIONS

We are proud of our commitment to benevolent giving for others and of our outward focus on the needs of others in our community and in the world. In Matthew 25:42-45 we read where He said the following:

"For I was hungry, and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty, and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me." They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

Statement of Faith

The Scriptures Inspired

The Bible is the inspired Word of God, a revelation from God to man, the infallible rule of faith and conduct, and is superior to conscience and reason, but not contrary to reason (II Tim. 3:5-17, I Pet. 1:23-25; Heb. 4:12).

The One True Godhead

The One True Godhead is revealed through three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are co-eternal, co-equal and co-existent as one being. Jesus Christ, who is God manifested in the flesh, is the second member of the Godhead, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 3:30; John 6:27; John 20:28; Acts 5:3-5; John 14:16-17; 1 Tim. 3:16)

Man, The Fall, and Redemption

Man was created good and upright, for God said, “Let us make man in our image, after Our likeness”. But, by voluntary transgression, man fell, and his only hope of redemption is in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Rom. 5:12)

Salvation of Man

Man’s only hope of redemption is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. For by grace we are saved through faith. As the Bible reads, “the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that is the word of faith which we preach, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your

heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (Rom. 10:9, 10; Eph. 2:8-10)

The Promise of the Father

All believers are entitled to, and should ardently expect and earnestly seek, the promise of the Father, to be "filled with" and led by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14), according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. Being filled with the Holy Spirit can be identified by the evidence of the "Fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22,23) in the life of the believer.

Blessed Hope

Jesus is coming again to gather all His saints to Heaven. (I Cor.15:51-52; I Ths. 4:16-17)

Eternal Life

Once the Holy Spirit has completed the work of salvation, the believer is forever sealed in the family of God. The believer's actions and lifestyle serve as evidence that the Holy Spirit has also completed the processes of redemption and regeneration. (1 Jn 3:7-9; Eph 1:13, 14; Eph 4:30)

Part Four: What is expected of me at The Haven?
Section Text: Matthew 25:14-30

As with anything in life talk is cheap. Many people say they support something only to find out that they have secretly been seeking to sabotage it. When it comes to commitments what I have learned is that people invest in what they are committed to. What is amazing to me is that people, even those with the most hardships, always have money to do what they want to or that is important to them. This is the backdrop to discussing what is expected of members of Haven Christian Ministries.

To begin the discussion, it must be understood that it is not by chance that you are here. There is a mysterious connection between how you carried out your will and how God enabled you to carry out His will. Paul reminds us that God is at work in us to desire and to carry out His pleasure (Philippians 2:13). With that God has a plan for your life (Jeremiah 29:11). And to accomplish that plan He has uniquely gifted you (1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Psalm 139:13-14). What then is our responsibility?

Jesus told a parable about a man going on a journey and before he left he gave gold to his servants. To one he gave 10 bags; to another 5 and to the last one 1 bag. The servants with 10 and 5 bags went and invested the gold for their master. The one with 1 bag took the bag and buried it in the backyard. Upon the master's return he gathered his servants to give account. The one with 10 bags doubled the bags through shrewd investments. The one with 5 bags doubled his bags through shrewd investments. The one with 1 bag returned the bag having hid it in the ground. At this the man took the unwise steward and cast him out, confiscating his bag and surrendering it to the one who had 20 bags (Matthew 25:14-30). The moral of this parable: God expects you to produce fruit from the talents that He has bestowed upon you. This is the perfect segue into outlining what Haven Christian Ministries expects from its membership: commitment.

What is commitment? Commitment means to obligate oneself. It is our belief that God has called us to commit ourselves to each other and the ministry to advance the kingdom of God. What are we looking for? The Three T's:

- **Time**: It is our belief that God calls the believer to give a minimum of 1/7 of their time to the service of Him. Exodus 20:8-11 commands us to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. One day a week is supposed to be totally devoted to God. This is the minimum that He requires. As we mature we will typically give more.

- **Talent:** It is our belief that God calls the believer to give of their gifts to the church. Everybody is good at something. This, we believe, is a gift from God (Romans 12:6-8; James 1:17). Therefore, we believe that God has called each of us to do what we do to the best of our ability for God (Colossians 3:23-24).

- **Treasure:** It is our belief that God gives resources to us not only to meet our needs but also to meet the needs of the church. Therefore, we believe that God has called us to budget our money such that we can support the ministry (Malachi 3:10; 2 Corinthians 9:1-5). It is our responsibility to give graciously and cheerfully, without resentment (2 Corinthians 9:7).

So how do you do this? First, commit to becoming an active part of the ministry. This only can happen if you take ownership of the ministry. It must be ***YOUR*** church. Second, identify what you like to do and see how you can incorporate it in what we do. For instance, if you have a passion for reading volunteer to read to the young people every other week. Or if accounting is your thing volunteer to count the money. We are firm believers that God sends gives to the church (Ephesians 4:11). Finally, faithfully give. Budget your money such that you can give faithfully. It is through giving that God has ordained for the church to be sustained - not selling dinners or concert tickets - but through tithes and offerings.

Closing

Again, we want to take this time to thank you for your decision to be a part of this ministry. From the beginning we have dedicated ourselves towards ensuring that the uncompromising Word of God goes out. Many have come across our doorstop. We have seen many go. Yet, we have held firm to our belief that the One called us all together is not through with us yet, but has for us what we stand in the need of. Therefore, we cling to this one reality, and that is that God has provided us…

> "…everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him…"
>
> 2 Peter 1:3

We encourage each other with these words. Now, as part of our family, we encourage you.

Important Numbers and Dates

Pastor John Thompson·····.·····708-692-2125

Administrator Ricky Rodgers·····.·····....630-6061910

- Facilities and Equipment Management
- Benevolence requests
- Financial Administration

Dea. Will Prentiss·····...630-809-1192

- Facilities and Equipment Management
- Transportation

Min. Rosemary Jennings·····...331-454-8354

- Prayer Requests
- Bereavement
- Special Events

Deborah Johnson·····630-334-9211

- Communications
- Special Events

Weekly Services

Kingdom Living Class·····9am

Sunday Worship·····10am

Friday Praise Team Rehearsal·····6pm

Opportunities to Grow, Fellowship & Serve

Men

Not only does the church need men but men need the church. Here those needs come together in awesome fellowship, workshops, and outings.

Women

When these women get together, watch out!! Whether at the church or out in the community, this group of women is on fire for God!

Children

Through arts and crafts, small group exercises, games and lessons, our children life the Word of God and practice it and have big fun at the same time!

Outreach/Missions

Helping others is an important part of our identity. We believe we were put here to make one another better. We do this by sharing the gospel, meeting community needs and conducting community events.

Praise Team

These folks can minister in song. It's not about your voice (but it helps), it's about your heart. The praise team helps to usher the congregation into the presence of the Lord through song.

Internet Team

Whether on Facebook, IG, Snapchat or Twitter, you'll never have to guess what's going on at The Haven. Even if you're not able to attend every now and then, livestreams are available for you.

Marriage/Single

All adults at The Haven—married and single—are united in our mission to love God, grow together, and reach the world. That's why, regardless of marital status, we join in worship, community, study, and service. However, the needs of these two groups may vary at times. We aim to meet those needs through the 'ships', fellowship, relationship and worship.