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21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY DISCIPLESHIP BOOK 1

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# 21st Century Discipleship

## **B O O K 1 : G E T T I N G   S T A R T E D**

**A COURSE FOR NEW BELIEVERS**

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Developed by the Center for Evangelism and  
Discipleship (CED),  
a division of Global University-ICI

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# Introduction

*21st Century Discipleship* is for you, the new Christian. You have become a disciple of Jesus Christ and have begun an exciting journey. A disciple is someone who learns, matures, and becomes like his or her teacher—in this case, Jesus. The word *journey* implies forward movement into new territory. You are leaving familiar ground and heading to places you have never been before.

On this journey, your love and appreciation for the Lord will develop. Your understanding of the Bible and ability to put its teaching into practice will grow. Why Christians do what they do—like pray, give, help the needy, serve, preach—will start to make sense. Old habits and bad attitudes that used to drag you down will begin to disappear. You will discover that God has gifted you in specific ways and wants to use you to advance His kingdom. You will face tough challenges in a new way—with God's help. Your relationship with other Christians will become highly valued and a source of incredible joy.

*21st Century Discipleship* has been prepared to help you on this journey. We cannot walk in your shoes, but we can come alongside to help you. The lessons in this course were written by pastors, missionaries, and other mature Christians who care about what happens to people just like you. Their collective experience and teaching from God's Word, the Bible, make this course invaluable.

Our basic goals for this course are to help you know Christ better; to assist you in growing spiritually; and to encourage you to become everything the Lord wants you to be. Always remember, your life is important to God and many people. God really does have wonderful things in store for you if you will be faithful. Enjoy the journey of discipleship!

# How To Use This Course

## ABOUT THE LESSONS

*21st Century Discipleship* is a series of three study guides with 13 lessons/study guide. Each lesson contains the following components:

- Title
- Introduction
- Outline
- List of objectives
- Lesson content
- Conclusion
- Suggested Bible verses to memorize
- Self-Test
- Answers to the self-test
- Information about the author of the lesson

## THE SELF-TEST

The self-test is a very helpful way for you to review what you have studied in a lesson. The questions are a combination of True/False, Multiple Choice, and Fill-in the blank. Once you complete the self-test, check your responses with the answers provided. In case you respond to a question incorrectly, the answers to the self-test also indicate where to look in the lesson to find the proper response. For instance, an answer will look like this a (5.3). The letter “a” refers to the correct response to the self-test question. The number 5 refers to the number of the lesson, and the number 3 refers to the lesson objective where the answer is found. It may be helpful for you to review the entire objective if you find you answered a test question incorrectly.



## WAYS TO STUDY

There are at least two ways you can study the material in this course: independently or in a group. Let us get acquainted with these two methods.

### Independent Study

Helping people study independently is what Global University specializes in. We know that not everybody who studies God's Word has access to a church, pastor, and a wide variety of resource materials. Therefore, we endeavor to provide you with a complete study guide. A qualified Bible teacher has carefully planned and written each lesson so that you may experience intellectual and spiritual growth in the convenience of your home.

Since there are no prearranged class times, individual study requires high motivation and self-discipline. Please be sure to have a Bible handy as well. The Bible is your main textbook; it alone is inspired by God. *21st Century Discipleship* is simply a tool to help you get the most out of your study of God's Word. With an open Bible, the Holy Spirit, and your discipleship course, you are in the classroom of the Holy Spirit. Be diligent and expect great things to happen.

### Maximizing Individual Study Time

1. Set aside quiet and regular times for study.  
Concentration is easier if you turn your mind to your studies at the same time each day. Pick a time when you are most alert.
2. Pray as you begin each study session. Ask the Lord to help you understand the material and make appropriate applications to your life.
3. Do a quick read through of the lesson, observing the objectives or main points.
4. Look over the lesson objectives a second time.
5. Read the lesson again. This time look up references, follow the exercises, and take any notes

- that may be helpful. Think about what you have learned and how it can be applied to your daily life.
6. Answer the study questions at the end of each lesson. Go back to the lesson if you need to find the answer. Then use the answer key to check your work.
  7. Take your time. No bell will ring to force you to move on to new material.
  8. Make good use of reference tools, such as a concordance and an up-to-date English dictionary, to help you understand words that may be unfamiliar.

## Group Study

You can also study *21st Century Discipleship* in a group. This is a very dynamic and helpful way to reinforce the lesson content. It also provides a way to build friendships with other Christians.

### Guidelines for Group Study

1. Set aside regular times for study with other believers. You can meet in a home, a church, or almost any place where you will be comfortable and uninterrupted. Plan to begin on time and end at an agreed-upon time.
2. Find someone to serve as a mentor or discussion leader. Usually the pastor of the church you attend can help you find just the right person to serve in this capacity.
3. We suggest that you study a lesson a week. Each person in the study group should carefully read the lesson at home before the meeting. Follow the instructions above for Independent Study.
4. Begin your group study with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide your conversation and help you learn. Then, together discuss each of the objectives in the lesson. You may want to read the objective out loud and then open it up for comments and

questions. Do not be shy about expressing yourself. Your mentor may want to highlight points that he or she feels are especially important.

5. Be careful not to drift off the topic in the lesson during your meeting time. Stay focused.
6. Tactfully avoid letting one person in the group dominate the question and discussion time.
7. A good way to conclude your meeting is to pray for one another, especially for needs that pertain to the lesson topic.

If you have questions or comments, please contact us:

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## LESSON 1

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# Your First Steps as a Christian

You are probably reading this lesson because you have decided to become a Christian. Following Christ is the most important decision a person can make because it leads to forgiveness, peace, joy, and fellowship with God. Around the world thousands are receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior every day, and they are experiencing the miracle of salvation. Salvation guarantees your place in heaven when your earthly life is over. According to Romans 6:23, salvation is a gift we cannot purchase, no matter how much money we have, how much we know, or what we are able to do. Thank the Lord every day for saving you!

So, what do you do now that you are a Christian? Is it just a matter of going to church or trying to be good? No! Virtually all religions have places of worship and moral teaching. The most basic description of the Christian life is relationship. You are now in a real relationship with God through faith in Christ. You will discover that your relationship with the Lord will mature and become your most treasured life experience.

As you journey in fellowship with God, many good changes will take place in your life. You will start to think differently, your attitudes will change, and people will notice the difference. God has given you a free will—to choose Him or to choose to live after your own ways. God's favor will be with you if you do things that please Him and that are helpful for your spiritual growth. This discipleship course will help you identify some of those things.

## LESSON OUTLINE

Spiritual Growth  
 Studying God's Word  
 Christian Fellowship  
 Celebrating the Lord's Supper  
 Prayer  
 Water Baptism  
 Generosity

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain the importance of spiritual growth.*
- 2: *Identify keys to successfully study the Bible.*
- 3: *Give scriptural support for the vital role of Christian fellowship.*
- 4: *Explain the significance of the Lord's Supper or Communion.*
- 5: *Explain why prayer is vital to the Christian.*
- 6: *Discuss why new Christians should be baptized in water.*
- 7: *Identify reasons why Christians should be givers.*

## Spiritual Growth

### **Objective 1:**

*Explain the importance of spiritual growth.*

It is God's will for you to develop and change! When you were conceived in your mother's womb, you started growing. The cells of your body, muscles, tendons, and

organs grew and formed into what God had designed you to be. If you had not started growing, it would have been a sign that something was wrong. Your survival depended upon your growth.

The same principle is applied to your spiritual life now that you have been “born again.” You are now a spiritual baby. Do not feel insulted—babies are precious and rightly deserve a lot of attention. But just as God did not intend for you to stay a baby physically, He does not intend for you to remain a spiritual baby. It is His will for you to grow! Spiritual growth can be defined as the development of your faith, your understanding of God’s ways, your Christlike character and attitude, and your God-given gifts and talents.

Christian leaders often turn to the book of Acts to discover how the early church, comprised of thousands of individual believers, grew spiritually. The early church offers an excellent basic pattern to follow; we will follow this pattern for much of what will be discussed in this lesson.

Let us read Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” Note the four important concerns the believers committed to: the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, taking communion, and prayer. In this lesson, we will discuss each of these areas in greater depth, but for now, let me highlight each of these concerns.

The teaching of the apostles was based upon the Old Testament Scriptures and the life and words of Jesus Christ. The apostles had been firsthand witnesses to all Jesus said and did during His earthly ministry. Within several decades of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the apostles and their associates began to put their oral teaching into writing. This writing later became known as the New Testament.

The idea of fellowship simply meant that the early believers spent much time together. They knew that they were not saved to exist in isolation, so they met together in homes and at the temple in Jerusalem. In those days, no church buildings existed, but that did not stop Christ’s followers from spending time together.

The early believers also celebrated what we would later call Communion, or the Lord's Supper. Why? They wanted to remind themselves of the continual provisions available to them through the work of Christ on the Cross.

Finally, they prayed. Prayer is indispensable to growth. If every true Christian would dedicate himself or herself to spending quality time in prayer, greater things would happen. God expects His people to pray, and He promises to answer prayer. What happened as the early church committed themselves to the apostles' teaching, breaking bread, fellowship, and prayer? "The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Now, let us explore these four ingredients to our growth in more detail.

## Studying God's Word

### *Objective 2:*

*Identify keys to successfully study the Bible.*

God's Word is His special revelation to us. We are told that all Scripture is "God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). God's Word is a compass or guide that shows us how we should live. King David said in Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Earlier in Psalm 119:9, David asked, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word." Studying God's Word is how we get to know God. Here are four simple recommendations that will help you in your study of God's Word.

### Take the time to read the Word

Allot a few minutes each day to read the Holy Bible. Find a quiet place where you will not likely be interrupted. You do not have to read an entire chapter, just a few verses. Ask the Lord to help you understand what you are going to read; and after you have read it, ask the Lord to help you apply what you have read. You will also want to take extended times to read the Word, but you probably would not start out doing this. Be

consistent and you will discover a desire to spend more time in the Word as the days go by.

### Find a Bible you like

The Bible you read is actually a translation of documents first written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Some versions of the Bible are easier to understand than others, depending on when and who did the translation work. There are many options available today, so you should be able to find a version that you can understand. Visit a Christian bookstore or talk to the pastor of your church or another mature Christian to get advice on choosing a version. We recommend the New International Version (NIV).

### Have a plan

Do not just flip the Bible open, randomly point at a passage, and make that your reading for the day. God can direct you that way, but more often than not you need the discipline of a daily Bible reading plan. There are many Bible reading plans available; some Bibles even have a reading plan or plans located in the back.

Have a notebook handy to write down your thoughts. As you are reading, the Holy Spirit may give you thoughts to help you understand what you are reading. Take a moment and write those down as they will be helpful later. Also, writing notes as you study the Bible will make you less distracted. Often when you quiet your mind like this, everything you need to do will run through your mind. Do not get up and do those things; just jot down a reminder to yourself to do them after your time in the Word.

## **Christian Fellowship**

### ***Objective 3:***

*Give scriptural support for the vital role of Christian fellowship.*

One of the great analogies in Scripture about the church is that we are the “body of Christ.” We know



from our own bodies that a hand cannot function alone even though it is strong. A foot cannot take us anywhere without the leg. None of these body parts can function without our brain sending messages to the nerves, muscles, and tendons. The basic message of fellowship is that we all need each other. Alone, we will not function very well. Together, however, we can function in a way that will bring honor and glory to God.

Note what Paul wrote in Romans 12:4–5: “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” We need one another! Even the story of creation teaches us that man was not created to be alone. Adam needed a woman, and God gave him Eve. Likewise, Christians need the encouragement and fellowship that comes from being in relationship with other believers. Together we are stronger and can be more effective in fulfilling our God-given mission on earth.

The wisest man of ancient times, Solomon, observed, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:9–12).

In the book of Hebrews we read, “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). There are over fifty times in the New Testament where you will read the phrase, “one another.” Most of these times are instructions for us to “pray for one another,” “love one another,” “encourage one another” or something similar. Here are two specific examples: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). “But encourage one another

daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" (Hebrews 3:13).

There will be times when we are discouraged and we need an encouraging word. Or there might be times when things are difficult and we need someone to come along and help us through those circumstances. That is why we need to be in fellowship at a local church, and we need to be in fellowship in small groups such as Sunday school classes or Bible studies in someone's home or at church. For those times when we do not require it, there might be someone there who needs us to come alongside of him or her for a season.

Perhaps you have seen documentaries on the feeding habits of lions in Africa. They follow herds for many days at times searching for that one animal that is straggling behind or somehow gets cut off from the rest of the herd. When the water buffalo, zebra, or antelope separates from the rest of its kind, it usually ends up as the main course for a hungry pride of lions. Similarly, our staying in fellowship with other believers will help keep us close to our heavenly Father and help us avoid the traps of our enemy.

## Celebrating the Lord's Supper

### *Objective 4:*

*Explain the significance of the Lord's Supper or Communion.*

Just before Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, He inaugurated what we refer to as The Lord's Supper or Communion. In some churches, the term Eucharist is also used. So why do Christians practice this custom? It goes back to the night before Jesus was arrested and condemned to die. He was celebrating the Jewish Passover with His closest disciples. It was His "last supper" with them before He would be crucified. For the Jews, the Passover was a time of remembrance and joy as they recalled their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. They ate a lamb and bread without yeast as their ancestors in Egypt did.

The Lord Jesus himself was about to become the sacrificial lamb to take away the sins of the world. His death on the Cross was going to be a once-for-all sacrifice. Today, we no longer have to bring a lamb to be sacrificed. Christ is our Passover lamb! When Jesus had that final meal with His disciples, He took ordinary bread and juice of that time and attached special significance to them. The bread that was broken, passed around, and eaten was to represent Jesus' broken body on the Cross. The juice that the disciples drank was to represent Jesus' shed blood to take away the sins of the world. Read Matthew 26:26–29 for a detailed description of that supper. Jesus told His disciples to continue to do this in memory of Him (see Luke 22:19).

Some churches today offer the Lord's Supper on a particular Sunday each month. Other churches celebrate every week. In the book of Acts, the early church broke bread on a regular basis—perhaps even daily (Acts 2:42). No matter how often, this observance served as a reminder to the believers of what God had done for them through the shed blood and broken body of Jesus Christ.

In Oriental cultures, breaking bread or eating together symbolized a bond among friends. For Christians, eating or celebrating the Lord's Supper is symbolic of the bond that exists between the Lord and those who believe and follow Him.

## Prayer

### *Objective 5:*

*Explain why prayer is vital to the Christian.*

Many people are unsure of how to pray. But prayer is simply communicating with God. This communication is not limited to spoken words; hence, a person who is speech impaired or cannot speak still has the ability to communicate with God. Such a person can communicate with God through his or her thoughts, meditations of the

heart, and by other outward expressions like art, service, and so on.

For others who are able to speak, prayer involves—but is not limited to—talking with God. For instance, when you were young, your parents may have taught you to use three important expressions of courtesy: I'm sorry, please, and thank you. You can follow that simple outline when you talk to God. When you foul up and do wrong, tell God that you are sorry. When you need His help, ask politely. And when God answers your prayer, thank Him.

While Jesus was on the earth, He prayed to God the Father (see Matthew 14:23). Why did Jesus need to pray if He was God's divine Son? Prayer is all about relationship. Jesus was in communion with His heavenly Father. We do not know all they talked about, but during those times Jesus found direction and was even given the words to say. In Luke 18:1–8, Jesus shared the parable of the persistent widow to teach His disciples that they should always pray and never give up. Why not take time now to read that parable?

In addition to Jesus' example, others in the Bible teach us that we need to pray. The apostle Paul wrote that we are to “devote . . . to prayer, being watchful and thankful” (Colossians 4:2). In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, he advised again, “pray continually.”

Prayer is learned by doing. The more we pray, the more comfortable we become and the more we learn how to pray. Our prayers can be very simple. We can begin to praise God for the gift of salvation, proceed to the needs of others, and then move on to the areas of our own lives that we need help in. We must always make sure to spend ample time giving God praise for His goodness, grace, and mercy that have been extended to us.

Now, allow me to suggest two other important things that you should add to the Bible reading, fellowship, communion, and prayer. These are water baptism and generosity.

## Water Baptism

### **Objective 6:**

*Discuss why new Christians should be baptized in water.*

Once we have chosen to follow Jesus Christ by accepting the gift of salvation, we should be baptized in water by immersion. There are many examples of this in the book of Acts (see Acts 2:41; 8:36–38; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15). In Colossians 2:12, the apostle Paul speaks of being “buried with him in baptism and raised with him.” The symbolism of water baptism is twofold. Our being immersed in water, as Christ was in Matthew 3, symbolizes our death to self or to the old life of sin and bad habits. When we are raised out of the water, we are symbolically joining in the resurrected life of Jesus Christ and looking forward to a new, wonderful life through Him.

One of the greatest truths from Scripture is that we have been called to live for God. We have been saved in order to be fully alive. Some people who claim to be saved have no evidence of the joy that comes from knowing they are in right relationship with Jesus Christ. This should not be. As believers in Christ, we should have the joy of the Lord no matter what the circumstances might be. Nehemiah, who was going through difficult circumstances, proclaimed the joy of the Lord to be his strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Water baptism does not save. It is simply a public proclamation that we have chosen to leave our sinful lives behind and live resurrected lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a difference between the sacrament of infant baptism as practiced by some churches and baptism by immersion as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures. Some groups incorrectly hold that God confers salvation and eternal life on a person when he or she is baptized. So, parents in some denominations are eager to have their infants baptized because they think it guarantees their children's salvation.

In evangelical churches, we believe each person must choose Christ and salvation. An infant is not capable of this and is rightly not condemned as a sinner. However, there comes a time when people do sin, reach an age of accountability, and become aware of their sinfulness and need of Christ. Only after such a person repents of sin and accepts Christ is water baptism appropriate and meaningful. Water baptism by immersion after conversion denotes a choice on our part, indicating that not only have we chosen to receive Christ as our Savior but we have also chosen to follow Him.

## Generosity

### *Objective 7:*

*Identify reasons why Christians should be givers.*

Just like Bible study, fellowship, communion, prayer, and water baptism, generosity is a vital part of the Christian life. Have you ever noticed that giving people tend to be happier and more excited about life than stingy people? Selfish people never seem to fully enjoy what they have. This is because “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

### God’s generosity

Clearly, God is a very generous giver. He gives us life, provides for our needs, offers salvation, and helps in our times of need. If God stopped being generous, even for one moment, life as we know it would cease to exist. He holds our lives in His hands.

Like our heavenly Father, Christians must also be generous. Proverbs 11:25 notes, “a generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.” Therefore, we must give of our time, talents, and material wealth to advance God’s kingdom and help others. While other lessons to come will deal specifically with each of these three areas, let me share with you two simple principles to remember.

## God owns it all

No matter whether we are financially wealthy or not, we do well to remember that God really owns everything we have. We cannot take anything with us when we leave this world. God simply allows us to manage certain resources for a period of time while we are on earth. So, whether we hoard or are generous, the resources actually belong to God.

## Practice tithing

Many Christians practice tithing. To tithe is to set apart one-tenth of our income and give it back to the Lord. This means that we trust God to help us live on the remaining 90 percent. This is not a requirement for salvation. Eternal life is a gift we receive through faith in Christ. However, when you consider that everything we have comes from God, the idea of giving some of it back to Him does not seem absurd. Tithing Christians often report that God enables the 90 percent they keep to go a lot farther than they ever imagined.

God promised to pour out His blessing on the Israelites as they tithed: “‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it!’” (Malachi 3:10). In the New Testament, Christians are also encouraged to give generously and cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). Of course, no pastor or church organization can require a person to tithe; tithing must be done freely. Following are reasons why Christians practice tithing.

- To be free from the bondage of money

Many people live for one reason—to acquire wealth. It does not matter how they get it either. In essence, they have become slaves to money. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus teaches, “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both

God and Money.” Regularly tithing helps us remember that God, not money, must come first.

- To receive God’s blessings

God is not stingy; He loves to bless His children. A prerequisite for enjoying God’s best is to be a giver. In Luke 6:38, Christ advises, “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

- To further the work of God’s kingdom

It costs money to run churches, fund programs that help needy people, and send missionaries. If you care about people and want to make an impact in their lives, you will be willing to give to make sure everyone has a chance to hear the Gospel, be saved, and grow spiritually.

- To express our commitment to Jesus

Think about it—we attach our hearts to what we treasure the most. Jesus taught that we must be careful not to get too attached to material possessions. Matthew 6:19–21 records His words: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Through giving, we accumulate heavenly reward that one day will be enjoyed fully.

## Conclusion

We learned in the beginning of this lesson that God wants us to grow spiritually. We also studied the four factors listed in Acts 2:42, 46–47 that led to the rapid expansion of the early church. As the early Christians continued to be faithful in these areas of their lives, the church blossomed and grew. The first Christians dedicated themselves to the Word, to fellowship, communion, and prayer. They were baptized in water,



thus identifying themselves with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. They also were very generous. The church soon increased from 120 believers (Acts 2) to thousands (Acts 6). In reality, the church, God's people, has never stopped expanding. There are more Christians today in the world than ever before. Decide to be one who makes a difference!

### **Suggested Verses to Memorize**

Acts 2:42

Psalms 119:105

Romans 12:4–5

Colossians 4:2

Matthew 28:18–19

Luke 6:38

## SELF-TEST

Please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *Salvation is*
  - a) *earned by being good.*
  - b) *inherited through your family.*
  - c) *a gift from God.*
2. *The pattern for growth in Acts 2:42 included*
  - a) *study of the apostles' teaching, prayer, fellowship and communion.*
  - b) *starting a business and prayer.*
  - c) *prayer only.*
3. *The pattern for growth in Acts 2:42 is*
  - a) *reserved for special days of the year.*
  - b) *meant to become part of everyday living for new and old believers.*
  - c) *just a suggestion.*
4. *Water baptism symbolizes*
  - a) *joining the church.*
  - b) *death to the old sinful life and rising to a new life in Christ.*
  - c) *that you were more spiritual than those who had not been baptized.*
5. *We fellowship with others because*
  - a) *we need each other.*
  - b) *we have nothing else to do.*
  - c) *others are helpless without us.*
6. *Our prayer life should consist of*
  - a) *requests for our needs.*
  - b) *requests for others' needs.*
  - c) *praise to God and requests for our and others' needs.*
7. *The reason we tithe is*
  - a) *to receive God's blessings.*
  - b) *to be free from the bondage of money.*
  - c) *for God's blessings and to be free from financial bondage.*

8. *The requirement for water baptism is*
  - a) *salvation and a desire to follow Christ.*
  - b) *to be 21 years of age.*
  - c) *to have been a believer for five years.*
9. *The teaching of the apostles was based on*
  - a) *their culture.*
  - b) *Judaism.*
  - c) *the Old Testament and the life of Christ.*
10. *Celebrating Communion should be done*
  - a) *once a month.*
  - b) *only in church.*
  - c) *as often as you need, to remember and celebrate Christ's work on the Cross.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *c* (1.1)
2. *a* (1.1)
3. *b* (1.1)
4. *b* (1.6)
5. *a* (1.3)
6. *c* (1.5)
7. *c* (1.7)
8. *a* (1.6)
9. *c* (1.1)
10. *c* (1.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 2

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# The Journey of Discipleship

Your new Christian faith makes you a disciple of Jesus. In fact, you immediately became a disciple of Jesus when you became a Christian. So what does becoming Jesus' disciple mean? A disciple is a student or learner of a certain teacher. Following someone's teaching as a way of life is the active side of discipleship. Now that you are following Jesus, His teachings in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will guide you throughout life. Naturally, all of the Bible will instruct you, too. As a Christian disciple, you will read through your Bible many times. The life-changing truths of Scriptures will constantly make you a better disciple.

Christian discipleship is the most exciting journey you will ever undertake. The pathways of a person devoted to Jesus lead to many blessings. As Jesus' disciple, you will experience the joy and power of Christian prayer. Marvelous spiritual treasures in your Bible await your discovery. Biblical truth will continually transform your life. Helpful and encouraging friendships with other disciples consistently become an important part of your new journey.

A prayerful study of the information in this lesson will provide a solid foundation for your relationship with Jesus. He is the Teacher, and you are the student. You will learn to know His voice. Living in obedient fellowship with Him brings increasing joy, and His abiding presence within your life imparts daily strength for every situation.

Like Jesus' first disciples, you will discover walking with Jesus is a new adventure each day. Some days bring great joy while other days present difficulties. A growing disciple learns, however, to move through every situation with grace and victory. Rewarding days of discipleship lie ahead for you. Now, on with your journey!

## LESSON OUTLINE

The Three Dimensions of Discipleship

The Qualities of a Growing Disciple

The Four Stages of Discipleship

Habits of a Maturing Disciple

Practical Concerns of a Good Disciple

Discipleship: The Big Picture

The Victorious Disciple

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Identify the three dimensions of discipleship.*
- 2: *Identify the qualities of a growing disciple.*
- 3: *Explain the four stages of discipleship.*
- 4: *Identify the productive habits of a maturing disciple.*
- 5: *Discuss the practical concerns of discipleship.*
- 6: *Present an overview of the important aspects of discipleship.*
- 7: *Point out six principles that empower the victorious disciple.*

## The Three Dimensions of Discipleship

### **Objective 1:**

*Identify the three dimensions of discipleship.*

Faithfully following Jesus requires an understanding of the three important dimensions of discipleship. The word *dimension* refers to aspects of an object that can be seen and measured. For example, a house has

the dimensions of depth, width, and height. These dimensions are a vital part of a house's physical reality.

Similarly, true discipleship also has three important dimensions. Although these dimensions are not physical in nature, they are very real. The three dimensions of discipleship are biblical instruction, life relationships, and Christian responsibility. Let us now consider each of these.

### **Biblical instruction**

Biblical instruction is the foundation of your walk with God. Therefore, you must avail yourself to sound biblical teaching. This teaching may come through a pastor, teacher, or even a college professor (Ephesians 4:9–16). Like Apollos, you may discover that certain Christian friends can provide helpful instruction from God's Word (Acts 18:24–26). Take advantage of every opportunity to hear sound teaching and preaching from God's Word.

The Holy Spirit will also help you achieve a clear understanding of the Bible. Jesus gave this wonderful promise to anyone who follows Him: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things" and "but when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 14:26; 16:13). God will always answer your prayer for the Spirit's assistance in understanding His Word!

### **Life relationships**

Life relationships include your relationship with God, other believers, and nonbelievers. Your most important relationship is with God. When your relationship with God is healthy, other relationships stay healthy, too. Your relationship with God gains vitality through a consistent prayer life. You discover new ways to walk in fellowship with Jesus. You learn the ways of a true disciple, including ways to develop healthy relationships with others.

### **Christian responsibility**

Christian responsibility is the dimension of discipleship that reflects a caring, helpful attitude



toward others. A healthy Christian takes responsibility for others, and this responsibility is expressed through your willingness to perform any task that helps others. Such tasks include your prayers and ministries given on behalf of believers and nonbelievers (Luke 10:25–37).

## The Qualities of a Growing Disciple

### *Objective 2:*

*Identify the qualities of a growing disciple.*

Jesus anticipates spiritual growth and fruitfulness in those who follow Him (John 15:2–8). Bible writers often used the image of “fruitfulness” to teach the qualities of discipleship. The image of fruit effectively illustrates the qualities of a maturing believer. The apostle Paul referred to these Christian qualities as *fruit of the Spirit*: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). The phrase “of the Spirit” (v. 22) is very important as it connects spiritual fruitfulness to the power of the Holy Spirit. There is no fruit without direct help from the Spirit of God. Are you growing the fruit of the Spirit? Carefully read the following descriptions of the nine fruit of the Spirit.

1. *Christian love* embraces many important qualities. Expressions of Christian love toward God and others will include the qualities of loyalty, devotion, respect, and esteem.
2. *Joy* is a deep gladness of the heart. Gladness often erupts into exuberant rejoicing that is expressed in song and worship. Peter said that our complete trust in Jesus leads to joy that goes beyond words (1 Peter 1:8–9).
3. *Peace* is a sense of calm and tranquility. The quality of peace keeps a disciple undisturbed and untroubled in all circumstances.
4. *Patience* is the quality of self-restraint before jumping into action. Patience waits and gives God every opportunity to help us work things out.

5. *Kindness* is goodness expressed through gracious living. Kindness stands in contrast to the harsh world around us.
6. *Goodness* is a moral quality that is expressed in profitable and useful behavior. Good behavior is defined by what God says is good and right.
7. *Faithfulness* is a quality of God. This means He is knowable and trustworthy. We can depend on Him. When we are faithful, we too are dependable and trustworthy.
8. *Gentleness* is an attitude of grace that accepts all of life as God allows it. When life is harsh, you do not argue with God. Gentleness is quiet strength even when under fire!
9. *Self-Control* allows you to behave properly under all circumstances. Physical appetites like hunger and sexuality demand self-control. Self-control is also exercised over emotional states like anger or discouragement.

Jesus used the image of fruitfulness to teach the need for His abiding presence in our lives. Prayerfully consider His words: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Jesus' statement is clear. We demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit only when He is present in our lives.

## The Four Stages of Discipleship

### *Objective 3:*

*Explain the four stages of discipleship.*

Christian discipleship goes beyond just learning facts. The process of discipleship involves four levels of personal growth. One level of discipleship may overlap another at any time; thus, each level of discipleship complements and encourages the next level of growth. Now, let us consider these important levels of discipleship.

## The New Disciple

This level of discipleship is experienced when you become a Christian. You have just begun your spiritual journey, but there is a desire for spiritual growth. You are at the level of *becoming*. You are becoming someone different for God. There is a new you emerging (2 Corinthians 5:17). Typically, the new disciple quickly moves forward to the next level.

## The Thoughtful Disciple

The level of thoughtful discipleship involves serious thoughts and reflections concerning vital issues of your new Christian life. Devotional times and church life, along with sermons, books, and good teaching, begin to create a growing awareness of critical issues. You enter this thoughtful level as certain things begin to happen.

- Your purpose in life is viewed more seriously.
- Greater challenges come to your growing faith.
- You feel more strongly about your Christian development.
- There is a growing sense of Christian responsibility toward a lost world.

The thoughtful disciple is in the stage of *becoming aware*. You are becoming aware of many new things. You are exploring the nature of your heavenly Father. You ponder the love and grace of God. Increasingly important is the prayerful consideration of the purpose of your Christian life. The wonders of God's Word are continually explored. Your connection with unbelievers takes on new meaning.

Jesus nurtured this level of discipleship through the parables. These were stories and illustrations that contained great truth about the kingdom of God and important life issues. The parables were meant to get disciples thinking and asking questions. Jesus was actually getting His disciples ready for the next level of discipleship.

## The Responsive Disciple

Thoughtful disciples understand the need to respond to what they have learned about the Christian life. A responsive disciple says, "I must now act upon what I know. I must enter the level of response and obedience to God and His Word." A responsive disciple can be described as sensitive, thoughtful, and hard-working. At this level, he or she is in the stage of *becoming aware and then responding*.

## The Committed Disciple

The committed disciple is the maturing disciple who *becomes aware of needs and responds to them in an unconditional manner*. The committed disciple serves Jesus unconditionally. Jesus wants soldiers who run toward the battle, not away from it. He wants workers that endure, even when the sun is hot. Jesus wants disciples committed to the task, not committed to themselves.

Have you noticed the development of our definition for a growing disciple? The new disciple is *becoming*; the thoughtful disciple is *becoming aware*; the responsive disciple is *becoming aware and responding* to the needs of others; the committed disciple is *becoming aware and responding unconditionally*.

Increasing joy and peace are the spiritual payoff for moving to a new level of discipleship. After all, doesn't Jesus want joyous and contented disciples (John 14:27; 15:9–11)? Your growth as a disciple deeply pleases the Savior!

## Habits of a Maturing Disciple

### Objective 4:

*Identify the productive habits of a maturing disciple.*

A habit is a behavior that is repeated, almost without effort. Certain habits can be harmful or destructive for a growing Christian. For example, gossiping or watching sexually explicit television is wrong behavior that quickly becomes destructive habits. Also, a healthy activity can become a habit that steals time needed for prayer,

Bible study, and other Christian concerns. Always put important spiritual matters first and then enjoy healthy and relaxing activities. Give spiritual matters priority. This enables you to properly balance the rest of life and stay free from unhealthy habits.

Now let us review the most helpful habits for maturing Christians. First, a growing disciple will cultivate the habit of prayer. Prayer brings great spiritual blessings into our lives. Prayer is a means of removing obstacles that block spiritual growth. Divine healing and other miraculous interventions are usually the fruit of much prayer (James 5:13–18).

Andrew Murray, the son of a godly minister, wrote powerful books about prayer during the nineteenth century. Murray's father was a man of prayer, and his home was often filled with the lively sounds of worship and prayer. Young Murray benefited from the family habit of prayer and would himself become a powerful preacher and writer. Murray knew that prayer was a critical factor of the Christian life. He wrote, "God's Word calls us to seek, to strive, to listen to truth, to pray and believe, to forsake sin and follow after what is good" (Murray 1982, 17). Murray knew prayer enables the Christian to live in the truth of God's Word and remain free from troubling sins.

Fasting is another holy habit often connected to prayer. Replacing a normal meal with prayer or study can reflect a deep love for God. The Bible teaches fasting as a way to know God's presence and guidance for our lives (Isaiah 58:6–10; Acts 13:2–3). Jesus viewed occasional fasting as an important part of the growing Christian's life (Matthew 9:14–17).

In addition to prayer and fasting, the maturing disciple will develop the habit of Bible study as he or she discovers new truth about the Christian life. Every time a follower of Jesus studies the Bible, a new adventure begins. Make this your determination as a disciple.

Choosing the most accurate translation of the Bible is important to the new disciple. You may want to seek guidance from trustworthy believers for this important matter. Additionally, memorizing Scripture helps you hide

God's Word in your heart so that you do not sin against Him (Psalm 119:11). Beyond memorizing, note-taking during Bible study helps you recall what you have studied.

## Practical Concerns of a Good Disciple

### *Objective 5:*

*Discuss the practical concerns of discipleship.*

You are now in the greatest time of your life. Nothing compares to the joy of faithfully following Jesus. This joy increases as you make good decisions about practical matters of discipleship.

An important practical matter for the new disciple is choosing the right church. It is not productive to hop around for a long time between churches. Ask God to give you wisdom about choosing a church. When you find a church that you sense is right for you, attend it faithfully. The following questions can assist you with finding the church that will accelerate your spiritual development.

- Does the church consider the Bible as God's inspired Word to humankind?
- Does the church consider the Bible the final authority on life and personal behavior?
- Do the ministers of the church clearly and effectively teach God's Word?
- Does the church strongly rely upon prayer for the needs of its people?
- Does the church offer opportunities for ministry and servanthood to others?
- Does the church offer encouraging and helpful fellowship for its people?

The Bible offers encouraging words about this important subject of fellowship within the local church: "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). This verse reveals a powerful motivation for

faithful church attendance: the local church should offer encouragement through wholesome relationships.

Another practical matter of discipleship is your relationships with other believers. These relationships are part of the joy of choosing the right church. As time passes, you will find new friends who also follow Jesus. Gaining new friendships is important to your growth as a disciple. Godly friendships will encourage and help you in your newly-discovered faith. These friendships will provide relationships that encourage your spiritual growth.

Wholesome relationships with other believers will usually make you a better disciple. Consider the good things provided through healthy relationships with a mature Christian.

- Godly relationships are sources for encouragement during difficult times.
- Godly relationships provide opportunities for personal ministry.
- Godly relationships offer support in times of personal failure.
- Godly relationships bring the presence of Jesus into our lives.

You must prayerfully guard against relationships that compromise your faith in Christ. Improper relationships carry the sting of spiritual death. God will help you sense the unhealthy nature of improper relationships. Immediately exit any relationship that turns your eyes away from Jesus and holy living.

## Discipleship: The Big Picture

### *Objective 6:*

*Present an overview of the important aspects of discipleship.*

Effective discipleship is never just doing one thing well. Serving Jesus pulls together many significant areas of Christian living. For example, the character and life of the disciple is vitally connected to the spiritual

disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and Christian reflection. Your ministry to the body of Christ is an expression of a variety of gifts, skills, and talents. These gifts are nurtured and developed through prayer, study, and the help of others. A servant-like attitude opens many doors for godly relationships and various ministry opportunities. It is easy to see that many aspects of Christian living merge to create an effective disciple for Jesus.

Gaining a solid understanding of Christian living requires knowing your *call* and *development* as a disciple. First, view your call as a disciple as the center of godly living and ministry to others. In the illustration *Discipleship: The Fundamental Call*, the arrows pointing outward emphasize that healthy disciples become mature servants to God and people. Servanthood is then expressed through a variety of ministry actions toward others.

## ***Discipleship: The Fundamental Call***



Now let us think about your spiritual development as a disciple. Spiritual development is like a picture puzzle. A picture puzzle has many interlocking pieces,

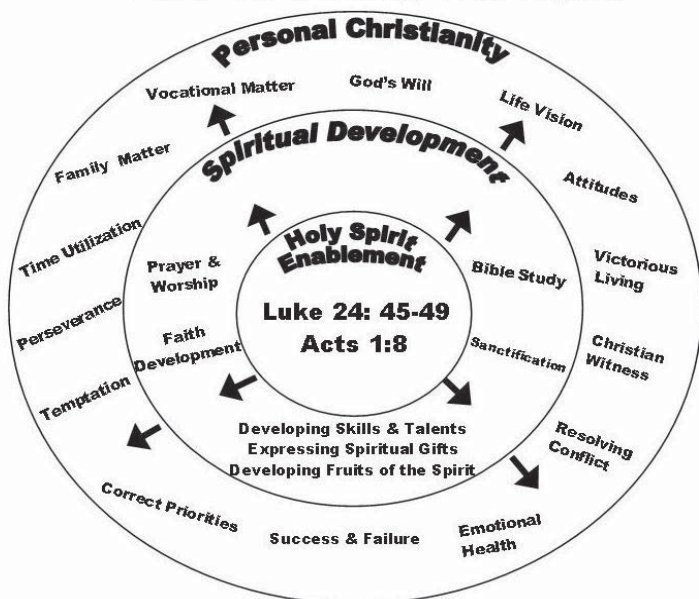


sometimes a thousand or more. The picture is literally within the puzzle. However, the picture is only a scramble of pieces until the pieces are fitted together. The picture emerges only when the puzzle is completed. Naturally, every piece is important. If only one piece is lost, the puzzle can never be completed.

Discipleship is about putting *all* the significant pieces of Christian living together. When all the right pieces are continually fitted in all the right places, the effective disciple emerges. Maturing disciples learn exactly what pieces are needed and the processes for bringing those pieces together.

The illustration below can help you identify many important areas related to your spiritual maturity. Notice that the Holy Spirit is the center of your spiritual development. The arrows pointing outward indicate how the Holy Spirit empowers all aspects of spiritual development. Spiritual development helps your faith become deeply personal, touching the crucial areas of your life. Every area of your life is impacted by God's transforming power.

## ***The Growing Disciple***



As a growing disciple, you invite God's transforming touch upon every area of life. God helps you bring together the important pieces of a growing and productive Christian life. Your Christianity is increasingly a powerful public witness. You are becoming a true disciple both in character and in testimony to others.

## The Victorious Disciple

### *Objective 7:*

*Point out six principles that empower the victorious disciple.*

God is always at work in the life of a growing Christian to secure spiritual progress that promises spiritual victory. Always keep in mind that the power of the overcoming life—the Holy Spirit—lives in you. Thus, victory over any temptation is never in question when you realize that “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

The following biblical principles are encouraging teachings that develop discipleship. Memorize these short principles and carefully study the Scriptures that support them.

1. *Good decisions have good results.* Poor decisions regarding personal behaviors and important relationships can endanger your spiritual growth.
2. *God's nearness is the reward of prayerful living.* When we make even the smallest effort to move closer to God in prayer, He responds by moving closer to us (James 4:7).
3. *The wayward desires of the flesh are banished through godly behaviors.* Godly behaviors include prayer, Bible study, and faithful church attendance (Matthew 16:24–25; Romans 6:11–14; Galatians 5:24–25).
4. *Wholesome relationships insure wholesome living* (Ephesians 5:1–7).

5. *Diligently seeking guidance and empowerment from the Holy Spirit guarantees a victorious life* (Galatians 5:16–18).
6. *The victorious life is achieved through an understanding of God's provisional love for the individual* (Romans 8:31–39).

## Conclusion

You have discovered in this lesson that growth as a disciple demands spiritual excellence. A healthy and productive disciple is constantly reading, praying, listening, and researching valuable resources that empower personal spiritual growth. You must use every resource God has given you in order to answer a powerful question: *What does Jesus expect from me as His disciple?* Answering this question provides the deep joy and peace achievable only through a life ordered by the Master.

## Reference List

Murray, Andrew. 1982. *God's Will: Our Dwelling Place*. Springdale, PA: Whitaker House.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE VERSES TO MEMORIZE

|                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| Matthew 16:24–25 | Romans 6:11–14    |
| John 14:26       | Galatians 5:22–23 |
| John 15:5        | Hebrews 10:25     |
| John 16:13       | James 4:7–8       |

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *The three dimensions of discipleship discussed in lesson two include*
  - a) *witnessing, joining a church, and ministry tasks.*
  - b) *biblical instruction, relationships, and Christian responsibility.*
  - c) *love, joy, and peace.*
2. *The most important relationship for spiritual fruitfulness and productivity is your*
  - a) *relationship with Jesus.*
  - b) *relationship to the church.*
  - c) *relationship with other Christians.*
3. *The term disciple refers to one who*
  - a) *studies the Bible for long hours.*
  - b) *investigates Christianity.*
  - c) *follows Jesus and obeys His teachings.*
4. *The committed disciple is a follower of Jesus who*
  - a) *is certain to attend church faithfully.*
  - b) *takes classes about world religions.*
  - c) *becomes increasingly aware of many Christian concerns and responds to them unconditionally.*
5. *The habit of Bible study is*
  - a) *not that important to a growing believer.*
  - b) *a practice for only the most spiritual leaders among us.*
  - c) *an extremely important practice for every growing believer.*
6. *An excellent way to remember what you study in the Bible is to*
  - a) *take notes for immediate reinforcement and future reference.*
  - b) *read the Bible only a few minutes at a time.*
  - c) *ask others their opinions about what you read.*

7. *Godly relationships with other disciples are*
  - a) *really not that important for the growing Christian.*
  - b) *to be avoided.*
  - c) *important to Christian growth and maturity.*
8. *The fundamental call from which all ministry emerges is*
  - a) *apostleship.*
  - b) *discipleship.*
  - c) *evangelism.*
9. *The center of spiritual growth for committed disciples is*
  - a) *reliance upon the power of the Holy Spirit in daily Christian living.*
  - b) *steady church attendance.*
  - c) *reading many Christian books.*
10. *The greatest reward of a prayerful life is*
  - a) *others complimenting you for a powerful prayer life.*
  - b) *fellowship with Jesus.*
  - c) *getting everything you want from God.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *b* (2.1)
2. *a* (2.1)
3. *c* (2.1)
4. *c* (2.3)
5. *c* (2.4)
6. *a* (2.4)
7. *c* (2.5)
8. *b* (2.6)
9. *a* (2.6)
10. *b* (2.7)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 3

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# How to Get the Most Out of Bible Study

Some have said that Christianity is a religion of the “book,” meaning the Bible. The Bible is unlike any other book, for it is inspired by God, explains who He is, tells what He has done, and reveals what He will do in the future. The Bible is often called the “Scriptures” or the “Word” or the “Word of God,” and it contains wisdom not found in any other book.

While you should love and reverence the Bible as God’s recorded message, you are not to worship the Bible. Worship the One who is the focus of attention in Scripture—Jesus Christ. He told the Jews of His day, “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me” (John 5:39). Those Jews were thorough students of the Scriptures available at that time (the Old Testament), but sadly most missed the central message—that God would send a personal Savior to give His life for sinners.

Remember that eternal life is not in the printed page but imparted by the Spirit of God through faith in Christ. More than being a religion of the “book,” Christianity is about “Christ in you!”

The fact that God has left us His written Word is very significant. It is food meant to satisfy our spiritual hunger. Notice what Jesus says: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). You will do well to spend time every day reading and meditating on the Bible. God will help you understand it as you devote time daily to learn from it and apply its wonderful truths to your life. Many Christian leaders recommend that Christians spend 15 to 30 minutes each day in the Word. You can do this! It may mean getting up a little earlier in the morning or cutting out some frivolous activity, but the results will be well worth it.



## LESSON OUTLINE

Interpreting the Bible  
Characteristics of the Bible  
How to Approach the Bible  
Figurative Language in the Bible  
Practical Tips for Studying Scripture

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain what it means to correctly interpret the Scriptures.*
- 2: *Identify six characteristics of the Bible.*
- 3: *List prerequisites for receiving from God's Word.*
- 4: *Distinguish between literal and figurative languages in the Bible.*
- 5: *Point out practical tips for studying Scripture.*

## Interpreting the Bible

### **Objective 1:**

*Explain what it means to correctly interpret the Scriptures.*

One of the most important skills you will learn as a Christian is how to correctly interpret God's Word. The apostle Paul advised, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Stepping into the world of Scripture is like visiting a foreign country. You immediately find new words, strange customs, and unfamiliar expressions—expressions like ephahs and

homers, a bruised reed and smoking flax, a brazen laver and cherubim. And what does it mean to “sit in the gate” or to “cast lots”?

The cultures of the people of the Bible were very different from yours. You might think of Bible interpretation as building a bridge between our modern world and the Bible world. To interpret the Bible correctly, you must ask three basic questions: 1) What does the text say? 2) What did it mean to the people who first heard it? 3) What does it mean to us today?

In 2 Timothy 2:15, the Greek word translated “correctly handle” literally means “to cut straight.” Let me illustrate this idea with two examples. In biblical times, a man using a plow needed to cut a straight furrow. The apostle Paul was a tentmaker by trade. Tents were made with animal skins. In order to match the animal skins, each skin had to be cut in a “straight” line. Hence, Paul was comparing interpreting the Scripture to cutting a straight line. You “cut a straight line” with Scripture by matching verses and thoughts that go together. When you “cut straight,” you will find that Scripture agrees with Scripture.

## Characteristics of the Bible

### *Objective 2:*

*Identify six characteristics of the Bible.*

### The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible is God’s revelation of himself to humans. It is not man’s opinions about God. God made himself known by speaking through the biblical authors such as the ancient prophets and the apostles of Christ. However, do not think that because the Bible is old it is irrelevant to us in the twenty-first century. Just as we still breathe the same air that has been around for millennia, God’s message is as pertinent today as it ever was.

### The Bible is without error in its original manuscripts (Deuteronomy 32:4).

The Bible you own is actually a translation of the sacred writings of special people God used to share His message. You can trust the historical accuracy of the Bible. It needs no correction. Bible translators make every effort to make sure their translation is as close to the original manuscripts as possible.

### The Bible speaks with absolute authority.

When you read the Bible, you are listening as God speaks to you. Therefore you must submit yourself to Scripture's teachings. It has been said that those who reject the authority of Scripture do not do so because God's Word is full of contradictions; rather they reject the Bible because it contradicts them!

### The Bible is in unity.

Even though the Bible is composed of 66 books, written by over 40 individuals over the course of hundreds of years, it contains one basic message from beginning to end. That message is the story of God reconciling (making peace) humankind to himself through Jesus Christ. All Scripture relates to that one theme.

### The Bible is clear.

Though parts of the Bible are hard to grasp without the help of the Holy Spirit and teachers (Acts 8:30–31), the central message of the Bible can be known by anyone of average intelligence. There are no secret codes to unlock the purpose of Scripture, so one does not need to be an expert theologian to benefit from studying the Bible.

### The Bible is practical.

The Bible is practical; you can apply it to life. For example, the book of Esther is not meant to teach merely Persian history. It tells us of God's care and guidance of His people. The guidelines in the Bible will help you live a happy and productive life.

## How to Approach the Bible

### *Objective 3:*

*List prerequisites for learning from God's Word.*

I hope you are excited about learning from God's Word. Here are three prerequisites for receiving spiritual nourishment from the Bible.

### You must believe the Scriptures are the Word of God.

To correctly handle the Scriptures, you must receive the Bible as it is: God's word of truth, God's marvelous revelation to humanity. This requires faith based on facts. The Bible is accurate when it refers to historical people, places, and events. Archeological evidence supports the details recorded in Scripture. All the data eventually point to Jesus who lived, died, and rose from the dead—one of the best supported truths of history. No church teaching, man-made creed, or preacher takes priority over the Scriptures.

### You must ask God to give you wisdom and revelation.

To unbelievers, the Bible can seem almost impossible to comprehend. But to God's children who diligently pray for understanding, God gives insight. Notice these words taken from the Bible: "None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand" (Daniel 12:10). One day the apostle Peter confessed his conviction that Jesus Christ was no mere mortal man but God's divine Son. Jesus responded, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 16:17). As God's Holy Spirit gives you the wisdom to grasp scriptural truth, the amazing wisdom and power of the message of the Bible will impact your life.

### You must eagerly search for the truth of the Scriptures.

To truly appreciate the deep truths of Scripture, you must eagerly search for them. God does not reward laziness and indifference. Rather, He blesses diligence

and effort when it comes to seeking Him. We are called to grow in grace and the knowledge of God; this takes place only as we dig into the Bible, God's Word.

## Figurative Language in the Bible

### *Objective 4:*

*Distinguish between literal and figurative languages in the Bible.*

In every culture and nation, people use both literal and figurative languages to communicate. For instance, when English speakers say "It is raining cats and dogs," they mean that rain is falling heavily. A Chinese person who understood some English and heard this phrase for the first time may not understand that this was a figurative expression. Someone would have to teach that listener the true meaning of the expression.

In similar ways, the human writers God used to pen the words of the Bible employed both literal and figurative languages to convey their message. Consider Jesus' method of teaching. He lived in a culture that loved to tell stories, so He often conveyed His message with stories and figures of speech. He did so purposely to make strong impressions on the hearts of the listeners. Jesus preached not only to the minds of His listeners, but also to their wills and emotions. Stories and figures of speech bypass the mind and aim at the emotions. Emotions in turn affect the will. Thus, philosophical arguments do not convince as well as emotionally powerful stories. Let us look at common figures of speech found in Scripture.

### Hyperbole

The word *hyperbole* may be new to you, but it has a simple meaning. A hyperbole is an exaggeration of something to produce a certain effect. You might be thinking, then, that exaggeration is a form of lying. However, exaggeration is a form of lying only if its intent

is to deceive the listener. It is not deceptive to use hyperbole to convey truth.

Jesus was a master of hyperbole. He spoke of camels going through the eyes of needles and mountains being thrown into the sea. In Matthew 23:24, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees: “You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” The real meaning of that rebuke is, “You pay close attention to little things but neglect the important things.” Another example is Matthew 5:29: “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.” This is an obvious exaggeration to teach the importance of avoiding anything that causes one to fall into sin. Jesus also said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Does this mean that we must literally hate our closest relatives? Of course not! Jesus was simply stressing that our love for Him must be supreme.

### Simile

A simile is a clearly expressed comparison between two unlike things introduced by the conjunction *as* or *like*. Here is a biblical simile: “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you” (Luke 17:6). Similes and parables are related. When a simile is expanded into a story, the result is a parable.

### Metaphor

A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things that is not clearly expressed by conjunctions. Here is an example: “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matthew 5:13).

### Proverb

A proverb is a memorable, one-sentence statement that expresses an important bit of wisdom. Matthew 6:21

is such an example: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

## Riddle

Riddles are puzzling sayings. Mark records one such saying: "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man'" (Mark 14:58).

## Parable

A parable is an expanded simile or metaphor, for example, "The kingdom of God is like" [followed by a story or parable]. Over one-third of Jesus' words recorded in the gospels are parables. More examples of parables include "The Good Samaritan", "The Four Soils", and the "Prodigal (Lost) Son."

Be careful not to get overly caught up in the details of a parable. Do not assign a different meaning to each element of the story. Parables are simple stories told to make one basic point and to call for a response from the listeners. The parables of Jesus were not meant to teach doctrine as such but to call forth a response. Understanding a parable is like "getting" a joke. The two things that make a joke funny to its hearers are the familiar points of reference and the unexpected turn in the story. If you pay too much attention to the details, you lose the punch line.

There are many other kinds of figures of speech in the Bible. Students of the Bible need to become familiar with these. So how can you know when something in the Bible should be taken literally or figuratively? A good rule of thumb (that is a figure of speech!) is to, first, read the text literally. If it does not make sense literally, then the text is possibly figurative. In that case, look for the essential truth being presented. Bear in mind that it may not be easy for the first-time reader of Scripture to determine the difference between a literal statement and certain figures of speech. However, diligence in study will be amply rewarded as you grow in your understanding of the events and teachings of God's Word.

## Practical Tips for Studying Scripture

### *Objective 5:*

*Point out practical tips for studying Scripture.*

### **Aim to know God**

Make the purpose of your Bible study to get to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ. You do not earn points for simply knowing a lot about the Bible or for reading it a certain number of times. The goal is to see Jesus throughout the pages of the Bible and respond to Him.

### **Be open to new thoughts and concepts**

Read the Scriptures loosely. By that, I mean read without initially forming any rigid opinions about what the Bible says and means. Do not try to fit verses into your preconceived notions about what God is like and the way the world operates. Lean on the leading of the Holy Spirit, and everything will fall into place. Absorb God's Word, and the Spirit will highlight what you need to understand.

### **Be patient**

If verses seem to conflict with or contradict one another, do not automatically assume that the problem is inherent in the Bible and irresolvable. There is no cause for alarm or abandoning the faith! It may be that you have not read enough and retained enough of the Bible to see how one or more verses fit into the whole. Your understanding of the verses in question could be flawed.

For example, a person who knows little or nothing about auto mechanics may look at the engine of his or her car with a sense of great mystery. He or she may have absolutely no clue how one piece of the motor relates to the others. It may even look like one odd-looking part is useless and does nothing. However, a trained mechanic understands that each piece of the motor was engineered with a purpose. It is not there by accident.

It is the same with the verses in God's Word. Each one is there with divine purpose. As you trust in God's



Spirit to open your spiritual eyes, you will grow in understanding. If you do not understand something right away, do not be afraid to put it on the shelf for a while. The study of Scripture is a lifetime pursuit, and frankly some things do not become clear until after many years.

It might help you to know that in almost all cases, the so-called problematic verses you will come across can be harmonized by carefully compiling and comparing the data. It is not usually an either/or issue but a both/and issue. You can also purchase books by Christian scholars who have compiled and compared the data and resolved most of these difficulties. A very small number of problems with the biblical text are the result of poor translating or copying, and these too can be identified. However, none of the so-called problematic verses affect Christian doctrine (beliefs) in any way.

### Pray

Ask God for understanding. This is vital because merely reading the Word is not enough. You must understand it in order to obey and act in faith upon it. Obedience and faith will release God's supernatural blessings and produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Jesus promised to send us the Holy Spirit who would lead us into all truth (see John 16:13).

### Be cautious

As a growing Christian, you will be exposed to many interesting ideas from people around you, including fellow believers. Do not automatically accept when people tell you their latest revelation from God's Word. Check it out yourself with the Bible. See if what you hear lines up with God's Word. Seek God with all your heart to get His understanding of the Bible, not someone else's interpretation.

Also, do not believe a particular interpretation just because it is unusual. Sadly, some Christians are gullible and naïve. They do not correctly handle the Word of God and are particularly attracted to odd ideas. They may even feel that the stranger the idea, the more spiritual

it must be. Just because something is unusual does not make it true. In most cases, your interpretation of Scripture verses will make logical sense.

### Maintain purity in your life

Make sure your heart is pure before God. If you store hatred, revenge, jealousy, bitterness, prejudice and envy in your heart, those things will negatively influence your ability to learn from the Bible. Sinful attitudes will distort your concept of God, others, and yourself.

### Avoid pride

Over time as you gain more knowledge of God's Word and become wiser in His ways, watch out lest an attitude of superiority develops. Read 1 Corinthians 13 from time to time. This chapter talks about the supremacy of love in the Christian life.

### Become familiar with common symbols used in Scripture

Some ordinary things are often used symbolically in Scripture to convey spiritual truth. For instance, the lamb often represents Christ; the human body sometimes represents the church, the sea can refer to the Gentile nations; the number "seven" represents perfection or completion. The number "twelve" has special significance; for instance, there were twelve ancient tribes of Israel and twelve apostles chosen by Christ.

### Look at the context

To study in context means to read the verses surrounding a particular text. Do not let a verse hang by itself. You may even want to read the verse in the context of the whole chapter or book in which it is found. Also, put the Scripture into its proper historical and cultural setting. Ask yourself how you would have reacted to what was said had you lived in that time. Reading in context is vital, for unscrupulous people have invented many strange and dangerous false doctrines simply because they pulled a verse out of context.

## Learn to use various translations of the Bible

Fortunately, we live at a time when you can buy various translations of the Bible into major languages. For instance, there are many excellent translations of the Bible into English. These translations are all made from the same ancient manuscripts in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, but one version may translate a word or sentence a little differently from another. Some translations are very literal and perhaps somewhat difficult to follow in your language while others try to convey not so much exact words but the thoughts communicated by the original manuscripts. When studying a Bible text, compare two or three reliable Bible translations to get a fuller idea of what the original author was saying.

## Learn to identify different kinds of biblical literature

The Bible contains history, poetry, prophecy, parables, proverbs, and other kinds of literature. The kind or genre of literature affects how you should interpret a particular verse. For instance, you should not typically read poetry literally; instead look for the underlying meaning and truth. Do not treat proverbs like prophecies, expecting them to find literal fulfillment in every situation. To illustrate, Proverbs 22:29 says, "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men." Does this mean that every skilled person will always work in a high profile position and receive the accolades of very powerful leaders? Not necessarily. The proverb in question teaches that skill generally brings recognition and advancement, but there are exceptions. A highly skilled Christian in a Muslim country may be denied advancement because of his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

I trust you have enjoyed this lesson and are now eager to be a lifelong learner and student of the Bible. Here are some final thoughts for you. Come to God's written Word with an open heart. Do not assume you already know what the Bible says. Pray for God's will, not your

will, to be done. Then will the Bible become an open door for you to fellowship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit will shine a light on truths that you have never seen before. Remember, God reveals wisdom and knowledge to the one who is humble and hungry for truth.

### **SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE**

Matthew 13:44

Matthew 16:17

John 5:39

John 6:63

Acts 17:11

1 Corinthians 2:13–14

1 Corinthians 10:11

2 Timothy 2:15

2 Timothy 3:16

1 Peter 1:20

1 John 2:27

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *The Bible is*
  - a) *to be worshipped.*
  - b) *God's inspired Word.*
  - c) *merely fiction.*
2. *Bible interpretation is like*
  - a) *visiting a foreign country.*
  - b) *making tents.*
  - c) *building a bridge.*
3. *When we say that the Bible has one message from beginning to end, we mean it is*
  - a) *inspired.*
  - b) *without error.*
  - c) *in unity.*
4. *The Christian faith is based on facts.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*
5. *Choose the statement that is incorrect.*
  - a) *Hyperbole means to exaggerate something to produce a certain effect.*
  - b) *A proverb is a memorable statement that expresses an important bit of wisdom.*
  - c) *A metaphor is comparison of two like things introduced by the conjunction as or like.*
6. *Understanding a parable is likened to understanding*
  - a) *a joke.*
  - b) *deep theology.*
  - c) *all the details of the parable.*
7. *It is important to be patient as you study Scripture because*
  - a) *God intends to confuse you as you study.*
  - b) *understanding the Bible is a lifelong process.*
  - c) *it contains many mysteries no one understands.*

8. *Identify a good reason to use caution when exposed to unusual interpretations of biblical verses.*
  - a) *Unusual interpretations are usually the most accurate.*
  - b) *Unusual interpretations are generally the most spiritual.*
  - c) *Some people do not correctly handle the Word of God and are attracted to odd ideas with no firm biblical foundation.*
9. *If you really want to understand God's Word, you must*
  - a) *know more about it than your pastor.*
  - b) *have the heart of your heavenly Father.*
  - c) *stick to one translation.*
10. *The Bible contains*
  - a) *different kinds of literature that require particular ways of interpreting them.*
  - b) *only one genre of literature.*
  - c) *only ancient poetry and history.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *b* (3.2)
2. *c* (3.1)
3. *c* (3.2)
4. *a* (3.3)
5. *c* (3.4)
6. *a* (3.4)
7. *b* (3.5)
8. *c* (3.5)
9. *b* (3.5)
10. *a* (3.5)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 4

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# Nurturing a Passion for Prayer

A passion for prayer is necessary in developing intimacy with God. At the outset of this teaching, we need to establish that the practice of prayer is for the purpose of drawing close to God more than anything else. Desiring closeness to God is where the word *passion* comes in.

Our passion must be directed towards a relationship with God rather than towards the religious practice of prayer. Passion for prayer is more properly termed passion for intimacy with God. Anything less will eventually be misdirected into prideful boasting of how much we pray.

It is also possible to misinterpret a passion for God with materialism. Some people have a greater passion for things than they do for God. Some hope to use prayer as the means to gain material things. Though prayer certainly does help us gain the things we need, our passion must remain directed towards God. If all we pray for are things, then things will be all we get. If indeed we are praying for closeness to God, then we will get intimacy. An intimate relationship with God far outweighs anything else we may acquire through prayer.

This lesson is about nurturing a passion for prayer. King David once said, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1–2). That is the kind of heart we need to maintain passion for prayer.



## LESSON OUTLINE

The Necessity of Prayer  
 The Need for a Clear Conscience  
 Hindrances to Prayer  
 Prayer Excuses  
 Unrecognized Answers  
 Hearing God

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain why we should pray.*
- 2: *Discuss the role of confession in developing intimacy with God.*
- 3: *Identify distractions that inhibit prayer.*
- 4: *List common excuses we give for not praying.*
- 5: *Explain how to handle what seems like unanswered prayer.*
- 6: *Discuss the role listening has in prayer.*

### The Necessity of Prayer

#### **Objective 1:**

*Explain why we should pray.*

If our ultimate objective is to nurture a passion for prayer, then obviously we must pray. Often the practice of prayer results in a greater desire to pray. However, there is the danger of prayer becoming a religious exercise if a person is not careful. Even though Paul admonishes us to “pray continually” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), why we pray is just as important as prayer itself.

If we pray from a legalistic perspective, believing that God will hear us because of how much we pray, then we would not be much different from the Pharisees. Jesus was not impressed with the Pharisees who prayed a lot: "And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full" (Matthew 6:5). Therefore, we can conclude that it was not just the act of prayer that Jesus was interested in, but rather that which motivates us to pray.

Prayer is all about our relationship with God. Matthew 6:6 states, "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen." Certainly, the public prayer meeting has its place and is necessary. However, the public prayer meeting is different from your personal prayer life. It is in the closet of prayer where we get to know God intimately.

It is impossible to develop a meaningful relationship with someone we rarely spend time with. Our relationship with God is subject to similar time investment. We must communicate with Him actively if our relationship is going to progress. Initially, the practice of prayer can be drudgery. However, once the fruit of our relationship with God begins to develop, prayer becomes enjoyable and productive. Thus, prayer is the means of giving birth through the intimacy it develops between Christ and His bride. The kingdom of God grows through such birth.

If a person is truly interested in the life of God, then he or she must pray. Without life we simply have a religious appearance. Religion has no life, merely an outward form. Prayer is the breath of life we need.

## The Need for a Clear Conscience

### *Objective 2:*

*Discuss the role of confession in developing intimacy with God.*

One of the prerequisites for a healthy prayer life is that of understanding one's position with God. Hebrews 4:16 encourages, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence." When a person is born again, he or she develops confidence to approach God. This confidence is not borne out of arrogance but out of a clear conscience with God. The clear conscience results from right relationship with God, which begins with confession.

Confession is critical in our developing intimacy with God. King David wrote, "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts" (Psalm 51:6). Our heart is our "inner part," or our "innermost being." Monitoring what enters our heart helps us maintain a clear conscience with God. First Timothy 1:19 further encourages us to cling tightly to our faith in Christ and keep our conscience clear. Unfortunately, some people have shipwrecked their faith by deliberately violating their conscience.

When in prayer, it is not uncommon to first spend time in confession. Innately, we understand the need to clear our conscience with our Lord before we can exercise our faith. Confession is the key to faith and a clear conscience. God clears the conscience.

## Hindrances to Prayer

### *Objective 3:*

*Identify distractions that inhibit prayer.*

### Pride

Pride is often the greatest diversion to prayer. King David wrote, "In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God" (Psalm 10:4).

The proud has no time for God and sometimes even looks down on prayer.

Prayer is God-centered, not self-centered. By its very nature of asking, seeking, and knocking, prayer is humbling. When we bow in prayer, we humble ourselves in the presence of God as we seek His help and direction. We also look to Him as the source of life. All of these actions go contrary to human pride. Hence, proud people cannot have intimacy with God until they surrender their wills to Him.

### Impatience

Another hindrance to prayer is impatience while waiting for God to respond. Impatient seekers can perceive prayer as ineffective. Many people who do not understand the power of prayer or the timing of God believe that it is necessary to “do something” if they are going to make a difference. I once heard a preacher ask his congregation to pray about a particular political issue coming up for a vote in congress which could have proved spiritually devastating if it passed. One of his parishioners said to him, “I know you are asking us to pray, but I’m a person of action, I need to actually do something. What else can I do?” He tried to explain to her what God could do if His people prayed sincerely, that even laws could be changed. This woman greatly missed the significance of God’s people bowed in the presence of God and what that can do to change any situation.

Second Chronicles 7:14 states, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” Praying is one of the most effective things we believers can do. In fact, we cannot do anything else effectively unless we have prayed.

## Prayer Excuses

### *Objective 4:*

*List common excuses we give for not praying.*

Three of the most common excuses people give for not developing intimacy with God through prayer are: they are too tired to pray, are too busy, and do not feel like praying. We shall examine each of these excuses.

### Too tired to pray

Have you ever fallen asleep while praying? It is very common to fall asleep while praying, partially due to the nature of prayer. Prayer is talking to God, and many people like to do that silently. There is absolutely nothing wrong with silent prayer. In fact, Hebrews 4:12 tells us that God knows the thoughts and intents of our heart. Subsequently, God can hear silent prayer as well as vocal prayer. However, when we pray silently, we tend to drift in our thoughts. Wandering thoughts typically end up as dreams.

There are a few things we can do to stay alert in prayer. We can give God the best time of the day. The best time of the day is that segment of the day when we are most effective. Not everybody functions the same way at the same time of the day. Some people are night people, and others are morning people. Typically, the morning people think that praying in the morning is the most spiritual time of the day. However, a person could pray in the afternoon and have an effective spiritual time also. Each person needs to find his or her own best time of the day and use some of that time for prayer.

In Scripture, people prayed at various times of the day and night. Acts 3:1 records that “one day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.” King David prayed often at night: “At midnight I rise to give you thanks for your righteous laws” (Psalm 119:62). In the book of Proverbs, we read, “I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall

find me" (Proverbs 8:17, KJV). Throughout the Scriptures the time of day is less of an issue when it comes to prayer.

Therefore, pray when you can stay focused and alert. If you need to, pray audibly. Some people find it necessary to pace and pray just to stay focused. If you get tired while praying, get a drink of water and then go back to prayer. Any or all of these suggestions will help you have a quality time of seeking God.

### Too busy to pray

Being overwhelmed with life to the point where we feel too busy to do anything extra is not an uncommon feeling. The German church reformer, Martin Luther, was famous for saying that on the days when he absolutely had too much to do, he would spend an extra hour in prayer in order to get it all done. Prayerlessness is the sign that we have come to believe that we—rather than God—are the solution to our problems.

In Matthew 21:13, Jesus said, "My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" In this statement, Jesus made prayer preeminent. Jesus also made prayer a priority in His life. We should do no less. We will never see the significance of prayer until we prioritize it. The only way to overcome the idea that we are too busy to pray is to see prayer as the only option in our becoming all God wants us to be.

The law of sowing and reaping applies to time also. Often we hear about this principle in regard to our finances. It is not uncommon to hear a teaching on how God will bless and multiply whatever we give to Him. The same is true with time. If we have only ten minutes to spare in our schedule and determine to give that to God in prayer each day, soon we will find that we have twenty, thirty, or forty minutes to give Him. God will increase whatever we give Him.

### Do not feel like praying

One misconception about prayer is that it should always be a euphoric experience of angels singing and

of us floating on clouds. It would be wonderful if every time we went to the prayer closet we were overwhelmed with the presence of God. But the reality is that most of the prayer life is simple obedience to God and plain hard work. Jesus said it better when He told the disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Jesus had been praying in the Garden of Gethsemane and when He returned to His disciples, He saw them sleeping rather than praying. Their bodies (flesh) were weak; they did not want to pray.

The same is true for us. Therefore, to develop intimacy with God we must discipline ourselves to pray. We are to pray because the Scriptures admonish us to. Jesus addresses this in Luke 18:1: "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up." Jesus is teaching here that prayer is to be an act of the will as much as a response to the prompting of the Spirit.

We cannot wait until we feel like praying before we pray, or we will never pray. The act of prayer is spiritual discipline. Discipline requires effort and determination. We must determine in our hearts to spend time in prayer. Only then will we see the benefits of prayer.

## Unrecognized Answers

### *Objective 5:*

*Explain how to handle what seems like unanswered prayer.*

Have you ever found yourself asking why it is you are praying for the same thing you prayed about many times before? The prophet Habakkuk found himself in the same kind of dilemma. He was the prophet of the day and was God's voice to the people, yet it seemed he could not get an answer to his prayer. In Habakkuk 1:2 he cries, "How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen?"

The apostle Paul also found himself in a situation where he could not get an answer from God. Listen to his

words taken from 2 Corinthians 12:7–9: “There was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” Three different times Paul prayed about the thorn in his flesh without getting an answer. Certainly Paul did not lack faith. He was a great man of faith.

Paul’s experience teaches that our position must always be one of faith. Even when we do not see the answer in the time frame we think we should, we must continue to believe. Too often we think of faith as something that will bring an answer immediately. That is not always the case. It takes faith to continue to believe for the answer in the midst of great opposition. Obviously, God was doing something in Paul’s life that was greater than Paul’s revelation of Him. And God was limited in what He could reveal to Paul. But instead of struggling with not receiving an answer, Paul took the position of humility. The humble person is content with what God knows and with whatever answer God gives.

When we question God about an answer to prayer, we assume that we know all things and that there is absolutely no reason for God not to do our bidding. Obviously, we do not know everything; God knows all things. Therefore, when waiting for an answer to prayer, we simply need to be humble. James 4:6 says, “‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

## Hearing God

### *Objective 6:*

*Discuss the role listening has in prayer.*

In every relationship there needs to be give and take. Often our prayer lives represent more taking than giving. We often ask God to answer our prayers and meet our



needs without the slightest thought of what God might be trying to say to us. Listening during our prayer time is more than just giving God a chance to speak. It is balancing out the relationship, which in turn enhances the relationship.

It is critical for us to learn to give the Lord ample opportunities to speak to us while we are in prayer. Some people go to prayer with a list of all the things they want from God. While in prayer, they chatter about their list then end the prayer without taking any time to listen for God to speak to them. Can you imagine being married to a person who never stops talking? What if the only time you heard from your mate was when he or she wanted something? It would not take very long to feel used. Many Christians are also guilty of trying to use God.

Psalm 46:10 gives advice on listening: “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The instruction “be still” in this verse can be translated, “cease striving.” There are times when God tells us to slow down and stop trying so hard. We must be still then!

The Pharisees thought that God would hear them by “their many words” (Matthew 6:7). Today, some people also babble and even give God instructions in how to handle problems. Such incessant talking during prayer is often an indication of faithlessness. There are times when we need to cease talking and must simply listen to God. Not until we cease striving can we hear the voice of God. God does speak to us, but it is often through His still small voice.

Elijah the prophet learned this lesson. He had been very zealous for the Lord and felt that he alone had a pursuit for God. God called Elijah and said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” When Elijah did as instructed, the Lord passed by and a great wind destroyed the mountain, and broke it in pieces. But the Lord was not in the wind! After the wind, there was an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake

was fire, and the Lord was not in the fire. However, after the fire, Elijah heard God's still small voice. Then Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and humbled himself before His God (1 Kings 19:10–13).

To have a well-balanced prayer life, we must take time during each prayer time to allow God to speak to our hearts. There is certainly nothing wrong with bringing our petitions and supplications before the Lord. There is also nothing wrong with quieting our hearts during prayer. Often I will open God's Word and read it during my prayer time. God speaks through His Word. His still small voice makes a giant impact in our lives.

## Conclusion

Nurturing a passion for prayer should be one of the priorities of our lives. Nothing is more critical to our relationship with God than the ability to communicate with Him. However, we must be intentional in developing a healthy prayer life. There are three vital steps in the advancement of a personal life of prayer: setting a time goal, establishing a set time for prayer, and prioritizing prayer.

### A Time Goal

To develop the discipline of prayer it is important to determine the minimum amount of time you want to spend praying. Goals give us something to reach towards. Without a time goal, it is common to quit praying after a very short time.

### A Set Time

Failure to establish a set time for prayer can easily allow other issues in our lives to keep us from praying. Prayer should be scheduled in the same way we schedule all other critical activities.

### A Priority of Prayer

If prayer is not a priority in our lives, we will never establish it as a deep habit. We must give preeminence to our time with God. Jesus taught us that prayer should

be over and above all other things in the house of God (Matthew 21:13).

### **Suggested Scripture Verses to Memorize**

Psalm 10:4

Psalm 42:1–2

Psalm 46:10

Matthew 6:6

Matthew 21:13

Matthew 26:41

Hebrews 4:16

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *A passion for prayer is more properly termed a passion*
  - a) *to gain material wealth.*
  - b) *for intimacy with God.*
  - c) *to work for God.*
2. *Prayer is all about our \_\_\_\_\_ with God.*
  - a) *relationship*
  - b) *standing*
  - c) *submission*
3. *When we are careful to watch over what enters our heart, we maintain a clear conscience with God by allowing Him to*
  - a) *remove our sin so we never err again.*
  - b) *inspect our hearts with frequency.*
  - c) *remove His hedge of protection from us.*
4. *Confidence to approach God*
  - a) *is the product of human arrogance.*
  - b) *is an impossible goal.*
  - c) *comes when a person is born-again.*
5. *The relationship between pride and prayer is such that*
  - a) *pride is a great aid in prayer.*
  - b) *proud people enjoy praying.*
  - c) *pride is a great diversion to prayer.*
6. *People who do not understand the power of prayer or the timing of God believe*
  - a) *it is necessary to do something if they are going to make a difference.*
  - b) *there is no use for prayer because whatever will be will be.*
  - c) *they must become emotional and weep before God will answer.*

7. *The most common excuses for not developing intimacy with God through prayer are*
  - a) *exhaustion, busyness, and not feeling like praying.*
  - b) *laziness, busyness, and not feeling led to pray.*
  - c) *tiredness, sickness, and lack of desire.*
8. *When we constantly quibble with God about an answer to prayer, we*
  - a) *make Him happy.*
  - b) *assume that we know all things.*
  - c) *exercise our authority in prayer.*
9. *In waiting for an answer to prayer, we must take the position of*
  - a) *panic.*
  - b) *arrogance.*
  - c) *humility.*
10. *Listening during our prayer time is more than just giving God a chance to speak. It is*
  - a) *balancing out the relationship.*
  - b) *forcing God to hear our hearts.*
  - c) *understanding our will for Him.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *b* (4.1)
2. *a* (4.1)
3. *b* (4.2)
4. *c* (4.2)
5. *c* (4.3)
6. *a* (4.3)
7. *a* (4.4)
8. *b* (4.5)
9. *c* (4.5)
10. *a* (4.6)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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Since 1999, Ron Auch has served as Senior Pastor of Prayer House Assembly of God in Kenosha, Wisconsin, a church he planted. Prior to that he traveled nationally and internationally with Pray-Tell Ministries, a ministry he founded in 1981. Ron is the author of numerous books on prayer as well as a conference speaker.



## LESSON 5

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# Developing and Using Your Faith

The word *faith* is used in many different ways in the Christian community. We often say that someone has strong faith or that someone has come to faith. In this lesson, we will examine the essential components of faith—what faith is, why it is vital, and how it is to be used. Understanding faith in God can lead to amazing things!



## LESSON OUTLINE

Understanding Faith  
Faith and the Christian  
The Development of Faith  
Testing of Faith  
God's Promises

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Define faith.*
- 2: *Indicate the importance of faith to a successful Christian life.*
- 3: *Discuss how faith develops.*
- 4: *Summarize how the Christian's faith will be tested.*
- 5: *Identify promises of faith from God's Word.*

## Understanding Faith

**Objective 1:**  
*Define faith.*

Faith is one of the most important topics in Christianity. It is a part of nearly everything we do, and it determines everything we are. But what exactly is faith? Hebrews 11:1 gives this definition: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

This definition shows that faith is an assurance and a conviction. Faith emerges from the soul when we believe in something that is beyond our five senses, in things that are not seen or sensed. According to this definition, faith is not unusual. Faith is very common.

Almost every moment of every day, human beings place their faith in different things. As the driver of a car speeds toward a busy intersection, he has faith in his brakes, hoping that when he steps on the pedal, the car will slow down. When a person sits down on a chair, he or she has faith in the legs of the chair and is assured that they are strong enough to sustain the weight. When we buy a hamburger and eat it, we show faith in the person who cooked the meat, trusting that it is free from poison or germs.

From these examples, we see that faith is only as good as the object of the faith. Faith must be in something, and faith has value only if it is trusting in something that is worthy of the trust. For example, the driver of the car might have very strong faith in his brakes. But if the brakes fail, his faith is useless.

Faith has power only when it is placed in something that is actually true. This applies to both secular and religious faith. In 1 Corinthians 15:17, Paul writes, "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." It does not matter how much faith we have in something. If that "something" is not worthy of our faith, our faith in that object will be worthless. We need only enough faith to bring us to a point of trust and action. But the object of our faith must be faithful and true!

So everyone has faith. The real issue, however, is whether or not we have placed our faith correctly. The Bible is clear that our faith as Christians is to be placed in God. God alone is worthy of our faith. Jesus said, "'Have faith in God'" (Mark 11:22). Earlier, Proverbs 3:5–6 instructed, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

## Faith and the Christian

### **Objective 2:**

*Indicate the importance of faith to a successful Christian life.*

Why is faith in God so important? The Scriptures give many reasons:

### Faith is essential for salvation.

The Christian life begins with faith. To become one of God's children we must have the hope and conviction that God exists, that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead, and that He forgives us and has caused us to be born-again. None of these things can be seen; none can be accomplished through our efforts. Paul writes, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

When a prostitute came to Jesus and affectionately washed His feet, the religious people were appalled (Luke 7:39). But by her faith, she found acceptance and forgiveness. "And Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'" (Luke 7:50).

### Our hearts are purified by faith.

Not unlike the prostitute in Luke chapter seven, the heart of every human being has been stained by sin. Because of this sin, people are guilty and separated from God. While some try to cleanse themselves through religious works, Scripture says that we are cleansed through faith in God, not by our own efforts. Paul articulates: "God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them [Gentiles] by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8–9). The apostle later wrote, "However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:5). Our faith in the cleansing

power of Christ's blood removes the sin and guilt from our hearts. With these pure hearts, we can now worship and fellowship with the Godhead.

### We are justified by faith.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2). When we place our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we no longer face the judgment of God. Because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross, the price of our sins has been paid once and for all (1 Peter 3:18). We are no longer condemned (Romans 8:1)!

This is a complete contrast to the way the world treats us. The world continually judges us by the things we have, the things we do, and the way we look. But once we place our faith in Christ, we are completely accepted by Him because of what He did when He shed His blood for us. This is a powerful reason to pour out our praise and thanks to God!

### Faith is essential for living in obedience.

Hebrews 11 lists many heroes of the Old Testament: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. How did they accomplish such incredible things for God? They did it all "by faith." They had an assurance of hope and a conviction about things they could not yet see, so they obeyed God's call and changed history.

We also can create new legacies in the kingdom of God. When we trust in God, placing our faith in Him, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in us helps us to accomplish great things (Ezekiel 36:27). Without Christ, we "can do nothing" (John 15:5), but all things are possible through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). This is perhaps one of the most important realizations in our growth and service in the Lord: To be used mightily by God, all we need is faith in His ability to work through us. All of the heroes listed in Hebrews

were ordinary people...but by faith they were willing to allow God to work through them to do great things.

### Courage comes from faith.

"Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6–8). Here, Paul shows the key to courageous living: walking by faith and not by sight. Courage is the will to do something in spite of dangerous circumstances. The danger might be to our health, wealth, reputation, or security. If we live by what we see, we will continually draw back into a "safe zone" of self-protection. By placing our faith in God, we can live beyond what we see, trusting in Him and not in our circumstances.

Courage through faith, however, recognizes that God may choose to not protect us from all peril. Great courage was seen in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (see Daniel 3) when King Nebuchadnezzar tried to compel them to worship false gods and golden idols. How did these young men reply?

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up." (Daniel 3:16–18)

These men were willing to face death rather than compromise their beliefs. They had the faith to believe that God was able to deliver them. But they had a deeper faith as well. They were willing to obey God even if He did not deliver them. God did protect the three men, but in some situations, He does not. Obedient faith in Christ can lead to death or martyrdom. Starting with Stephen (see Acts 7:57–60) and continuing today, God has regularly allowed believers to be killed for their faith. In those times,

our faith in God and hope in heaven give the courage to stand tall against any threat, even if it costs us our lives.

### Faith is required to please God.

The writer of Hebrews summed up the importance of faith with these words: “Without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). Evidently, God takes no pleasure when our lives are lived in self-reliance. He designed us for an intimate and dependent relationship with Him by living by faith in Him. Nothing else pleases God.

This is only a partial list of why faith is so important. Faith is not just a part of the Christian life, it is the foundation. Faith is where our relationship with Christ starts, it is where we grow in intimacy with Him, and it is the key to all peace and purpose in this life and beyond.

## **The Development of Faith**

### ***Objective 3:***

*Discuss how faith develops.*

Our faith in God grows as our confidence in Him is strengthened. For that to happen, our beliefs about God must be truthful and accurate and must come through the Scriptures. Once truthful beliefs about God are established, we must choose to act on those beliefs—even when visible circumstances or internal feelings tell us to do differently.

A. W. Tozer wrote, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us” (1961, 1). This is particularly true when it comes to faith. When we choose to place our faith in God, it is important that we have a solid understanding of who God is and how He works. Through the Bible we hear about God’s awesome and powerful attributes. Believing these truths gives us confidence to trust God wholeheartedly.

Below are powerful, foundational truths about God that cause our faith to be strong:

## God Is

While no one has seen God (John 1:18), the evidence of His existence is all around us.

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20). Belief in this basic fact—that God exists—is the starting point of all faith. This belief opens the door to the reality of the spiritual realm and starts the development of faith.

It is difficult to have faith when our facts are weak. Many influential Christians—including C.S. Lewis and Josh McDowell—had to be convinced of the facts of God’s existence before they were willing to place their faith in Him. The study of the facts behind the Christian faith is called apologetics. If you struggle with faith because you are uncertain of the facts, make it a priority to get the answers you need to be convinced of the evidence behind our faith.

## God Loves

John 3:16 has been quoted and memorized more often than any other passage of Scripture: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (KJV). Understanding the love of God is necessary for a faith-building relationship with Him.

The love that God has for us is unlike any other kind of love. God’s love is unconditional. This means that His love is based not on what we do, but on who He is. The love we experience in the world is often based on our performance. Human love has conditions that say, “I will love you if...” God’s love has no conditions. He loves us because love is what He is. He does not just choose to love us; the Bible says that He is love (1 John 4:8).

Acceptance of His love makes us willing to obey Him. God’s perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18), and through it we know that He has our best interests.

As our confidence in the truth of God's love grows, so does our faith.

### God Provides

Belief in God's provision is a powerful faith builder. In the Western world, we have been taught to trust in our material possessions. This is a foolish faith, for earthly possessions can be taken away from us in an instant. Jesus commands us to have faith in God's provision:

Do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" . . . your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matthew 6:31–34)

God provides what He knows we need, and not necessarily what we want. When He does not provide the way we wish He would, we must place our faith in His love and goodness. He may not provide what we think we need, but He always provides the circumstances we need to develop in our faith.

### God is in control

Faith in God grows when we recognize that He is in control of all things. God knows all things (1 John 3:20), He has all power (Jeremiah 32:17–18, 26–27), and He exists everywhere (Jeremiah 23:23–24). Isaiah 45:5–12 commands us to have faith in God's goodness, love, and power—even when bad things are happening around us. Once again, walking by faith gives us great peace in the midst of troubles.

The key to our faith, then, is the faithfulness of God! In the Bible, His faithfulness has been described as:

- Everlasting (Psalm 119:90)
- Established and firm (Psalm 89:2)
- Unfailing (Psalm 89:33)



- Great (Lamentations 3:23)
- Infinite (Psalm 36:5)
- Incomparable (Psalm 89:9)

When we walk by faith, prayer and worship come naturally. Paul exhorts:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:4–7)

### God is in you

While our faith must be in God and Christ, we also must have faith in the fact that Christ is in us. Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing” (Galatians 2:20–21).

Our faith in God develops in great leaps and bounds when we realize that Christ lives within us. When we gave our lives to Christ, we were truly “born again.” This is both a great mystery and a powerful truth: We no longer live. Christ lives in us. Our life is now His life, and He desires to live His life through ours. Therefore, we must “live by faith in the Son of God.” By trusting in His presence in us, we surrender our lives to Him and allow Him to live through us, moment by moment.

Not only is Christ in us, but also we are in Him! Colossians 3:1–4 records, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." The nature of faith is again revealed in this passage. Our minds are to be focused not on earthly things, but on God and the incredible truths that we cannot now see. We have died and have been born again. Christ lives in us, and we live in Him!

### Asking for more faith

One day, a large crowd gathered around Jesus and His disciples. A man had brought his son to Christ, hoping for healing. The man cried, "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." Jesus replied, "Everything is possible for him who believes" (Mark 9:22–23). This father cried out to Jesus, asking Him to overcome his unbelief. And Jesus answered by healing the son.

Most people can identify with this father's prayer. While they do have faith, they may also struggle with doubts. When you find yourself with a lack of faith, ask God to help you. Because He lives inside you, He will give you the faith to obey Him in any circumstance. In one instance when the apostles asked the Lord to increase their faith, Jesus replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you" (Luke 17:6). God can develop even the smallest amount of faith. Place your faith in God, and you will see His will done in your life.

### Faith through experience

The first steps of faith are often the most difficult, for we have little previous experience with God. As we grow in knowledge and experience, our faith develops through new hope and stronger convictions about God's faithfulness.

Consider, for a moment, the experiences of Rob Graham, a pastor from the Black Hills of South Dakota. He decided to leave his growing church to start a new one near San Antonio, Texas. He would start with no salary and no members, in an area where there were no homes. Why did he not stay in his safe place in the Dakotas, where

he had a steady income and vibrant ministry? First, he strongly felt God's call. Second, he had been through this before. Four times in his life, Rob had stepped out in faith, leaving behind secure positions to start something new and uncertain. The road had never been easy, and even in this situation, he knew that the church might fail. But Rob's past experiences with God convinced him of God's faithfulness. Now, he knows God is, loves, and provides. These experiences have increased Rob's faith in God.

Reflecting on what God has already done in our lives often makes it easier to step into the unseen future. Romans 8:28 promises, "all things God works for the good of those who love him." In many situations, however, we cannot see the good. It is especially in those moments that we must ask for the faith to continue walking in faith. We will see the good—someday. Today we may have to ask for faith in spite of our circumstances.

Experience with God helps us to understand how He works. Every new situation requires a new step of faith. This was the case when Paul wrote to the new church in Thessalonica: "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing" (2 Thessalonians 1:3).

### Faith growing through the Word

The apostle Paul wrote, "Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). What a powerful verse! As you have studied in previous lessons, the Bible is a powerful tool God has placed in our hands. As we study His promises, His attributes, His acts, His will, and His plan, our faith will be nurtured. Do not neglect this vital aspect of the Christian life.

## Testing of Faith

### *Objective 4:*

*Summarize how the Christian's faith will be tested.*

Every Christian's faith will be tested! James 1:2–4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

While it is true that everyone lives by faith in something, Christians are called to live by faith in God. The true test of our faith in God comes when the other things or people we trust in—friends, family, finances, possessions, reputations, ministries, and abilities—are threatened or taken away. Testing is inevitable! Proverbs 17:3 says, "The crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart."

Tests will show what you really believe about God. Your true beliefs are not revealed by your theology (what you say you believe). Your beliefs are revealed by your biography (what you do). James 2:17 says that "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." What you choose to do during these trials will show where your faith really lies. Tests of faith will come either by choice, by force, or by the grave.

### **By Choice**

Each day you have the choice to live by faith, trusting in God rather than in the circumstances you see. You might choose to give more money to charity, leaving you fully dependent on God to meet your needs. You might choose to break off a relationship based on the conviction that God will supply your emotional needs for love. The possibilities are endless. The Holy Spirit and God's Word will guide you in walking by faith and not by sight.

## By Force

Sometimes you have no choice in your circumstances. You might lose your job, your mate, or get a life-threatening disease. In those times you are forced to have faith, else you could relapse into stress, worry, and anger. Furthermore, God will sometimes forcefully remove the things you are trusting in so that your faith and freedom in Him will be strengthened.

James 1:2–4 says that this kind of testing produces endurance, and endurance has the result of making us perfect and complete, lacking nothing. The end result is glorious. But the test itself is often very painful and difficult.

## By the Grave

Ultimate faith will come as we face death. At that time, we will have to trust in God with everything we have and everything we are. Many who face death do so in fear. But Christians who have had their faith in God strengthened by the Word, prayer, and experience will be able to approach death with hope and confidence.

## God's Promises

### *Objective 5:*

*Identify promises of faith from God's Word.*

Through faith the most valuable of all desires can be ours. Below is a partial list of God's promises concerning faith in Him:

- Faith brings wisdom (James 1:5).
- Faith leads to forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43).
- Faith gives access to God (Ephesians 3:12).
- Faith brings peace and rest (Romans 5:1).
- Faith gives spiritual light (John 12:36, 46).
- Faith moves mountains (Matthew 17:20).
- Faith pleases God (Hebrews 11:6).
- Faith frees from spiritual death (John 11:25–26).
- Faith causes obedience (Matthew 24:45).

- Faith protects from evil (Ephesians 6:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:8).
- Faith causes us to be adopted by God (John 1:12).
- Faith gives us God's inheritance (Acts 26:18).
- Faith leads to spiritual life (John 20:31).
- Faith frees from judgment (John 3:18; Acts 13:39).

## Conclusion

Faith in God is essential to the Christian life. It develops through truth, prayer, and experience. Tests of our faith are normal and should be expected . . . and they give us endurance and completeness. Through faith in God we can accomplish amazing things, not because of us, but because of the faithfulness of God himself.

## Reference List

Tozer, A. W. 1961. *The Knowledge of the Holy*. New York: HarperCollins.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

Proverbs 3:5

Romans 5:1

Romans 10:17

Hebrews 11:1, 6

James 1:5

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. According to the book of Hebrews, faith is
  - a) something only a born-again believer can have.
  - b) an assurance and a conviction.
  - c) a feeling of strength and peace.
2. If someone has faith in something that is weak or false, the
  - a) faith is worthless.
  - b) faith will make everything okay.
  - c) strength of the faith will make up for the weakness of the object.
3. Christians are commanded to put faith in
  - a) God only.
  - b) God and themselves only.
  - c) God, themselves, and other things.
4. Which of the following is **not** a result of faith in God?
  - a) The purification of the heart
  - b) The promise that our troubles will be few
  - c) The strengthening of our courage
5. Romans 8:1 says that because of faith in Christ Jesus
  - a) our personal efforts to be holy will be successful.
  - b) we are no longer condemned.
  - c) we are still under the law of sin and death.
6. The "heroes" in Hebrews 11 did amazing things by
  - a) believing in themselves.
  - b) trusting in one another.
  - c) placing their faith in God.
7. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego teaches us that
  - a) we are to obey, even if we are not sure God will protect us.
  - b) if we obey God, nothing will harm us.
  - c) our lives will be preserved in all situations if we have faith.

8. *Faith in God develops through all of the following EXCEPT*
  - a) *knowing truth about God's character.*
  - b) *increasing our talents and skills.*
  - c) *prayer.*
9. *God's Word teaches that faith*
  - a) *is not necessary for godly living.*
  - b) *brings peace and rest.*
  - c) *does not free us from judgment.*
10. *God tests our faith to*
  - a) *punish us for disobedience.*
  - b) *develop our endurance and make us complete.*
  - c) *prove our strength.*



## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. b (5.1)
2. a (5.1)
3. a (5.1)
4. b (5.2)
5. b (5.2)
6. c (5.2)
7. a (5.2)
8. b (5.3)
9. b (5.5)
10. b (5.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

Todd Hillard is an author and freelance writer from the Black Hills of South Dakota. He has 17 years of fulltime pastoral experience and was a missionary in Turkey for 3 years. He and his wife have five children.

## LESSON 6

---

# Your New Spiritual Home, the Church

Jason's first experience with church was in a small group. The people from the church were friendly and loving toward him, even though he did not behave as "good" as they did. But he had decided to try out the church since his new friends went there. After visiting the church several times, Jason gave his life to Christ.

Before, Jason's life had been about working and drinking alcohol on the weekends. Now, he attended church gatherings, helped put a roof on someone's house, became active in youth ministry, and discovered a growing desire to be in church. His involvement in the church helped him to grow in his new relationship with Christ. Within a year, Jason felt that God was calling him to full-time ministry, so he entered into a mentoring relationship with his pastor.

As illustrated through Jason's life, one of the most important things for all new Christians is to get involved in a local church. The church is more than just a building where meetings take place each week. It is the center of your new spiritual life, and a place where you can find people with similar focus on the things of God. Therefore, becoming involved in a church can help you in several different ways. First, it gives you the opportunity to worship God with people who have also been born again. Second, you will find people to turn to when you need help. Third, you will discover great encouragement and new knowledge about God.

Being a part of a church, however, is not just about getting something. It is also your chance to give back. You can contribute to the work of the church by offering your talents, service, and ideas. Church is more than just a place that you attend; it is a place where you can belong.

There is no substitute for being faithful to a local church. While you can certainly learn about God through television and radio ministries, it is almost impossible to become intimately involved with such distant ministry. Studying and reading the Bible on your own is important, but it is also important that you be surrounded by other people of God who can offer you encouragement, advice, and help. That is the value of belonging to a local church.

## LESSON OUTLINE

What Is the Church?

Your Role in the Church

The Role of Church Leaders

Biblical Illustrations of the Church

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Define what the church is.*
- 2: *Evaluate your role in the mission of the church.*
- 3: *Point out the responsibilities of leaders in the church.*
- 4: *Describe ways the church is illustrated in Scripture.*

### What Is the Church?

#### **Objective 1:**

*Define what the church is.*

The term *church* is used in a number of different ways. Sometimes it is used to refer to a building, as in, "I am going to the church today." Other times it is used to describe a local body of believers, as in, "The church service was very good today." And it is used to refer to

all churches everywhere, as in, “The church’s job is to evangelize the world.”

The word *church* comes from the ancient Greek word *ekklesia*, which simply means “an assembly.” As God’s people, we have been called out from the world and set apart for God. We are His *ekklesia* or assembly of people on the earth. Thus, the church really is not a building or a place at all. The original meaning of the word did not refer to a building where believers met, but to the believers themselves. The church is not a building; it is a people.

Think about it like this: if the church building burns down, does the church still exist? Of course! Because the location is not what is important. The fact that there are people of God, who have been called out from the world by the voice of the Father, and who have responded by meeting together for a common purpose, is what makes them the church.

From the moment you accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, when you renounced the sinful things of the world, you became part of the church of God on the earth. You are now a called out one. Church is really where you belong!

### Why attend church

Beth attended church when she felt like it. Some mornings, especially if she had worked late the night before, she just could not seem to get out of bed. She told herself that it was okay if she prayed and read the Bible. Eventually, though, she was neither praying nor reading her Bible, and her attendance at church became less frequent. When people from the church called or stopped by to check on her, she would be embarrassed that she had not attended church for so long. Eventually, she avoided them. What had started as a once-in-a-while habit of missing church became a pattern, and the pattern eventually became a lifestyle.

Many Christians view attending church as something optional and not a necessary part of their spiritual life.

It is very important for all Christians to be committed to a local church and to faithfully participate in its activities. Hebrews 10:25 exhorts, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." By meeting together we can encourage each other to stand firm in the faith, especially in these last days.

Jesus set the example by regularly attending worship services. Often in the gospels we see Jesus going into the synagogues, the Jewish houses of worship, to share the truth about God. Jesus' parents also found Him as a boy in the temple. Luke 2:46 tells us, "After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions." Even as a twelve-year-old child, Jesus understood the importance of being in the house of God.

Other examples of Jesus attending worship services are found in Matthew 12:9, 13:54, Mark 1:21, and 3:1. There are a number of accounts of Jesus going to worship in the Jerusalem temple, too. Worship gatherings were a regular part of Jesus' spiritual life. He did this to set an example for us.

Even after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven, the first Christians continued to make a regular practice of coming together to worship God. Acts 2:46 records: "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." The example of the first Christians is yet another reason that we should faithfully attend church.

So for these reasons—because the Bible commands us, Jesus set the example, and the apostles understood the importance of church attendance—it is crucial for us to come together to worship God. Personal times of worship are important, but they can never substitute for worshipping with people of like faith.

### What happens at church?

Throughout my travels, I have attended many churches with different styles of worship. Churches in

Nicaragua are in some ways dissimilar from churches in the United States, and still more different from churches in Europe or in Africa. But globally, all churches have certain things in common. The book of Acts, which describes how the church was formed after Jesus' return to heaven, gives some basic forms of worship that should be included in all churches.

Acts 2:42 tells us that the disciples, "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This verse lists four elements—teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer—that should be included in churches. The apostles' teaching was from the Word of God. Today, churches will have sermons where the pastor or another church member stands, explains portions of the Bible, and encourages the believers to apply the verses to their daily lives.

Fellowship is the practice of getting together with other members from the church. Some churches plan times for their members to have fun over lunch or other activities. This also happens informally as members of the church get to know one another by meeting in homes. Even more, fellowship is a deep caring for other Christians that develops as we share the love of God.

Some Christians avoid the social aspect of church, thinking that it is not spiritual. But the Bible does not separate our spiritual well-being from our social needs. We need to spend time with other Christians, and sometimes that means sitting with them for dinner or playing a game. That is part of God's purpose for the church.

"Breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper or Communion. But it also refers to the general worship of God. Worship is the act of connecting our spirits with God's Holy Spirit. We often do that through singing worship songs or by partaking of the Lord's Supper. Giving offerings to God is another form of worship practiced in most churches.

Prayer, or talking with God, is not just done privately. The early church had prayer meetings, where they would

meet in homes or in a central location and talk to God as a group. Prayer is an important part of our church services, too. When we come together, we do not just talk to each other. We also talk to God.

While each church may practice these four elements differently, the important thing is that church members have a chance to hear teaching from God's Word, spend time getting to know each other, offer worship to the Lord, and take time to speak with Him. When you attend church, expect that these things will take place.

## Your Role in the Church

### *Objective 2:*

*Evaluate your role in the mission of the church.*

Meeting together as a church is about more than simply blessing the members of the church. God never intended the church to be a place only for Christians. The mission of the church is to reach out to a lost world and tell them about God's love. Matthew 28:18–20, sometimes called the Great Commission, is the primary mandate for evangelism and discipleship.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20).

Jesus commands His followers to do four things. First, we are to go. We cannot sit in the church and wait for the return of Christ. We are to be involved in the world, to go out and find people who need to know about Jesus Christ and introduce them to Him. My local church, for instance, regularly goes to a community a few miles down the road. We hand out groceries, play music, provide games for the children, and share with them stories about what God has

done for us. This is just another way to share the good news about Jesus Christ with one's community.

Second, we are called to make disciples. A disciple is a follower of Jesus. Every Christian should be trying to make other people into disciples, too. Being a disciple is about more than praying a prayer to ask Jesus to be a part of a person's life. It is a long-term commitment to help others on their spiritual journey. We should all have people who are helping us grow closer to Christ, and we should all be helping other people grow closer to Christ. Remember Jason, whom we introduced at the beginning of this chapter? He is an example of a disciple. His commitment to Christ and the ministry helped other youths in their spiritual journey. Just as he was growing in Christ, he was helping them to grow as well.

In 2 Timothy 2:2, the apostle Paul tells his co-laborer Timothy, "The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Discipleship is about being trained so that we can train others.

Besides making disciples, we are also called to baptize. Water baptism is a practice of the local church. It is a public statement that a person has made a decision to give his or her life entirely to Christ. Every Christian should be baptized in water as soon as possible after committing his or her life to the Lord.

Finally, we are called to teach people to obey the commands of Christ. We do this not only through our words, but also by our example. We must be models of what it means to obey Christ. Hence, the mission of the church is to reach the lost, disciple, and baptize them. This is your mission, too, as a member of the church. God can use your abilities to help the church fulfill its mission on earth.



## The Role of Church Leaders

### *Objective 3:*

*Point out the responsibilities of leaders in the church.*

Since the mission of the church is to reach the lost, all Christians ought to be ministers in the sense of personal evangelism and discipleship. However, in the church there are leaders who take responsibility for organizing the work and helping motivate people to accomplish the mission. The most visible leader in the church is the pastor.

### Pastors

The title *pastor* comes from the Greek word meaning “shepherd.” Like shepherds, pastors are to take care of the flock of God. First Peter 5:2 tells pastors, “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve.” In other biblical passages, pastors are referred to as elders (1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1). Pastors or elders have many duties: 1) leading and overseeing the church; 2) caring for the spiritual needs of the church; 3) praying for the sick and needy; 3) counseling; 4) being an example; and 5) preaching and teaching. The goal is to share God’s Word clearly so that people can apply it to their lives.

Our responsibility to pastors or elders is also stipulated in Scripture. Hebrews 13:17 tells us, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” The Bible also instructs us to pray for the leaders of the church, and to support them in every way that we can.

### Deacons

Besides pastors, deacons are the other main leadership role within the church. Acts 6:3 records the first use of deacons in the church. Deacons usually

oversee various operational aspects of the church in order to give the pastor time to focus on spiritual leadership. The Bible is clear that deacons must be individuals of the highest integrity and must have a clear grasp of biblical truth. Their lives must be worthy of respect (1 Timothy 3:8–13).

## Biblical Illustrations of the Church

### *Objective 4:*

*Describe ways the church is illustrated in Scripture.*

### The Church as a Human Body

The Bible describes the church in several different ways. One common description of the church is that it functions like the human body. The Bible refers to the church as the “body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Other Scriptures refer to Christ as the head of the body, the church (see Ephesians 1:23, 4:15 and Colossians 1:18).

Literally speaking, the head guides and controls the body. The human body does nothing without the head’s approval and involvement. Even the heart beat and breathing are controlled by parts of the head. In a similar way, as head of the church, Christ guides and controls the church. The church should not do anything without Christ’s permission and leading.

There are a number of other ways that the church resembles the human body. First Corinthians 12:12 says, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.” As members of the body of Christ, we all have different functions and abilities. But we need one another to function efficiently.

Failure to work together will jeopardize our God-given mission. Therefore, Paul admonishes, “There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). Each member of the body

of Christ must do his or her part to maintain the strength of this relationship and accomplish God's mission.

### The Church as Bride

The Bible also describes the church as the bride of Christ, a pure bride (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:26–27; Revelation 19:7). Paul earlier noted, “The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:23–24). Scripture indicates that the marital relationship between a man and a woman is intended to reflect Christ's relationship with the church. Hence, the husband is to be the head of the household, just as Christ is the head of the church.

This does not mean that husbands should lord their position over their wives. Instead, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25). Christ sacrificed everything for His church. That same sacrificial love should be displayed in marriage relationships. If husbands love their wives the way that Christ loves the church, then it would be easy for wives to submit to that love.

### The Church as a Family

Another illustration of the church is as a family. The church should be an environment where people belong, where they relate and work together in love and peace. Paul exhorts, “I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought” (1 Corinthians 1:10). It can be difficult to live without divisions in the church, but as we submit to the Spirit of God, He makes it possible.

The basis for our unity is love for each other. First John 3:11 says, “We should love one another.” That means we have to learn to get along with other members of the church. We must pray for, care for, and be willing to sacrifice for each other. We cannot give up on others

or be negative towards them. John 13:35 insists that the world will know we are disciples of Jesus by our love for each other. We must love each other as Christ loves us.

This love includes forgiving each other. Ephesians 4:32 reads, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Since God has forgiven us, our responsibility is to forgive others of everything. This means that we have to move beyond being offended and must demonstrate grace toward each other. We should not keep track of how often people have wronged us, but should lay down our rights for the sake of keeping peace in the family of God.

Finally, the family of God ought to be generous. "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10). We must look for ways to help other people, to share with them, and to bless them. We must think of others before thinking of ourselves. This is the heart of what it means to be God's family, the church.

## Conclusion

Belonging to a church is about much more than weekly attendance to hear a sermon. Being part of the church requires working with other believers to accomplish God's mission on earth. If you do not belong to a local church, begin this week by finding a place where you can faithfully attend and contribute your gifting. If you already belong to a church, consider whether you are offering yourself and your abilities to the church as God intends. Ask God to show you where you should be involved. As you do this, you will find yourself growing deeper in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE VERSES TO MEMORIZE

Matthew 28:19–20

Acts 2:42

1 Corinthians 12:12

Galatians 6:10

Ephesians 4:32

1 Timothy 2:1

Hebrews 10:25

Hebrews 13:17

1 John 3:11

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *The word church comes from an ancient Greek word that means*
  - a) *an assembly.*
  - b) *house of God.*
  - c) *group of believers.*
2. *Which of these is the correct attitude about church attendance?*
  - a) *Attending church is unnecessary since all believers will go to heaven.*
  - b) *Believers should want to attend church to grow closer to God.*
  - c) *Church attendance is required in order to get into heaven.*
3. *What was Jesus' attitude toward attending worship gatherings?*
  - a) *Jesus rarely attended worship gatherings because He knew they were unnecessary.*
  - b) *Jesus regularly attended worship gatherings, setting the example for us.*
  - c) *Jesus said that we could not get to heaven without attending church.*
4. *Which book of the Bible describes the habits and worship practices of the first church?*
  - a) *Acts*
  - b) *Matthew*
  - c) *Revelation*
5. *Which of these is not one of the things the Bible mentions as happening in all church worship services?*
  - a) *Eating full meals*
  - b) *Preaching*
  - c) *Prayer*

6. *What is the primary mission of the church?*
  - a) *To reach the lost, baptize and disciple them*
  - b) *To please members by creating a comfortable family atmosphere*
  - c) *To meet together regularly to encourage each other to stay faithful to Christ*
7. *The Greek word for "shepherd" is used for which church leader?*
  - a) *Deacon*
  - b) *Elder*
  - c) *Pastor*
8. *Who is the head of the church?*
  - a) *Elders*
  - b) *Jesus*
  - c) *The pastor*
9. *In Scripture, the church is **not** depicted as a*
  - a) *bride.*
  - b) *husband.*
  - c) *body.*
10. *How will the world know that we are disciples of Jesus?*
  - a) *Because we attend church*
  - b) *Through our good deeds*
  - c) *By our love for each other*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *a* (6.1)
2. *b* (6.1)
3. *b* (6.1)
4. *a* (6.1)
5. *a* (6.1)
6. *a* (6.2)
7. *c* (6.3)
8. *b* (6.4)
9. *b* (6.4)
10. *c* (6.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 7

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# The Heart of Worship

The term *worship* defies a simple, one-size-fits-all definition. While some people limit worship to the song service at church on Sunday mornings, worship far exceeds a slot on a program. Arthur Rouner (1968) writes,

In the life of the Christian church nothing is more important, in any age or at any time, than the life of its people at worship. If the church is irrelevant and meaningless here, it will be irrelevant and meaningless in the world. If it is exciting and victorious here, it will be exciting and victorious in the world. Charge the church to be active and influential in social causes, yes. Spur it on to activity in every area of life, by all means. But neglect its mission and its ministry here, and it will die. It will be a dead institution with nothing to say anywhere to anyone.

It has been said that worship is to the spirit and soul what exercise is to the body. We were created to worship God. Worship is the normal employment of moral beings.

## LESSON OUTLINE

What Worship Is  
Service and Worship  
Worship and Sacrifice  
Hindrances to Worship

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain what worship involves.*
- 2: *Identify ways our service to God is true worship.*
- 3: *Indicate the connection between worship and sacrifice.*
- 4: *Point out five hindrances to worship.*

## What Worship Is

### **Objective 1:**

*Explain what worship involves.*

There are several Greek words which are translated as “worship” in English. One of those words is *proskuneo*. *Proskuneo* is used sixty times in the New Testament; it means “to adore, to give reverence to.” This is the word Jesus used when He said to the woman at the well, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship [adore, give reverence to God] in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). As believers, the object of our spiritual worship is, of course, God.

An epitaph was found in an animal cemetery outside Hartsdale, New York. This epitaph for a dog read, “To the memory of Bruce, the devoted servant, faithful friend, warm admirer, and ardent worshipper of his master” (Gibbs 1950, 63). How does a dog worship his master? He wags his tail, licks the hand of the owner, and maybe sits

in his master's lap. The dog simply enjoys the company of the master. In fact, the dog may sit still for some time expecting nothing in return other than an occasional pat on the head or a scratch behind the ears. In some way, true and heartfelt worship is similar. Our worship of God is a more sophisticated demonstration of such love.

King David is a wonderful example of a true worshipper of God. His devotion to and dependence upon God showed that God was the grand love object of his life. David notes in Psalm 116:1–2, “I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.” Look also at David's words in Psalm 63:1–8.

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land where there is no  
water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and  
beheld your power and your glory. Because  
your love is better than life, my lips will glorify  
you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in  
your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will  
be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with  
singing lips my mouth will praise you. On my  
bed I remember you; I think of you through  
the watches of the night. Because you are my  
help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. My  
soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

### To worship you must know God

There are several lessons to be learned from this passage. First, David testifies of his relationship with the Lord. The psalm is very personal; it contains the words I, my, and me some twenty times. Hence, God was personal to the writer. God was not some vague, mystical thing. He was David's friend, David's God. And David was not ashamed of Him! God was the center and focus of David's life.

Elsewhere David says, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). And later, “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth

has nothing I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25). David's other desires were nothing compared to the Lord. David wanted God perhaps as much as God wanted David.

Now, what were the circumstances that surrounded David as he wrote this psalm? The background to this psalm is that David was hiding in the wilderness of Judah. He was probably fleeing from the armies of his own rebellious son Absalom. Although he was king, his enemies were seeking to overthrow and kill him. He had been driven from Jerusalem, the capital city, and was hiding in caves. But even though there was desert all around him, the desert had not touched his heart. David did not quit worshipping God, nor did he question God's love. David loved and trusted God in spite of his circumstances.

### To worship you must be willing to praise

David praised God incessantly. In verse 3, he glorifies the Lord. In verses 4, 5, and 11, he praises the Lord. His commitment is summarized in verse 4, "I will praise you as long as I live." David loved the Lord, and this love gave breath to his worship. Thus, worship was an integral part of David's lifestyle. Using the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how, the chart below highlights David's worship of God.

|                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Whom</b> did David praise? | God  |
| <b>What</b> did David do?     | He praised and worshipped.   |
| <b>When</b> did he praise?    | Continually. He seemed to enjoy worship during the stillness of the night and the early hours of the morning.  |
| <b>Where</b> did he praise?   | Anywhere. He could worship in a desert or in his bed.  |
| <b>Why</b> did he praise?     | Because the One True God was His God. He worshipped because he had experienced the Lord in power and glory. He knew that God was faithful and trustworthy. |
| <b>How</b> did he praise?     | With his entire being: with uplifted hands, joyful lips, and his whole heart   |

Included in praise and worship is the idea of magnifying the Lord. Psalm 34:3 urges us, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together" (KJV). To magnify is to make larger. When one looks through a magnifying glass, the object under observation does not actually become larger; it only appears larger. Thus, the magnifying glass simply increases one's perception of the object under scrutiny.

Similarly, when the psalmist urges us to magnify God, we are encouraged to enlarge our perception of God. Essentially, God does not change, for He cannot change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). But as we draw near to Him in praise and worship, our understanding of Him is enhanced, magnified.

In Psalm 34, David received an added benefit: God answered his prayer (vv. 4, 15), provided for his needs (vv. 9–10), delivered him from trouble (v. 17), and protected him from danger (v. 7). David did not boast about his own cleverness or skill; he simply magnified the Lord.

Below is an excerpt of the timeless song "How Great Thou Art." This hymn illustrates one writer's magnifying the Lord:

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
 Consider all the worlds Thy hands have made,  
 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
 Thy pow'r thro'-out the universe displayed.  
 Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee:  
 How great Thou art, how great Thou art!  
 Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee:  
 How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

## Service and Worship

### *Objective 2:*

*Identify ways our service to God is true worship.*

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, worship and service are closely connected. Matthew 4:10 quotes Jesus saying, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God,

and serve him only.'" One of the words translated *worship* in the New Testament is *latreuō*. The word means "to minister or to serve." It also means "to worship".

Later, Romans 12:1 says, "So here's what I want you to do, with God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him" (The Message). The New International Version of the Bible concludes this passage by saying, "this is your spiritual act of worship." So what is your spiritual act of worship? It is presenting your whole life to God in service. Colossians 3:23 reminds us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men."

Consider many of the people the Bible mentions worshipping God—Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, Abraham, Moses, David, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Daniel, Mary the mother of Jesus, and the three wise men. These and other worshippers prayed, acted in faith, proclaimed the Gospel, bowed before God, fixed a meal, took off their shoes in reverence of God's presence, and even prepared for war. None of these people worshipped in a church building as we know it. They did not listen to a sermon or sing a song from a projection on the wall. Instead, these true worshippers understood that what we are, and what we do, individually and daily, is more important than what happens in church some ninety minutes a week.

R. T. Kendall (1989) writes, "I believe that every Christian has one fundamental calling and one primary duty—a duty which is also a delight. We are called, by the way we live and in all we do, to worship God. This is a full-time activity, not only here on earth, but in heaven, too" (15). Russell Shedd says, "The New Testament projects a vision of worship that infuses ALL OF LIFE with the presence and glory of God." Hence, God is not as much interested in the activities of worship as He is in the actions of life. It is our life actions, our Christian service, that Paul said results in the spiritual act of worship.

Sammy Tippit (1989, 118–119) shares a delightful story:

Several years ago I spoke at a Christian university about the necessity of spiritual awakening in this generation. I had many precious times of worship during the week. The more I worshiped Jesus Christ, the more I felt a great burden to tell others about Him. I asked God for an opportunity to tell someone of His great love. When I boarded the plane to fly home, I was seated next to a lady with a screaming baby. As the plane took off, the baby screamed louder and louder. As the baby screamed, the mother became very frustrated. Tension began to mount in my heart. I thought, “Oh, no. I’m going to have to listen to this screaming baby for the entire trip.”

As I looked at the situation, peace fled from my heart. But then the Holy Spirit began to convict me of my wrong attitude. He turned my focus to Jesus. I began to silently worship Him. The Spirit of God brought to my remembrance that Jesus is the King who became a Servant. I was faced with this question: What would Jesus do if He were here? I realized that Jesus would serve that lady. I asked her if I could play with the baby. Immediately she said, “Please do.”

I made funny faces, acted silly, and talked baby talk. I laughed as I thought to myself, “Is this what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit?” Finally the baby calmed down and fell asleep. The lady thanked me for assisting her and then began to ask me many questions. I shared Christ with her. As I was speaking to her she began to weep. Her husband was a medical doctor, and neither of them were Christians. Her mother-in-law had become a Christian just a few weeks prior to our meeting. The mother-in-law told her son and daughter-in-law



about Jesus. However, because she was a new Christian she felt inadequate. She told them, "I'm going to pray that God will send someone to you to explain His salvation more fully."

There I sat on that airplane as an answer to that mother's prayer. Yet I could have missed the opportunity. The choice was mine. I could have endured a plane ride next to a screaming baby. Or I could worship Jesus and unlock the door of difficulty with the key of peace.

When Tippit took that child from the mother, in obedience to what he felt the Lord would have him do, that mundane act rose up to sublimity and was transformed into worship. The Bible tells us that we should worship God continually (Psalm 105:4). God wants to be more than just an appointment on our calendars; He wants to be a part of the minutes and seconds of our everyday existence.

Let us look at one more example. Abraham learned how to both serve and worship. Genesis 18:2 says, "Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground." We know from further reading that two of these men were angels and the third one was the Lord. Several things stand out as to Abraham's treatment of these special guests:

- First, note the speed with which he moved. Five times the Scriptures record that 99-year-old Abraham ran or hurried.
- Second, the Bible emphasizes the quality of Abraham's hospitality. He personally picked out the best calf, ordered the finest flour for the bread, and brought some curds and milk. In all, the flour alone would have possibly weighed as much as 56 pounds. He prepared an extravagant feast for his guests.
- He honored them. When they walked up, he bowed in sincere homage. This mode of salutation was reserved for kings, princes, and those believed to be deity.

- Abraham wanted to serve rather than be served. While his guests enjoyed the banquet, Abraham simply stood by under the cool branches of a nearby tree and watched. Rather than eat, he watched for the slightest need or request. His delight was to give undivided attention to these heavenly visitors.

At any moment the Lord could have interrupted this aged host and created bread and meat to feed a multitude. Why didn't He? God simply allowed His servant to serve Him. Abraham's actions reveal pure and undefiled worship.

Louie Giglio writes, "Worship is our response, both personal and corporate, to God for who He is and what He has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live" (as quoted in Muchow 2006, 46).

## Worship and Sacrifice

### *Objective 3:*

*Indicate the connection between worship and sacrifice.*

Worship involves giving to the Lord. Early in his career, Matt Redman, the popular Christian musician in Britain, was singing with his church's praise band. The band was successful, and it was at this point that the group's pastor decided on a drastic course of action. Let us see how Matt Redman tells this story.

Pastor decided he'd strip everything away for a season, just to see where our hearts were. So the very next Sunday when we turned up at church, there was no sound system to be seen, and no band to lead us. The new approach was simple—we weren't going to lean so hard on those outward things any more. Pastor would say, "When you come through the doors of the church on Sunday, what are you bringing as your offering to God? What are you going to sacrifice today?" If I'm honest, at first I was pretty offended by the whole thing. The worship was my job! But as God softened my heart, I started to see His wisdom all over these actions. At first the meetings were a bit awkward: there were long

periods of silence, and there wasn't too much singing going on. But we soon began to learn how to bring heart offerings to God without any of the external trappings we'd grown used to. Stripping everything away, we slowly started to rediscover the heart of worship. After a while, the worship band and the sound system reappeared, but now it was different. The songs of our hearts had caught up with the songs of our lips.

Out of this season, I reflected on where we had come to as a church, and wrote this song:

## HEART OF WORSHIP

When the music fades  
All is stripped away  
And I simply come  
Longing just to bring  
Something that's of worth  
That will bless Your heart

I bring you more than a song  
For a song in itself  
Is not what you have required  
You search much deeper within  
Through the way things appear  
You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship  
And it's all about you  
It's all about you, Jesus  
I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about you  
It's all about you, Jesus

King of endless worth  
No one could express  
How much you deserve  
Though I'm weak and poor  
All I have is yours

Every single breath (Redman 2001)

Redman had truly tapped into the heart of worship. He had come to appreciate that worship is meant to include something that we offer to God; something of worth to Him; something that will bless His heart.

Let us now look at one of the purest examples of giving/worship in the Bible. John 12:1–8 says,

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus. It seems that our Lord often visited there. Bethany was also about two miles from where Jesus' enemies were plotting to kill Him. In fact, they would be successful in their quest in less than 144 hours from this point in time. The account captured here in these eight verses sets in motion the concluding events of our Lord's life. Mary's actions serve as a finger pointing to the looming Cross. The purpose of His visit is seen in verse two: a dinner in Jesus' honor.

Let us look at the guest list. At least 17 people were present for the party. The twelve disciples were there, and Lazarus was there. This resurrected Lazarus was one of Jesus' dearest friends. We also know that Martha was on the guest register. In fact, the party may have been Mary and Martha's way of saying thank you to the Lord for giving Lazarus back his life. Furthermore, according to Matthew and Mark, Simon the Leper was hosting the party (Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3). There were at least nine different Simons in the Bible. This one though had the peculiar nickname "The Leper." Why? We cannot be sure. However, we do know that he was not a leper here in John 12. Were he a leper there, no one would have been able to eat with him, fellowship with him, or touch him. It is thought that he had been afflicted with leprosy at one time, but Jesus had healed him.

A number of Marys are listed in the Word of God. As Simon was nicknamed "The Leper," so this particular Mary could have been nicknamed The Worshipper. Each of the three times that we see her in the Bible, she sits at Jesus' feet in worship! Because Mary's brother and sister are mentioned but never a husband, she may well have been single. Nonetheless, we have no reason to believe that her relationship with Jesus was romantic. There is never an indication of sensuality in the relationship. Rather, we see in her pure, worshipful, adoring love—the love found between a woman and her Savior, a lady and her Lord.

So Mary is overcome with a desire to express her adoration of Jesus; her worship of Him demands sacrifice. John writes, "Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume" (John 12:3). A flask of fragrance would normally contain not more than an ounce; however, Mary's held perhaps as much as 12 ounces. It had, no doubt, been imported from afar, probably India. This fragrant gift could have represented her life savings.

It was the custom of that day to pour a few drops of perfume on a guest whenever he or she arrived at a house and/or when the guest would recline to eat a meal. Likewise, when guests prepared to eat a meal, servants customarily washed the guests' feet and dried them with towels. Since the people then wore shoes akin to our sandals today and there were no paved roads, feet-washing was a very acceptable and appreciated practice. Mary knew of these traditions and knew that this situation demanded much more than the customary. She poured her valuable perfume on the Lord. Mary did not offer just a few drops of perfume; instead, she poured at least a pint of perfume unto her Lord.

Mary demonstrated that true love manifests itself with a certain extravagance. It will not seek to get by as cheaply as possible; rather, it will be reckless at times in its generosity. In looking at our Lord's life, one cannot help but notice that people were drawn to Him for a variety of reasons. Some were simply curious, and others wanted their physical needs met. Mary could not be found in either of these groups. She sought Jesus only to worship Him.

Mary expressed her love and worship to Jesus in a way that has been captured for the ages. As a result of her act of devotion, the whole house was filled with the fragrance of her sacrifice. Matthew 26:13 adds, "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

## Hindrances to Worship

### *Objective 4:*

*Point out five hindrances to worship.*

Let us begin this section by reading Matthew 15:1–9:

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked,  
"Why do your disciples break the tradition

of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!" Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.'"

Jesus' life was divided into three segments: The first year of His ministry was the year of popularity; the second, the year of opposition; and the third, the year of His death. In Matthew 15, Jesus was in the third year of His ministry. His popularity had peaked and was on the decline. The Pharisees were out to destroy Him. Note that the Pharisees were the do-gooders of their day; they were religious leaders. As teachers of the law, they knew the Scriptures well, and they knew about worship. Nevertheless, they got off-track. Let us examine five aspects of the Pharisees' lifestyle that became hindrances to their worship.

## Tradition

First, the worship of the Pharisees was based on tradition. Mark 7:1–5 reads,

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were "unclean," that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to

the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with 'unclean' hands?"

On three different occasions in this passage, the text alludes to the unwritten laws of the Pharisees. Elsewhere, Jesus called these laws "rules taught by men" (Matthew 15:9) or traditions. The traditions were in actuality the Hebrew oral law that had been passed on from one rabbi to another for hundreds of years. These laws consisted of some 613 commandments. In the sixth century AD, all of these oral laws were compiled into what is now called the Talmud. Over time, these laws or traditions evolved into the very equivalent of Scripture.

In the case of the washing of hands, there is not one verse in the Old Testament where God commands a person to wash his or her hands before eating. Therefore, the Pharisees' charge was not based on God's instruction; it was based on the oral traditions of the elders.

So what does all of this have to do with worship? Actually, a great deal. Jesus was upset with the Pharisees because they had substituted their traditions for godly worship. These religious leaders would not worship unless everything was just right. This exaggeration of the importance of traditions and man-made rules led to the Lord's rebuke in Matthew 15:9, "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

For us, the lesson is that we must get to the place where even if we were stranded on a deserted island without any of our religious trappings, we could still worship God and enjoy His rich presence. Our traditions



must never become the focus of our worship. The focus of our worship must ever be God and God alone!

### Location

Second, in John 4 is the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Read what she says to Jesus: “‘Sir...I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem’” (John 4:19–20). Jesus corrected her: “‘Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem’” (v. 21).

As a Samaritan, she had been brought up to despise Jerusalem and to regard Mount Gerizim as the most sacred place in the world. The Jews in return belittled Mount Gerizim. Jesus, however, told the Samaritan woman that the day of such man-made rivalries would end. Jesus further said, “A time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks” (John 4:23). Jesus said that the time had already come for a change in the nature of worship! Therefore, we must not become consumed with minutia such as worshipping in a certain church, a specific place, or a particular outfit. God is most concerned about sincere worship.

### Narrowness

Third, the worship of the Pharisees was narrow. In John 9, Jesus heals a blind man, to which the Pharisees’ responded, “‘This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath’” (v. 16). Instead of worshipping the Lord for the incredible healing performed, their narrow thinking caused their focus to be shifted to whether it was proper to heal on the Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest. They had missed the big picture!

Through the years, I have heard people give all sorts of reasons for not worshipping at church: the music was too loud; they did not like a particular person in the service, they did not approve someone else’s clothes;

they had other things on their mind like sports, chores, or other domestic issues. However, to worship God, we must discipline ourselves to look past the distractions of minor issues to the fact that God is present and is seeking diligent worshippers. Our gracious heavenly Father is still setting people free. We must not let our narrowness blind us to His mighty deeds!

### Wrong focus

Fourth, the Pharisees put people before God. In Matthew 15:2, the Pharisees confront Jesus: "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?" Evidently for the Pharisees, the teachings of the elders were more important than the words of Almighty God. The Pharisees' religious activity had become automatic, artificial, and nothing more than an act. It was not worship. Their singing, preaching, and liturgy were not worship. They drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.

Although those who started these traditions may have been learned men with good intentions, they were only men. Whenever the teachings and opinions of humans replace the words of Almighty God, the sin of people-worship or idolatry occurs. Idolatry was and still is a grave sin against the Holy God.

### Not from the heart

Fifth, the Pharisees' worship was in word only. They said the right things, yet Jesus said of them, "Frauds! Isaiah's prophecy of you hit the bull's-eye: These people make a big show of saying the right thing, but their heart isn't in it" (Matthew 15:7–8 The Message).

Today, we too must be careful lest we fall under the same condemnation. While our prayers may be articulate, the music uplifting, and our sermons theologically sound, these would all be meaningless if our hearts are not poised in worship to God. Worship is designed by God to help in the process of making the worshipper more like the One who is worshipped—God Almighty, the eternal Lord.

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## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

Psalm 34:3

Psalm 42:1

Matthew 4:10

John 4:24

Romans 12:1–2

Colossians 3:23

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *Which sentence is false?*
  - a) *Worship is magnifying God.*
  - b) *Worship is merely a human tradition.*
  - c) *Worship is service to God.*
2. *Worship is meant to be*
  - a) *a lifestyle.*
  - b) *confined to a particular place.*
  - c) *a part of our religious duty.*
3. *An example of a true worshipper of God is*
  - a) *Judas Iscariot.*
  - b) *Cain.*
  - c) *King David.*
4. *David's experiences with God were*
  - a) *vague and impersonal.*
  - b) *distant and non-existent.*
  - c) *personal and intimate.*
5. *Worship is designed by God to help in the process of making the worshipper more like the One worshipped.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*
6. *Mary's act of worship involved a gift that was equal in worth to*
  - a) *thirty pieces of silver.*
  - b) *a year's salary.*
  - c) *ten talents.*
7. *A true statement about love is that it*
  - a) *is self-centered.*
  - b) *does not require sacrifice.*
  - c) *manifests itself with a certain extravagance.*
8. *The oral law of the Jews contained how many commandments?*
  - a) *7*
  - b) *10*
  - c) *613*

9. Which is not a hindrance to worshipping God?
  - a) Love for God
  - b) Tradition
  - c) Wrong focus
10. Worship is
  - a) the believer's highest occupation.
  - b) not important to God.
  - c) tied only to the Old Testament.

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *b* (7.1)
2. *a* (7.2)
3. *c* (7.2)
4. *c* (7.1)
5. *a* (7.4)
6. *b* (7.3)
7. *c* (7.3)
8. *c* (7.4)
9. *a* (7.4)
10. *a* (7.1)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 8

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# Getting to Know the Holy Spirit

Getting to know the Holy Spirit is a lifelong journey that will include a great deal of direct learning, experience, and observation. The aim of this lesson is to introduce you to some of the activities the Holy Spirit mentioned in Scripture as well as provide a means to recognize His work in your life.

The Lord manifests himself in and through believers by the Holy Spirit. In one of Jesus' last discourses with the disciples, He told them, "'I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you'" (John 16:12–14).

If we are to experience God's manifestation in our own lives, we must get to know the Holy Spirit personally. How can we do this? Let us look at three prerequisites:

1. First, we need to be with Jesus (Mark 3:13–15). We are called to be His disciples. This means learning the Word of God, spending time with Christ in prayer, and meditating upon His life and works. Jesus and the Father are the ones who sent the Spirit (John 14:16, 26).
2. Second, we must build our lives specifically upon the things Christ taught since this is the substance of the Holy Spirit's revelation to us (Matthew 7:24–27).
3. Third, we should observe how the Spirit works in other people. Much can be gained by considering the experiences of others. We would do well to read the writings of Spirit-filled Christians, from



the apostles of the early church to contemporary men and women of God. And when we come into contact with differing views on the Holy Spirit, we evaluate them in light of Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

## LESSON OUTLINE

The Holy Spirit in Creation and Spiritual Formation  
 Characteristics of the Holy Spirit's Ministry  
 The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus Christ  
 God the Holy Spirit

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Explain how the Holy Spirit's work in physical creation relates to His work in spiritual formation.*
- 2: *Compare the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and the New Testament.*
- 3: *Indicate the Holy Spirit's leading in Jesus' life.*
- 4: *Explain why the Holy Spirit is God.*

### The Holy Spirit in Creation and Spiritual Formation

#### **Objective 1:**

*Explain how the Holy Spirit's work in physical creation relates to His work in spiritual formation.*

#### The Holy Spirit in physical creation

In the very first passage of Scripture we encounter the Holy Spirit. Genesis 1:1–2 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the

earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The Holy Spirit waits for God the Father to speak. His word will initiate the Spirit's work in crafting the heavens and earth for God's glory and man's well-being. God's awesome, artistic imagination will be painted on a formless, empty, dark canvas. After six days, the canvas is completely covered. God's thoughts and words have become material existence as the Spirit gives them substance.

Note the pattern God uses in Genesis 1 to accomplish His purpose in creation. On the first two days, God *separates* light from darkness (vv. 4–5) and the waters (vv. 6–8). On the third day, He *gathers* the water under the sky and distinguishes it from dry ground (vv. 9–10). Then God *produces* vegetation (vv. 11–13). On day four, He again *separates* day and night (vv. 14–19) and sets the sun, moon, and stars in place to govern the day and night. On the fifth day, He *fills* the sea and sky with living creatures (vv. 20–23). On the sixth day, He calls the land to *produce* living creatures to move along the ground (vv. 24–25), and He also creates humankind (vv. 26–31). In looking at the pattern, you may notice that days 4–6 almost mirror days 1–3:

Days 1–3 (Separates, Gathers, and Produces)

Days 4–6 (Separates, Fills, and Produces)

The differences lie in the degree of separating and producing and the particulars of each day.

If we look closely, we can see that this pattern was not just used at creation; it is also followed in the spiritual formation of believers. The following chart shows how the Holy Spirit's work in physical creation connects to His work in the spiritual formation of Christians.

## The Holy Spirit in Physical Creation and Spiritual Formation

| Genesis 1          |   | Genesis 2                 | The Disciples | Believers Today                    |
|--------------------|---|---------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| "Hovers" (1:2)     |   |                           | John 1:48     | John 16:8–11                       |
| Formlessness (1–2) | → | Fashions [us] (6–10)      | Mark 1:17     | Romans 12:2<br>Galatians 4:19      |
| Emptiness (1–2)    | → | Fills [us] (11–13, 20–25) | Acts 2:1–4    | Romans 5:5, 8:16<br>Galatians 4:6  |
| Darkness (1–2)     | → | Floods [us] (3–5, 14–19)  | Luke 24:45    | 2 Corinthians 4:6<br>Ephesians 5:8 |

The work of creation is to fashion the formless earth, fill it to remove its barrenness, and flood it with light to reflect God's nature (1 John 1:5).

### The Holy Spirit at Work in Jesus' Disciples

John 1:47–49 is another example of the Holy Spirit's miraculous hovering. Jesus shares prophetic foreknowledge by referring to an incident that had recently taken place in Nathanael's life about which he thought no one knew. This leads Nathanael to affirm his trust in Christ.

In Mark 1:17, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew to follow Him. This call initiates Jesus' transformational ministry in their lives. Neither of them will be the same as God fashions them not only into disciples but also into apostles, who take the message of the kingdom of God everywhere they go.

In Acts 2, the believers gathered in the upper room are filled with the Holy Spirit. This marks the beginning of their becoming *fishers of men*. The rest of Acts chronicles the ministry of the apostles and the church as the church is empowered by God to do the works of Jesus (John 15:16).

In Luke 24:45, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand the Scriptures, and He floods them with the light of revelation. Jesus makes it clear that it is possible to know God's Word and not know the One to whom it points (John 5:37–40).

## The Holy Spirit in Believers today

Formlessness, emptiness, and darkness are words that could be used to describe the spiritual condition of all unsaved people. Yet, the testimony of John 16:8–11 is that the Holy Spirit is very near lost people, seeking to create an awareness of His conviction in their lives.

While it is natural for us to conform to the ways of this world (Romans 12:2), God desires us to be transformed according to His pattern for spiritual growth. The principles from Genesis 1 and 2 apply here. The *separating* refers to God's call for us to come out of the world (2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1) and into deeper levels of sanctification (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). *Gathering* refers to our need to be with Jesus (John 15:1–8) and to our receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38–39; Ephesians 5:17–18). *Producing* refers to God's work in us to bring forth fruit (Galatians 5:16–25) and His entrusting us with ministry to others (2 Timothy 2:1–2).

Our being filled with God's Spirit confirms to us that we are His children (Galatians 4:6), whom He loves (Romans 5:5) and empowers (Acts 1:8). Our emptiness is simply an opportunity to draw closer to Him (Matthew 5:6). Then can God flood us with the gospel by making "his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). We can rely on the Holy Spirit.

## **Characteristics of the Holy Spirit's Ministry**

### *Objective 2:*

*Compare the Holy Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and the New Testament.*

## The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments

Because this subject is so extensive, we will focus on the primary difference of the Holy Spirit's activities in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. The following chart gives a comparative analysis from five different vantage points. Two words sum up the Spirit's work in

both testaments: anointing (Old Testament) and filling (New Testament). Our ability to help others experience the power and presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives depends a great deal on appreciating the difference between these two terms.

|                              | OLD TESTAMENT<br><i>Anointing</i>  | NEW TESTAMENT<br><i>Filling</i>   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>The Spirit's Presence</b> | A "hope" that all could experience (Numbers 11:29); Priests ancestral lineage (Exodus 40:15) | All can receive the Spirit (Acts 2:17). From "some" to "all" (Ephesians 5:18)                                     |
| <b>Terminology</b>           | Bestow, Place upon, Come down, Fall on, Rest on<br>(1 Samuel 10:6, 10)<br>- <i>External</i>  | In addition to the Old Testament terms: Baptize, Fill, Receive. From "on" to "in" (Acts 2:4)<br>- <i>Internal</i> |
| <b>Orientation</b>           | Tasks, in the sense of duties or work (Exodus 31:2); Prophecy (Numbers 24:2)                 | Relationship (Romans 8:16); Prayer (Jude 20); Praise (Ephesians 5:20)   |
| <b>Limitation</b>            | Occasional (Numbers 11:25)   | Continual (John 3:34; 14:16)  |
| <b>Depiction</b>             | Rain (Isaiah 44:3) – "coming down on us," "falling on us," "poured on us"                    | Spring-fed well (John 4:14), or River (John 7:37–39) – "coming out of us"   |

The terms *anoint*/*anointing* occur approximately 120 times in the Old Testament. Literally, the word means to "rub on" or "apply" or "touch." The meaning corresponds to the ministry of the priests in the Tabernacle (Leviticus 21:10), the ordaining of a prophet (Jeremiah 1:5) or king (1 Samuel 16:1). This conveys the idea of God endowing or bestowing (Isaiah 61:1–3) spiritual power or insight to people.

In the New Testament, there are nine references to anointing. Four of these refer to Jesus (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Hebrews 1:9). The remaining five refer to the Holy Spirit in believers (2 Corinthians 1:21–22; 1 John 2:20, 27). The meaning of *anointing* from the Old Testament is absorbed into the New Testament meaning of *filling*. We have moved from "Immanuel, God *with* us" (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) to "the hope of glory, Christ

*in us*" (Colossians 1:27; John 14:17). In the paragraphs below, we will discuss the chart in more detail.

### God's Presence

As the chart indicates, the Spirit's presence in the Old Testament was restricted. Moses' disappointment about this must have been shared by other leaders before the time of Christ. It was not until the day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit would be released to abide in believers (John 7:37–39).

### Terminology

The language used in the Old Testament shows that the Spirit was a part of God's work beyond creation. The language also indicates that the Spirit was not permanently given to any person. An examination of all the verses in the Old Testament indicates that the Spirit was never *in* a person in the sense of abiding permanently. However, the wording in the New Testament gives an entirely different picture of our being baptized (immersed) and filled with the Holy Spirit. He is not only "on" us but, more importantly, "in" us.

### Orientation

In the Old Testament, the Spirit moves upon people primarily for them to prophesy (Numbers 11:25–29; 24:2–3; 1 Samuel 10:6, 10; 19:20, 23; 2 Chronicles 15:1–2; 20:14–17) and perform tasks that bring glory to God (Exodus 31:1–5; Judges 14:6, 19; 15:14; 1 Samuel 16:13). In the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is the key link in our connection to the Lord (Romans 8:1–17). The church is spoken of as "a holy temple in the Lord" wherein He lives by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:21–22). We are very blessed to be able to know God intimately.

### Limitation

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit was poured out purposefully, but infrequently compared to the New Testament. Though God does still anoint in the sense of the ability to perform tasks and minister gifts of the

Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7–11), we must be careful not to lose sight of His abiding in the believer. If this is not clear, we will be forever asking God to “come down” upon us instead of asking Him to “flow out” of us (John 7:37–39).

## Depiction

The majority of Old Testament Scriptures depict the Spirit as “coming down” upon someone (Numbers 11:25–26; 1 Chronicles 12:18; Ezekiel 11:5). This lends itself to understanding a momentary prophetic word or task orientation. In the New Testament, the Spirit fills us, then works through us. His anointing abides within the Spirit-filled believer to produce the fruit of His presence and manifest His ministry to others.

## The Holy Spirit in the Life of Jesus Christ

### *Objective 3:*

*Indicate the Holy Spirit's leading in Jesus' life.*

Luke 4 gives an overview of what to expect from a Spirit-led life. In Luke 3:21–22, we read of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit's descent upon Him in the form of a dove. Chronologically, Luke 4:1 is the next thing that happened after Christ's baptism. In that verse we read that, “Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit . . . was led by the Spirit in the desert.” Jesus is our example. It is vital to understand that a Spirit-led life begins by being Spirit-filled. Let us now study in more detail what this means.

### Jesus resisted temptation (Luke 4:1–13)

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He fasted and was tempted by the devil for forty days. The three temptations recorded in this chapter can be categorized in the following way:

- 1) A presumption upon faith. This first ploy by the devil to get Jesus to turn stone into bread would have reduced faith to a magic show. Although

Jesus was hungry, He did not act presumptuously (Luke 4:13). Rather, He resisted the enemy by affirming God's truth.

- 2) A distortion of grace. What Jesus recognized here was that the devil was in no position to give anything. Only God can give. The devil distorts God's goodness. This outright lie became the source of its own undoing when Jesus responded by saying, "'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only'" (Luke 4:8).
- 3) A rationalization of Scripture. The devil tried to justify temptation by getting Jesus to twist the meaning of Psalm 91:11–12. However, for Jesus, the issue is not the devil's use of Scripture, but His own. Jesus does not rationalize Psalm 91; He responds with an appropriate Scripture that silences the tempter.

### The Spirit focused and empowered Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:15–22, 32, 37, 42)

From the point of His teaching in Nazareth, Jesus fulfilled His mission through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thus, He was empowered to preach good news, free prisoners, restore sight (physical and spiritual), and release the oppressed. Jesus could have done many more things during those three years, but He did not. His Spirit-led life was guided by the unity He had with His Father (John 5:19).

Jesus also lived under the approval of His Father; therefore, He did not need to find significance in people's approval. Still, His effectiveness or anointing in ministry was noticeable to people (Matthew 7:28–29).

### Jesus overcame rejection in ministry (Luke 4:23–30)

When Jesus preached the truth about Elijah and Elisha, people were angered to the point of wanting to kill Him. The basis for Christ's ability to walk away from this early rejection of His ministry was the security He had in His Father's love. He knew rejection would play a significant



role in His ministry (Matthew 20:17–19; Luke 11:15; John 6:60–66; 8:48). Yet, He kept His heart on His Father's love.

### Jesus chose His words carefully (Luke 4:22, 24–28, 32)

Jesus chose His words to fit His audience. Sometimes He spoke graciously to people (John 8:10–11); other times He rebuked those in error (Luke 11:37–52). In all instances, His objective was to promote God's truth and love.

### Jesus involved himself in spiritual battles (Luke 4:33–35, 38–41)

It is evident that Jesus' message carried authority. But Jesus came to do more than talk. His words were often accompanied by a demonstration of the Spirit's power to heal, drive out demons, and do miracles (Matthew 11:4–5; Luke 13:31–32). Thus, Jesus exposed and rebuked the works of darkness so that others would be freed to put their trust in Him.

### Jesus prayed (Luke 4:42)

Jesus knew He could not fight unless He was fit, so He kept in constant contact with the Father (Luke 4:42–43). Jesus loved His Father and set aside time to talk with Him. Prayer was very natural for Christ.

Furthermore, Luke 4:1 tells us that Jesus was “led by the Spirit.” Verse 43 indicates that Jesus also knew why He was sent. These are the bookends for Christian living—to be Spirit-led in our service to the Lord and to be assured that we are “sent” by God in all we do.

## **God the Holy Spirit**

### *Objective 4:*

*Explain why the Holy Spirit is God.*

### The Spirit's Divine Attributes

There are four attributes or characteristics of deity that describe the Holy Spirit as God. The first is found in Hebrews 9:14: “How much more, then, will the blood

of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" This scripture asserts that the Spirit of God is eternal—without beginning and end. The most basic truths about God are that He is eternal and He exists in the form of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Genesis 1:26; Matthew 28:19; John 14:16–17; 2 Corinthians 13:14).

The second attribute that indicates the Holy Spirit's deity is found in 1 Corinthians 2:10–11: "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." This scripture emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is omniscient, knowing all things. This characteristic is also common in the Father and the Son. The Spirit's knowledge is complete, and He reveals the truth to believers (John 16:13–14).

The third characteristic is found in Romans 8:11: "And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." This Scripture reveals that the Holy Spirit is omnipotent or all powerful. It is He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Also, by the power of the Spirit, Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb (Luke 1:29–37). This same Spirit even makes us alive in Christ (Romans 8:9–10).

The fourth divine characteristic of the Holy Spirit is found in Psalm 139:7–12. David asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (v. 7). This passage shows the Holy Spirit's omnipresence. The term *omnipresent* means that the Holy Spirit is at once present everywhere. Matthew 8:1–13 records a story of Jesus healing a Roman soldier's servant without actually being there. Jesus spoke His word of healing to the soldier, and the servant was healed. How did this occur? The Holy Spirit was present in both places simultaneously

to heal the servant at Jesus' word. It is awesome to behold such testimony of Scripture!

As you read the Bible, you will find the Holy Spirit is present in all the mighty works of God: creation, the inspiration of Scripture, new birth, healing, raising the dead, and many other moments. Now, we will turn our attention to the personhood of the Holy Spirit.

### The Spirit is Personal

The Bible shows us clearly that the Holy Spirit has personal attributes. He is not merely a power or force emanating from God the Father or Jesus the Son of God. Consider the following three personal characteristics of the Holy Spirit.

1. He has intellect (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). The Spirit teaches us truth and helps us to understand the mind of God.
2. He has emotion (Romans 15:30). Paul's mention of the "love of the Spirit" hints at the passion of the Spirit in drawing us closer to other believers.
3. He has a will and exercises it (1 Corinthians 12:11). The Spirit decides how His gifts will be distributed; they are His to be used at His will.

With regard to the Holy Spirit's nature, the early believers treated the Spirit in a personal manner. In Acts 5:3, Peter rebukes Ananias for *lying* to the Holy Spirit. In Acts 7:51, Stephen accuses the Jews of *resisting* the Holy Spirit. In Matthew 12:31–32, Jesus makes it clear that it is possible to *blaspheme* the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 4:30, Paul warns Christians against *grieving* the Holy Spirit. Finally, in Hebrews 10:29 we learn that a person can *insult* the Spirit.

On a positive note, the Scriptures show us that we can allow the Spirit to control our lives (Romans 8:9), we can receive the blessing of His intercession (Romans 8:27), see His gifts manifest in and through us (1 Corinthians 12:7), overcome the battle of the flesh within us (Galatians 5:16–26), and feel His joy (1 Thessalonians 1:6). These are just some of the ways we relate to the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

The Holy Spirit's work in physical creation shows us a pattern of how He works in the spiritual formation of believers. By looking at the major difference between how the Spirit operated in the Old Testament compared to the New Testament, we appreciate our need to be baptized in the Spirit. Getting to know the Holy Spirit is a lifelong journey. This lesson has offered you a foundation to learn more about the Spirit and experience more of His presence. Ask the Holy Spirit to make the Bible's meaning and application clear to you. Since it was He who inspired the writing of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:14–16; 2 Peter 1:20–21), we can be certain that He wants us to know its true meaning and live it out to God's glory.

### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES TO MEMORIZE

Genesis 1:1–2

Luke 4:18–19

John 3:1–8

John 4:23–24

John 7:37–39

Romans 8:11

1 Corinthians 2:10–11

2 Corinthians 1:21–22

1 John 2:26–27

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. *Getting to know the Holy Spirit is*
  - a) *the way we get to heaven.*
  - b) *only for very spiritual people.*
  - c) *a lifelong journey.*
2. *Why was the Holy Spirit hovering over the waters in Genesis 1:1-2?*
  - a) *He was waiting to take pictures.*
  - b) *He was waiting for God to speak.*
  - c) *He was waiting to plan what would happen on each day of creation.*
3. *Which three words describe the Spirit's work in physical creation and spiritual formation?*
  - a) *Finding, Filling, and Flowing*
  - b) *Flooding, Freeing, and Filling*
  - c) *Fashioning, Filling, and Flooding*
4. *The Holy Spirit's work in both Testaments is summarized as*
  - a) *inconsistent and impossible.*
  - b) *emotional.*
  - c) *anointing and filling.*
5. *Indicate the major difference between the Spirit's ministries in the Old Testament and New Testament.*
  - a) *The meaning of "anointing" is absorbed into the meaning of "filling."*
  - b) *There is no difference.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit now lives in the church, whereas in the Old Testament He had no where to stay.*
6. *Jesus responded to the devil's temptations by*
  - a) *praying that God would take the testing away.*
  - b) *asking His disciples to help Him.*
  - c) *rebuking the devil with Scripture.*
7. *How is being Spirit-led connected to being Spirit-filled?*
  - a) *If we are filled with the Spirit, we will love people more.*

- b) *A Spirit-led life begins by being Spirit-filled.*
  - c) *One must be baptized in water to be filled with and led by the Spirit.*
8. *Three characteristics of the Holy Spirit's personal nature are*
- a) *sense of humor, mild temperament, and grace.*
  - b) *intellect, emotion, and will.*
  - c) *kind disposition, tolerance, and innocence.*
9. *Which of these statements is true?*
- a) *If the Holy Spirit knew more, He would be God.*
  - b) *The Holy Spirit is God because He knows all things.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit knows all things because He is God.*
10. *How can we know for certain that we are God's children?*
- a) *The Spirit testifies to our hearts individually that we are God's children.*
  - b) *Through reading as many books as we can about God*
  - c) *By not worrying about it*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *c* (8.1)
2. *b* (8.1)
3. *c* (8.1)
4. *c* (8.2)
5. *a* (8.2)
6. *c* (8.3)
7. *b* (8.3)
8. *b* (8.4)
9. *c* (8.4)
10. *a* (8.4)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 9

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# The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

When I was about ten years old, I attended Kids' Camp at Green Lane, Pennsylvania, the home of Eastern Bible Institute (now Valley Forge Christian College). My memories of the spiritual atmosphere at Kids' Camp are vivid—exuberant singing, passionate preaching, and extended prayer times in the old-fashioned prayer room behind the platform. No carpet, only hard wooden floors and splintery wooden benches. As a young boy I knew about the baptism in the Holy Spirit. My pastor-father preached about the Spirit often. My Sunday School teachers taught about this blessing, too. I wanted to receive this promised gift more than anything at that time.

One night I prayed long and hard following the preaching. It was past midnight, and the snack shop was closed. While the other campers were in their cabins, my counselor prayed for me as I was trying hard to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I prayed so long that my knees were sore and tired. I then rolled onto my back and continued crying out to God. I so desperately wanted to be filled with the Holy Spirit that I started kicking my legs, like a champion backstroke swimmer.

I laugh now as I think about what the counselor must have been thinking. After allowing me to kick my legs for just a couple of minutes, the counselor asked me why I was doing that. "So I can be filled with the Holy Spirit," I replied. Not long before then, during the Sunday evening altar time at my home church in Windsor, Pennsylvania, I had seen a man on his back near the altar; he was praying in other tongues and kicking his legs. I figured if I kicked my legs hard and long enough I, too, would be filled with the Spirit and speak in tongues.



The counselor was wise. He gently told me that I could stop kicking my legs and relax. He reminded me that Jesus would fill me with the Holy Spirit if I simply yielded to Him.

I closed my eyes, took a deep breath, raised my hands to heaven, and praised Jesus. Almost immediately Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit, and I began to speak in tongues. What a joy it has been for me to live through the power and wisdom of the Spirit! Every follower of Christ can receive the blessing in the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is God's promise to each of us (Acts 2:38–39).

## LESSON OUTLINE

The Holy Spirit's Identity

The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Old and New Testament References to Spirit Baptism

The Day of Pentecost

Fundamental Distinctions

How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Initial Physical Evidence

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.*
- 2: *Explain what is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*
- 3: *Identify references to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.*
- 4: *Summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.*

- 5: *Identify the essential differences between salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit and between water and Spirit baptism.*
- 6: *Explain how to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*
- 7: *Relate the importance of speaking in tongues.*

## The Holy Spirit's Identity

### *Objective 1:*

*Describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does.*

Very briefly I would like to review some of what was covered in Lesson 8 of this discipleship course. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead—a distinct, divine person. He is holy, that is pure and separate from sin. He is a Spirit. The Hebrew word for *spirit* is “ruah” or “ruach” (Ezekiel 37:1). The Greek word is “pneuma” (Acts 1:8). Both mean “breath” or “wind.” The Holy Spirit, then, is “The breath or the wind of One who is separate.”

### The Holy Spirit is divine

The Holy Spirit is divine (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Ascribed to Him are the attributes of God: life-giving (Romans 8:2), possessing the truth (John 16:13), having perfect love (Romans 15:30), holy (Ephesians 4:30), eternal (Hebrews 9:14), and omnipresent (Psalm 139:7). The Holy Spirit does the works of God. He creates (Genesis 1:2), casts out demons (Matthew 12:28), convicts of sin (John 16:8), regenerates (John 3:8), and resurrects (Romans 8:11).

### The Holy Spirit possesses personality

Followers of God have not always viewed the Holy Spirit as being a Person. For instance, the ancient Jewish concept of God's Spirit was that of a powerful yet impersonal force (McGee and Burgess 1988, 801). However, the New Testament teaches clearly that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person with characteristics

of personhood. He possesses a mind, intelligence, knowledge (Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11), and a will (Acts 16:6–7). He speaks (Acts 8:29; 11:12), loves (Romans 15:30), and can be grieved, vexed, blasphemed, insulted or outraged (Matthew 12:31; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 10:29). No impersonal force, such as electricity, lightning, water, or wind, can demonstrate such emotions. Nor do these impersonal forces have knowledge and a will. Furthermore, as a person, the Holy Spirit is referred to in the masculine gender. John writes, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (16:13).

### Works of the Holy Spirit

*The Holy Spirit convicts of sin and produces spiritual life.*

The Holy Spirit makes known to us what Jesus has done for us (John 16:15). He convicts us of our sin, of Christ’s righteousness, and of God’s judgment of Satan (John 16:8–11; 1 John 3:8). The Holy Spirit also produces spiritual life in us (Romans 8:1–2). Before we accepted Christ, we were dead in sin. But after salvation, the Holy Spirit assures us that we are children of God (Romans 8:16).

The Holy Spirit also brings forth fruits of righteousness in believers’ lives (Galatians 5:22–23). The fruit of the Spirit cannot be produced by self-effort, but grows when we allow the indwelling Spirit to take control and produce His fruit in our lives.

*The Holy Spirit makes us holy.*

The Holy Spirit gives us power over our human, fleshly nature (Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:13). Every Christ follower must fight the battle between our spiritual nature and our human, fleshly nature.

When our middle child, Jonathan, who is now a young adult, was nine, I tucked him into bed one night. After prayer Jonathan said, “There’s a war going on in my mouth.”

“What do you mean, ‘a war’?” I asked.

He said, "There's a war going on between my cough and the cough syrup."

"Who is winning the war?" I pressed.

"Right now the cough is winning, but eventually the cough syrup will win," he replied confidently.

He kept talking: "Carman has a song about battles. In his song he says that we may lose some of the battles, but we are going to win the war. The cough may win some of the battles, but the cough syrup is going to win this war."

This was a teaching moment, an opportunity to share with Jonathan about Paul's words to the Romans concerning the war that wages within all of us, the war between the flesh and the Spirit. It is true that as we yield to the Spirit, we are set free from the law of sin and death.

*The Holy Spirit helps us pray.*

The Spirit also helps us pray (Romans 8:26). Fred Cottriel, a former missionary, pastor, and Superintendent of the Southern Californian District of The Assemblies of God, experienced a miracle because the Holy Spirit prompted a woman to pray. He told this story:

It was a snowy winter day during World War II. I hadn't slept in a real bed for months. I was tired of being tired; and I was tired of being scared, wet, and cold. I was weary of losing friends to war. We were to have a short rest. My men and I took lodging in some uninhabited houses. The house I chose had a fireplace. I lit a fire, sat on a couch, and fell asleep. I dreamed I was wounded. I awoke from my dream to an order to carry some land mines to an infantry unit which needed help. The explosives were placed on my tank, and with my unit we made a breakthrough. While we were delivering the mines, the enemy began shelling our positions. I

was wounded. The mines were hit, but miraculously did not explode. When I told that story in a church after the war, a woman asked, "What date was that?" When I told her, she said, "Let me tell you the rest of the story." She was awakened by the Lord and could see my face clearly. The Spirit directed her to intercede for me. Her prayer saved my life. Thank God for her obedience and for power in prayer. (*Pentecostal Evangel*)

*The Holy Spirit counsels and empowers for service.*

Not only does the Holy Spirit counsel us in the truth of Christ (John 14:16–17; 16:12–13), but He also empowers and equips us for faithful service (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8, 4:31). Trying to serve God without the power of the Holy Spirit is futile.

## The Baptism in the Holy Spirit

### *Objective 2:*

*Explain what is the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a spiritual experience that first occurred in Jerusalem ten days following Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven. The event is described vividly in Acts 2:1–4. The 120 Christians were filled with the Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Other supernatural manifestations included were the sound of a violent wind filling the whole house where they had gathered and the appearance of tongues of fire that rested on each of those present.

This baptism, which is distinct from and subsequent to salvation, is available to all of Christ's followers. McGee and Burgess (1988) describe it this way: "This (baptism) signifies a total submergence within the reality of the Holy Spirit so that whoever is so baptized has a vivid sense of the Spirit's presence and power" (41).

Let us now take a closer look at the terminology in the New Testament that refers to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The different terms give us a clearer picture of what God is doing when believers experience this wonderful event.

### Baptized in (or with) the Holy Spirit

Christians who are baptized in the Holy Spirit are suddenly immersed in the presence of God's Spirit in a fresh, new way (Acts 1:4–5; 11:16). Experientially, the Spirit who indwells every true believer moves upon and influences the child of God in a more powerful manner.

### Outpouring of the Spirit

Perhaps you have stood outside during a downpour of rain. The rain soon drenches your hair, clothes, and shoes. In some ways, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is likened to that of physical rain. Though we cannot physically see the Holy Spirit as He is poured out on us, His effects are unmistakable (Acts 2:17–18; 2:33; 10:45–46).

### Filled with the Holy Spirit

Being filled with the Spirit does not suggest that one has more of the Spirit than someone else. Rather, the Spirit who is totally present now totally claims the recipient. Another way to look at this is to consider that when a follower of Christ is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit who is within is released for total inward occupancy (John 7:37–39; Acts 2:4, 9:17).

### The Holy Spirit comes on individuals

The New Testament also speaks of the Holy Spirit coming on individuals and filling them. For instance, Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you" (Acts 1:8). This term describes the suddenness with which the Spirit often moves upon hungry hearts. Other references to this terminology can be found in Acts 10:44 and Acts 19:6.

## The Gift of the Holy Spirit

The experience we know as the baptism in the Holy Spirit is also spoken of as “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). The word *gift* signifies that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is not earned by one’s following Christ or by attaining a certain level of spirituality. Like salvation, the baptism in the Holy Spirit is a gift or blessing. We neither earn nor deserve it.

It is also important to note that the “gift of the Holy Spirit” is different from the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4–11). While the gift of the Holy Spirit describes the initial filling of the Spirit in the life of the believer, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are God-given capacities and abilities which enable the Christ-follower to minister to others.

## The promise of the Holy Spirit

Peter told the seekers on the Day of Pentecost, “‘The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call!’” (Acts 2:39). The word *promise* is the Greek word *epangelia*, which means “a gift graciously announced and bestowed.” A promise is a declaration of some benefit to be conferred. What a benefit the baptism in the Holy Spirit is!

For some people, promises are like pie crusts, lightly made and easily broken. But not so with God! The God who “remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham” (Psalm 105:42) is the same God who honors His promises to us. Paul affirms, “No matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

This baptism in the Holy Spirit is a promise to every believer—young, old, male, female, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, married, single, newly-saved, or mature in the faith. This gift is for all. Throughout the New Testament we have noted that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is referred to in different ways. Yet, the blessing

is the same—a total submergence into the person, presence, and power of the Holy Spirit.

## Old and New Testament References to Spirit Baptism

### *Objective 3:*

*Identify references to the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments.*

### The prophet Joel

The Old Testament prophet Joel, writing as the Spirit inspired him, promised this blessing: “‘And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days’” (Joel 2:28–29). In explaining the unusual spiritual phenomena on the Day of Pentecost, Peter said to his fellow Jews,

These men are not drunk, . . . No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: “In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.’” (Acts 2:15–18)

### John the Baptist

John the Baptist promised this blessing, too. Preaching near the Jordan River, the forerunner of Christ announced, “‘I baptize you with water. . . But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire’” (Matthew 3:11).



## Jesus Christ

Prior to His ascension to heaven, Jesus emphasized that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on His disciples: "I am going to send you what my Father has promised" (Luke 24:49). While eating with His disciples following His resurrection from the dead, Jesus instructed them, "'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about'" (Acts 1:4). Jesus reiterated His promise: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

## The Apostle Peter

We noted earlier that Peter, the fisherman turned preacher, promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to a multitude of listeners (Acts 2:38–39). This is very significant! We have four individuals—Joel, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and the apostle Peter—indicating that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is for all Christians. That means you, too! May God give us the faith to believe, receive, and claim this blessing!

## A personal testimony

My great grandmother, Adeline Sorbo, was an Italian immigrant to the United States in the early 1900's. After marrying Anthony, they parented fifteen children, the oldest of whom was my grandmother, Mary. Devout Roman Catholics, the Sorbo family hitched up their horse and buggy each week to attend the mass in New Castle, Pennsylvania. It was after a friend's untimely death in a house fire that Adeline cried out to God with great earnestness, even questioning her own eternal destiny. Then, as Adeline was washing clothes one day soon after her friend's death, she was baptized in the Holy Spirit, filled with overwhelming joy, and began to speak in a language she did not know.

Wanting to know what this strange experience was, she prayed. Later, she heard an audible voice, "Go to where the crazy people are." Since she was all alone when she heard that message, she surmised that God

had spoken to her. She had never heard of the “crazy people.”

While selling cheese and milk door-to-door, she would ask, “Do you know where the ‘crazy people’ are?” No one knew. But one day, a friend who went to Adeline’s farm to pick green beans said to her, “I don’t know what you are looking for, but on Lyndel Street a group of Italians are meeting in a house. They sing and pray so loudly that their neighbors call them crazy. I have gone there several times myself. If you want me to take you, I will.” Adeline went and her life was never the same. Within a short time, all of her family members came to trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

## The Day of Pentecost

### *Objective 4:*

*Summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2.*

On the Day of Pentecost, Jews from all over the world were gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. This feast, first mentioned in Leviticus 23:15–21, was a time of celebration in which the Jews made an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. A harvest festival, the Feast of Pentecost marked the beginning of the time when the people brought their firstfruit offerings and gave God thanks for His many provisions, for the bountiful harvest. The word *Pentecost* means “fifty.” Thus, this feast occurred fifty days after Passover.

Let us summarize what happened on the Day of Pentecost. In obedience to Jesus’ command, 120 of Christ’s followers remained in Jerusalem to pray and wait on the Lord (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4–5). They did not know what to expect—only that they were going to receive fresh spiritual power. A partial listing of those present is given to us by Luke in Acts 1:13–14.

As they “all joined together constantly in prayer” (Acts 1:14), a sound came from heaven, a sound like the

blowing of a violent wind (Acts 2:2). At precisely that same moment, the praying disciples saw “what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (v. 3). Immediately, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and were able to speak in languages they had never learned.

Evidently, these newly-empowered believers left the prayer room and went down to the Jerusalem streets, still praising God in a variety of languages. Thousands of Jews from all over the world heard these Palestinian Jews praising God in languages not familiar to those speaking, but very familiar to those listening. “Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, ‘What does this mean?’” (2:12). But others ridiculed the believers, thinking they were drunk. Then, to the assembled crowd of thousands, Peter preached, explaining that what these followers of Christ were experiencing was precisely what the prophet Joel had prophesied hundreds of years before (2:14–21). Peter used that opportunity to preach about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a result, thousands “accepted his message” and were baptized (2:41). On that day the New Testament church was born. Today, those followers of Christ who embrace the same experience that the apostles received on the Day of Pentecost are called “Pentecostals.”

### Primary purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit

#### *Receiving spiritual power*

Jesus made very clear the primary purpose of this powerful spiritual experience. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jesus wants everyone in the world to know about His love and grace, His salvation and forgiveness. Knowing that we are often timid, He gave us this blessing to empower us to be His witnesses. The baptism in the Holy Spirit empowered and emboldened the first-century believers. The apostles who had been afraid to be associated with Jesus when He was arrested and crucified became very bold after being filled

with the Holy Spirit. Now unashamed to be identified with Christ, they courageously preached Christ at every opportunity (Acts 2–7).

### Manifestations of spiritual power

As a result of this spiritual empowerment, the Spirit-filled believers of the first century enjoyed many positive spiritual by-products. Below is a summary of these blessings.

- They spoke God's Word boldly, testifying to Jesus' resurrection (3:12–16; 4:8–12; 4:31, 33; 5:42).
- They witnessed miracles of healing (3:1–10; 5:12–16).
- They had overflowing joy in the midst of difficult circumstances (5:41; 13:52).
- Their prayer life was strong (2:42; 3:1; 4:31; 12:5).

## **Fundamental Distinctions**

### *Objective 5:*

*Identify essential differences between salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit and between water and Spirit baptism.*

### Salvation and Spirit Baptism

Salvation is the miraculous process by which individuals, by trusting in Jesus Christ alone, become children of God (Romans 10:9–10; John 1:12), receive forgiveness for their sins and accept the free gift of eternal life. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is the miraculous process by which Christ's followers are immersed in the Holy Spirit, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to be released into and through the believers' lives. Though extremely important to the believer, being baptized in the Spirit is not an entrance requirement into heaven. The essential difference, then, between salvation and Spirit baptism is that while salvation allows us to begin a personal relationship with God, the baptism in the Holy Spirit provides the power for us to live the Christ life.

The Holy Spirit is fully present in the life of every believer (1 Corinthians 3:16; Romans 8:9). However, when the believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, like a river, flows through the believer (John 7:38–39), thus infusing him or her with the wisdom, presence, and language of the Spirit.

### Water baptism and Spirit baptism

Since the term *baptism* is used in reference to both being filled with the Spirit and being immersed in water, it would be helpful to point out the some of the differences between these two experiences. First, water baptism occurs when a Christian is physically immersed in water by another follower of Christ (often, a pastor). The baptism in the Holy Spirit occurs when Jesus Christ spiritually immerses the Christ follower into the full life of the Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

Second, water baptism is a public witness to the fact that we died with Christ to our old nature and have risen with Christ to a new life (Romans 6:4–8). Spirit baptism is a personal and often private experience that results in greater power for more effective witness and ministry (Acts 1:8). Third, water baptism is primarily an act of obedience. Spirit baptism is primarily a response of faith.

## **How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

### ***Objective 6:***

*Explain how to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.*

The baptism in the Holy Spirit, like all of God's blessings, is a gift that is received by trusting fully in Christ. This particular gift, however, requires the believer to be physically and spiritually yielded. You may be very eager to experience the baptism in the Holy Spirit at this stage in your Christian walk. If so, prayerfully read what follows and begin seeking the Lord for the Spirit to be poured out on you.

## Advice in seeking Spirit Baptism

1. Read the Scriptures which describe the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4; 2:38–39; 8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:1–7).
2. Be convinced in your own heart that God expects believers to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
3. Accept that this gift is God's promise to you (Acts 2:39).
4. Begin to worship and praise Jesus, the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit. As you do this your heart will become more open to receive this blessing. Jesus said, "'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink'" (John 7:37). No one but Jesus can fill you with the Spirit.
5. Simply ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit.
6. Stay focused on the Giver (Jesus), not on the gift.
7. At some point in your worship of Jesus, you will sense an unexplainable urge to speak words that are foreign to you. This is the Spirit's enabling you to speak in languages you have never learned (Acts 2:4). Yield to this impulse, even though it will sound strange and seem illogical. You will most likely feel as if you are not in control. In one sense, that is true. The Spirit is taking control as you yield to Him. Remember, God will never force or coerce you to speak in tongues. You must be willing. Essentially, you do the speaking, but the Spirit provides the words.
8. Should you not speak in tongues the first time you ask Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, continue to keep your heart open to the Lord as you commune with Him. Do not think you have done anything wrong or that Jesus does not want to give you this blessing. Sometimes, it takes a little longer for us to be ready to receive the outpouring of the Spirit. However, God rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

9. Thank God for giving this gift to you.
10. Remember that the ability to speak in other tongues is the result of being filled with the Spirit, not the purpose for being filled with the Spirit. The primary purpose of the Spirit baptism, as noted earlier, is to bring glory to God by empowering and enabling the believer for more effective witness and ministry.

### Do not put God or yourself in a box

There is no one way in which Christians are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Sometimes we may be sitting while praying (Acts 2:1–4; 4:31), kneeling, standing, or walking. Other times someone may pray with us as we receive this blessing (Acts 8:17; 9:17; 19:6). Still other times individuals are baptized in the Spirit while simply hearing God's Word preached (Acts 10:44–46). The gift can be given when we are alone or when we are praying in a small or large group.

Once the gift is given, however, we must work at developing the language by spending more time praying in the Spirit. Surely, in the beginning one may simply repeat a few words in the unknown tongue—much as a small child begins to talk by using a few words. But as we utilize the language God has given us, our spiritual vocabulary will grow.

### Word of caution

Occasionally, and unfortunately, in their zeal to see others baptized in the Holy Spirit, some misguided believers try to help others be filled with the Spirit. I have witnessed these so-called “helpers” saying to the individual who is earnestly seeking Jesus, “Let go!” or “Hold on!” or “Just speak it out!” In most instances when this occurs, the earnest seeker becomes confused and distracted, not really knowing what to do.

I have also heard of certain Christians who will say to the seeker, “Just say ‘Hallelujah’ ten times real fast, and you will begin to speak in tongues.” Or, they have said,

“Repeat these words after me,” then proceeded to tell the praying believer what foreign words to say. While the individuals who do this are very likely sincere, they are, for sure, sincerely wrong. Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit. He is fully capable of filling us, and the Spirit is fully capable of enabling us to speak the beautiful heavenly language that God wants us to speak.

### **A testimony**

Years ago, while planting New Life Assembly in Athens, Ohio, Barbara, one of our first members, wanted desperately to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. We prayed with her, and it appeared that nothing significant happened. But as she left the church building and drove her car home, she continued worshipping and praising Jesus. Moments later, she sensed a stirring in her inner being and began speaking in a language she had never learned. She was filled with inexpressible joy as Jesus baptized her in the Spirit.

If you have been hungry for more of God and have not yet prayed to be filled with the Spirit, let me encourage you today. Do not be discouraged by those who say that this experience no longer happens in modern time. Millions of Christians around the world know personally that it does!

## **The Initial Physical Evidence**

### ***Objective 7:***

*Relate the importance of speaking in tongues.*

### **Evidence of the baptism in the Spirit**

We believe that speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit today because it was the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the first-century church (Acts 2:4; 10:46; 19:6). Some theologians believe that the book of Acts is historical, not theological—that its intent is to record history, not to establish doctrine. However,



we believe that God want us to experience the same power that the first-century believers experienced.

It is important to note that speaking in tongues is not *the* evidence of being filled with the Spirit; it is the *initial physical* evidence. There are certainly other evidences. For instance, there will be power for sharing our faith and purity in our actions, attitudes, and words. We experience joy that cannot be suppressed, no matter what the circumstances. And we enjoy a greater awareness of the Spirit in our everyday lives.

### Tongues is a great blessing

Let us look at some of the blessings of speaking in tongues. First, when we speak in tongues (sometimes called praying in the Spirit), we can pray with faith and confidence, even though we do not always know how specifically to pray (Romans 8:26–27).

Second, when we pray in the Spirit our own spirit is strengthened and edified (Jude 20, 1 Corinthians 14:4). The following story powerfully illustrates this truth. Cy Homer, who is now with the Lord, was, for many years, a distinguished pastor, preacher, and educator. His wife Ruth, a powerful prayer warrior, related this story. Her husband, Cy, was serving in the Pacific theater during World War II. A chaplain, he had been in the heat of battle. He had told his commanding officer that he wanted to be where the need was the greatest. His company was on a ship being moved from Okinawa to the Philippines. While on the ship, Cy had a nervous breakdown. He was broken emotionally and physically from the strain of war. So he was admitted into a Philippine hospital where he lay curled up for days in a fetal position. Another Spirit-filled chaplain, Chaplain Brengle, visited him. As Chaplain Brengle began to pray in his prayer language, fervently and earnestly, Cy Homer began to pray in tongues, too. He related later that as they were praying in the Spirit, he felt as though all the flotsam (floating wreckage of a ship) and jetsam (excess cargo thrown overboard) were being washed out of his life. As a result of praying in the Spirit, Chaplain

Homer was restored to emotional and physical health. Not long afterward, he was released from the hospital and went back to the battlefield, strong and whole.

When we pray in the Spirit, we commune with God at a deeper level, a level beyond the ability of the mind to understand, influence, or interfere (1 Corinthians 14:14).

Third, since the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, our capability to worship and praise God is also expanded when we pray in the Spirit (Acts 2:11; John 16:14). Pastor Jack Hayford notes, "From the very inception of the church, not only has praise been central, but the spiritual language has been a resource for the exaltation of God, paving the way in praise to the further glorification of Christ Jesus, His Son" (Hayford 1996, 45).

### Dealing with doubt

After we have been baptized in the Spirit, often our enemy, the devil, plants seeds of doubts in our minds about our experience. Norma Champion, a university professor and long-time Missouri state senator, was a college student when she doubted the authenticity of her own baptism in the Spirit. She wondered if hers was just an emotional reaction to the presence of God.

As she sat behind a fellow student, Val Keller, in chapel one morning, she heard Val quietly speaking in another language, praying and praising God in French. Having studied French, Norma was able to understand what he was saying. Val seemed to be speaking perfect French, experiencing no problem with the nasal and throat tones that are often difficult for American students of French. In response to Norma's question later, Val replied that he had never studied French and was not even aware that he was speaking that language. From that moment, Norma never doubted her own experience of Spirit baptism and speaking in tongues.

## Conclusion

The baptism in the Spirit was never meant to be a single emotional and spiritual event to be recorded in a believer's diary. The baptism in the Spirit is an entry point into the environment and atmosphere of the Spirit, so that the Christ follower breathes the air of the Spirit each moment. As we continually breathe in the air of the Spirit, our spirits are revived, enabling us to be more powerful witnesses of Jesus Christ, whom the Spirit has come to glorify and honor.

Consider how the first-century disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). They "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:52), and, in turn, they filled Jerusalem with their teaching. That should be our pattern. We are filled to fill and baptized to be a blessing!

In his insightful book *The Table of Inwardness*, Calvin Miller wrote of an antique wooden dynamite box in his home. The box was made in the nineteenth century, carefully constructed to withstand shock as its explosive contents were transported from the manufacturer to a place of use. On the lid were large red and black letters which said, DANGER DYNAMITE!

"But the last I saw it," Miller wrote, "it was filled with common paraphernalia that could be found in any workroom" (MacDonald 1986, 205).

God intends that we be filled with His "dynamite" power (Acts 1:8). Could it be that our lives are filled with common paraphernalia instead of that which is supernatural and life-changing? Our world desperately needs a church that is Spirit-energized, Spirit-led, and Spirit-equipped. We cannot do effective ministry without His enabling. So let us open our hearts to Jesus and be filled with the "breath of God," the life-giving presence of our Creator and Lord. Through our lives and ministries, may people come to know Jesus Christ. God bless you as you live the Spirit-filled life.

## THE EMPOWERMENT OF THE SPIRIT

It is more than a slogan or a theme; it is a divine promise.

It is not a theory or an option; it is an absolute necessity.

It is not a theological problem; it is the divine solution to the spiritual needs of our generation and the only power that can break satanic bondage.

There is no substitute or option for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

(author unknown)

### Reference List

Hayford, Jack 1996. *The Beauty of Spiritual Language*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

MacDonald, Gordon. 1986. *Restoring Your Spiritual Passion*. Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson Books.

McGee, Gary and Stanley M. Burgess. 1988. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Grand Rapids: Regency.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE VERSES TO MEMORIZE

Acts 1:45, 8

Acts 2:4

Acts 2:38–39

Acts 4:31

Ephesians 5:18

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct answer for each question.

1. *The Holy Spirit is God.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*
2. *The Holy Spirit helps believers*
  - a) *only as long as they have sinless lives.*
  - b) *but when it comes to praying, believers are on their own.*
  - c) *by giving them power over the flesh.*
3. *The baptism in the Holy Spirit is a powerful spiritual experience that*
  - a) *always occurs at the precise moment of salvation.*
  - b) *is a promise to every believer.*
  - c) *is man-made and has no basis in Scripture.*
4. *The prophet Joel prophesied that the Spirit of God would be poured out on all people.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*
5. *Evidence of change in the Spirit-filled believers of the first century included their*
  - a) *speaking the Word of God boldly.*
  - b) *reluctance to pray.*
  - c) *fear of political leaders.*
6. *The essential difference between salvation and Spirit baptism is that*
  - a) *the individual has to work hard to earn salvation.*
  - b) *salvation begins our walk with Christ and Spirit baptism empowers us to live for Him.*
  - c) *Spirit baptism is necessary for our entrance into heaven.*
7. *Jesus is capable of baptizing us in the Holy Spirit without the help of any other person.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*

8. *Speaking in tongues is the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit today because it was the initial physical evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.*
  - a) *True*
  - b) *False*
9. *Which of the following is not a characteristic of the Holy Spirit?*
  - a) *The Holy Spirit has a mind, intellect, and knowledge.*
  - b) *The Holy Spirit speaks.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit cannot be grieved or hurt.*
10. *Which of the following is not a benefit of speaking in tongues?*
  - a) *Our spirit is edified and strengthened.*
  - b) *We become superior to those who do not speak in tongues.*
  - c) *The Holy Spirit helps us pray when we do not know how to pray.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. a (9.1)
2. c (9.1)
3. b (9.2)
4. a (9.3)
5. a (9.4)
6. b (9.5)
7. a (9.6)
8. a (9.7)
9. c (9.1)
10. b (9.7)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

John M. Palmer is married and has three children. He graduated from Central Bible College in 1974 and co-planted a church in Ohio in the same year. From 1985–2006, John pastored First Assembly of God, Des Moines, Iowa. He has authored several books, including *Equipping for Ministry*, *Stories to Keep You Looking Up*, and *Keeping Up With The Jonahs*. Currently John serves as the General Secretary for the Assemblies of God with headquarters in Springfield, MO.

## LESSON 10

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# Becoming More Like Jesus: Sanctification

Children are often asked, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” A variety of answers are given, from being a policeman to being a mother. When I was growing up, I lived in a large apartment complex next door to a five-year-old boy named Robert. He would proudly say that he wanted to be a garbage man when he grew up. I thought that was strange because being a garbage man meant picking up smelly trash and riding on a stinky garbage truck all day. It was not until I got older that I realized Robert did not smell the stench of the trash. He saw the glory of the “Garbage Man.” Every day he saw the huge garbage truck pull into our apartment complex. It had a loud diesel engine, made a loud beeping noise when it backed up, and the garbage man would ride standing on the back of the truck. The garbage man would chain the large dumpster to the lift forks and pull the lever to raise the dumpster off the ground. There was a rumble as the trash was dumped in the back of it, and, with another pull of the lever, the hydraulics would whine as it compacted the trash inside the truck. Quite a sight for a five-year-old boy. Robert was captivated by the noise, strength, power, and size of the truck.

What do you want to be? Heaven longs to hear the response, “I want to be like Jesus!” Often we are consumed with what Christ wants us to do, and we overlook that He has first called us to be like Him. Becoming more like Jesus is a wonderful journey of transformation that is filled with divine lessons of empowerment.



## LESSON OUTLINE

The Definition of Sanctification  
 The Development of Sanctification  
 The Devotion of Sanctification  
 The Difficulties of Sanctification  
 The Discipline of Sanctification  
 The Dependency of Sanctification

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Define sanctification.*
- 2: *Explain God's purpose in our becoming more like Jesus.*
- 3: *Relate the importance of being a God-pleaser.*
- 4: *Describe the internal struggles involved in sanctification.*
- 5: *Identify disciplines vital in becoming more like Jesus.*
- 6: *Point out the role of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification.*

### The Definition of Sanctification

#### **Objective 1:**

*Define sanctification.*

Sanctification is the means by which God brings you to be what He wants you to be. Sanctification is both an act of separation from evil and an act of separation to God. This work of separation began at conversion as our sins were forgiven and we were declared righteous, but it did not end there. Peter addresses this process in 1

Peter 1:13–16, “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” The purpose of sanctification is to develop God’s holiness in our lives. In this way we become more like Jesus.

### Distinguishing initial conversion and sanctification

There is an important distinction between initial conversion and sanctification. Conversion occurs when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior. At that moment, we are justified; that is, we receive the judicial act of God by which He pronounces sinners righteous, free from condemnation and restored to right relationship with Him. Essentially, then, God sees us as though we had never sinned. He imputes Christ’s righteousness to us. The result is a new standing before God. Justification is instantaneous.

Sanctification, on the other hand, is God’s work through the Holy Spirit within us to change our character and conduct. Through the power released in us by the Holy Spirit, we separate ourselves from our old sinful lifestyles and dedicate ourselves to pleasing the Lord. It has been said that Jesus, like any good fisherman, first catches fish, then cleans them. Every one of us who is born again is being cleaned up, and this process can be painful, for we do not give up our old ways easily.

### Spiritual DNA

When a child is born, he or she has distinct, defining DNA markers such as eye color, physical features, and health concerns. That genetic makeup cannot be altered, yet the personality, disposition, and attitude of the child will be fashioned throughout that person’s lifetime. When God justifies and regenerates us (gives us new life), we are given spiritual DNA markers. Thus, we are destined to partake in and manifest God’s character of grace,

love, and holiness. This is part of what it means to be saved. Notice what the apostle Paul writes: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). Also, “since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

### Instantaneous or progressive

Some have wondered if sanctification is instantaneous or progressive. I believe that it is both! The day we surrender to Christ, we stand before God without condemnation and are declared holy. First Corinthians 6:11 states, “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” Yet, sanctification is also progressive, as we are “to be conformed to the likeness of his Son” (Romans 8:29). This conformation takes a lifetime!

## **The Development of Sanctification**

### *Objective 2:*

*Explain God’s purpose in our becoming more like Jesus.*

God uses wonderful life lessons to develop sanctification in our lives. Becoming more like Jesus is not an option for the believer—it is imperative. Paul writes, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Yet the working out of this sanctification process is designed to be a natural process. God has designed us and given us His spiritual DNA, so we can become more like Jesus!

### God’s provision for sanctification

We often assume that all birds fly, but there are actually twenty different types of birds that do not or cannot take to the air. Why? They do not have the necessary physical components for flying. Birds that do

fly have special feathers called “flight feathers,” which allow the birds to lift off the ground and soar through the air. There is a large ridge that runs down the center of their breastbone and large muscles attach to it enabling the bird to flap its wings. Such birds also can take flight easily because they are lightweight; God created them with hollow bones and an efficient digestive system.

Just as God has provided adequately for creation, He has also given us everything we need to be sanctified. We are His workmanship; we have been given a new spirit, a renewed mind, and a new heart. Too many Christians believe that they cannot become more like Jesus. They think that sanctification is too hard and beyond their ability. Let us be reminded again—God has given us everything we need to be sanctified! Read Paul’s prayer and affirmation for some early believers: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24).

### God, the Master Restorer

There is a story of a master painter who went into a secondhand store. He saw a painting that others might consider worthless, but to his expert eye, he saw another painting underneath. He bought the painting and began the painstaking job of restoring the original painting underneath. Many hours were spent stripping and peeling the top layer of paint away. With gentle care he made sure not to damage the precious original. Finally, the work was complete. The master painter stood amazed at the brilliance and beauty of the restored painting. He had seen something that no one else did!

This is what God does for us. He strips away our improper attitudes, thought processes, and pain. He tenderly cares for us during the process and is faithful to see the restorative work of sanctification complete in our lives. God sees in us potential, great value that others do

not always comprehend. He sees the holiness and glory of His Son in us!

### Difficulty and sanctification

God is committed to us and to this work of sanctification. Becoming more like Jesus is the journey of a lifetime, and God purposes to develop sanctification in us through the many painstaking experiences of life. Whether we care to admit or accept it, our lives are most fashioned in Christ's image during the most difficult times of life. This is why James writes, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

God sometimes disrupts our comfort in order to perfect our "flying" ability. We may feel that we are freefalling through the air but soon discover the updraft of His Spirit. We raise our wings in faith (sometimes in fear) and flap (pray) as though there is no tomorrow. Miraculously, God intervenes and we fly, being spared from certain disaster. As we comfortably find ourselves in the nest again, we rejoice in the perfecting work of God and realize we have learned much in the process of sanctification. Then, before we know it, God nudges us again.

Any man or woman of God can tell you that God masterfully develops us into His Son's image, even through desperate times. The apostle Paul gloried in his infirmities. James calls us to rejoice for sanctifying trials. Even Joseph in the Old Testament knew that God worked all things for good. The sanctifying work of God was so evident in his life. His character was developed in times of adversity; his integrity was formed in times of temptation; and his faith was displayed in times of disappointment. What about you? It is time to fly.

## The Devotion of Sanctification

### *Objective 3:*

*Relate the importance of being a God-pleaser.*

There is a song that our church sang when I was a child. The song begins with these lyrics: “To be like Jesus, to be like Jesus, all I ask is to be like Him.” I can still recall the feelings that rose up in me as I sang that song. I had an overwhelming desire and passion to be like Jesus. As we have discovered, becoming like Jesus is to be natural for the Christian, but at the center of this process is a passion for God and a heart to please Him.

### Whom are we trying to please?

Everyone lives to please someone—himself or herself, a spouse, child, parent, boss, or others. The object of our pleasure reveals much about our ambitions, disposition, and spirit. Paul connects the process of sanctification with pleasing God. He writes, “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1). God is not just concerned with our outward obedience to His will but also with our inward motivation.

Being a God-pleaser is necessary for sanctification, and our devotion to Him is at the heart of becoming more like Jesus. Enoch “was commended as one who pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5). It was Enoch’s desire to please God, and his ambition was rewarded with his translation from this world to heaven. Talk about becoming like Him!

The apostle Paul is another great example of devotion and passion. Paul did not consider himself to have attained perfection, but acknowledged his longing to please Christ. He said in Philippians 3:14, “I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” Before we think that this God-pleasing attitude was exclusively for Paul, he

follows with this verse, "All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you" (Philippians 3:15).

A heart to please God will lead us to spiritual maturity and steady us through the process of sanctification. Our passion and devotion drive us to please Him. Jesus even testified, "for I always do what pleases Him" (John 8:29). We cannot become more like Jesus if we do not have a heart to please Him.

### The Jonah syndrome

From the pages of the Old Testament we find the chronicle of the prophet Jonah. The account of Jonah is not just a children's story; it is a real example of someone who reluctantly served God but failed to become a God-pleaser. We find Jonah running *from* God to Tarshish instead of *for* God to Nineveh. Keep in mind that Jonah was an Israelite and very nationalistic. To him, the pagan and cruel Assyrians of Nineveh were unworthy of God's mercy. The last thing this prophet wanted was to help such ungodly Ninevites avoid divine judgment. So, he found a ship heading in the opposite direction.

However, Jonah wound up being thrown overboard by the crew of the ship and being swallowed by a huge sea creature. Some think it was a fish while others suggest that it was a whale. The ancient Hebrew text does not make that distinction. Lest you dismiss this story as completely unbelievable, there are many documented cases of people living through extraordinary situations generally thought impossible. For instance, a young man in Minneapolis fell seventeen stories from a building and survived; a Japanese man survived three weeks on a mountain without food or water in a state similar to hibernation; an Australian diver was attacked and half-swallowed by a vicious shark but eventually escaped. When you factor in God's unlimited power and providence, it is certainly within the realm of possibility that Jonah's experience is real. Furthermore, Jesus

Christ spoke of Jonah as a real historical person and his experience as factual (see Matthew 12:40).

After three days of introspection in the belly of the sea creature, Jonah repented of his sin and surrendered himself to God's plan. After being expelled from the belly of the creature, Jonah made it to shore, traveled to Nineveh, and preached the message God had given him. As Jonah feared, the Ninevites repented, and God graciously cancelled plans for their destruction. This infuriated Jonah to such a degree that he asked God to take his life. It is sad that Jonah could not rejoice in the repentance of the city. God used the message and reluctant obedience of Jonah to spare a city of 120,000, yet the prophet's heart was hard and cold. Even though Jonah was part of a great revival, he found no pleasure in it. He did not comprehend the deep concern in the heart of God for lost humanity.

If we go through the motions of obedience and sanctification without a heart for God, the kingdom of God may advance—but we would not. There are those today who live by a set of religious rules and believe that is the way of holiness. They are not driven by a passion and devotion to desire the heart of God. Holiness to them is only an outward act; however, true holiness is conformity to God's nature.

So beware of the Jonah syndrome. It will lead to a miserable life of spiritual solitude and disappointment. Instead, pursue God with great devotion and be a God-pleaser. Submit yourself to the will of God, and rejoice in the ongoing work of sanctification.

## The Difficulties of Sanctification

### *Objective 4:*

*Describe the internal struggles involved in sanctification.*

### Apostle Paul's honesty

The apostle Paul knew full well the struggles associated with sanctification. He had a passion for God,



yet wrestled with his spiritual failures and difficulties. He wrote to the Galatians about this spiritual conflict: "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Galatians 5:17).

In the book of Romans, Paul pours his heart out about his struggles with sanctification. He identifies his biggest obstacle as being his own flesh. There was a war raging inside of him between his flesh and his spirit. His desire was to be more like Jesus, yet he seemingly found himself failing in his pursuit of Christ. "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing" (Romans 7:18–19).

### A common experience and enemy

Paul was not the only one who felt engaged in battle. Everyone wars with the sinful nature or flesh. Our sinful nature often rises up to undermine the Spirit of God within us. James notes, "But each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed" (James 1:14). The world will not encourage us in our pursuit of Christ. It will dangle pleasure, gratification, and power before us to lure us from the path of holiness. The world will always try to distract us from following hard after the Lord.

Furthermore, all believers have a common foe—Satan. Eve's fateful encounter with the devil in the Garden of Eden reminds us that man is no match for the devil. Satan is the master of deception and the father of lies. His mission in life goes beyond the destruction of humans; it is aimed at thwarting the very purposes of God. He desires to corrupt everything that God has created and pollute God's way of holiness.

Jesus himself faced the temptations of Satan during His forty days in the wilderness. What audacious pride

of the devil to think that he could defeat the divine Son of God! The enemy did his best to lure Jesus into accepting a plan for power and glory other than the one God the Father ordained from eternity past. But Jesus was not fooled by the master of deception; He resiliently stood against his temptations (See Luke 4:1–13).

### **Why the struggle?**

We may wonder why God does not just exterminate or nullify the power of our sinful nature once we come to Christ. Why does God leave us to face temptations that complicate our earthly lives? Why does He allow the devil to harass His children?

While there is no quick and easy answer to these questions, remember that God is teaching us how to be overcomers. Our earthly life is a proving ground, a place where we can put into practice Kingdom principles and know firsthand the love, power, and grace of God. To be victors, we will have to face battles. It is no wonder that the New Testament compares the Christian life to a race, a fight, to soldiering. We must learn how to trust and depend upon God for His strength and help. Among the great consolations we have is the sure hope that all our struggles will cease when our earthly life ends and we leave this world to enter the presence of the Lord.

## **The Disciplines of Sanctification**

### ***Objective 5:***

*Identify disciplines vital in becoming more like Jesus.*

In this section, we will look at three biblical disciplines that we all must develop to progress in sanctification. These disciplines are tools God uses to do His work in our life. They are very general, and you will probably think of other disciplines that will be helpful to you personally. However, unless you make these biblical disciplines a part of your daily life, it is unlikely that you will survive long or happily as a member of God's family.

## The discipline of the Word

Jesus overcame the devil and his temptations with the Word of God. He did not war against the enemy with logic or human reasoning, nor did He close His eyes and hope the devil would disappear. He spoke the authoritative Word of God and silenced the devil. Do you use the Word of God as your defense? We are quick to look to the Bible for direction, yet slow to speak it against our flesh and against the devil.

Paul instructs us to put on the full armor of God, so that we can take a stand against the devil's schemes (Ephesians 6:11). In Paul's list of the believer's armor, only one offensive weapon is identified—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Like Jesus and Paul, we must discipline ourselves to fight the enemy with God's Word, not with our wisdom.

There are two ways to use God's Word for developing Christlikeness. First, we must study and learn its moral principles. Do not underestimate the power of knowing what God expects. It is amazing how much sin can be avoided by simply knowing God's basic guidelines for living. Here are some suggestions on how to do this.

- Start by learning the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). These commandments form the basis for God's moral law imbedded throughout the whole Bible.
- Study the Beatitudes (Matthew 5–7), which represent Jesus' teaching on how His followers should live. Jesus warned that ignoring His teachings is to court disaster!
- Become familiar with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22–23.
- Study the book of Proverbs. Proverbs are short, easy to remember statements that communicate godly wisdom. You will learn to love them and find great advice over a wide range of subjects. Make it your goal to read one chapter of Proverbs per day. Since

there are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs, it is easy to read the book of Proverbs through once a month.

The Holy Spirit in you will be faithful to remind you of the principles you learn from Scripture. He will also give you power to live in agreement with God's ways.

The second way to use God's Word for developing Christlikeness is to quote it when we come under attack. If we are not careful, we can fall into the same trap that Eve did (see Genesis 3), attempting to carry on a conversation with the enemy, explaining and defending our point of view. This strategy will not work because the devil is capable of outwitting and deceiving us. Discipline yourself to use the sword of the Spirit against the enemy when you feel your flesh rising up and urging you to think, say, or do something sinful. You may be embarrassed to do this at first, especially if others overhear you, but quoting Scripture is very effective in resisting the flesh and the devil.

Keep in mind that quoting God's Word is not like using a magical formula to pull a rabbit out of a hat. Many false religions have expressions or incantations that, if uttered, are supposed to bring relief, success, or good fortune. However, such activities have no linkage to being in personal relationship with the One True God. Only a born-again Christian has the God-given authority to quote God's Word and be confident of results. The act of using the Word is based entirely on being in right relationship with the Lord. Moreover, simply mouthing and pronouncing the Word is not enough. Faith in God is vital. The enemy cannot stand against a faith-driven, Spirit-filled child of God who quotes God's Word.

### The discipline of prayer

Jesus was a man of prayer, and every hero of faith was faithful to seek the face of God. Prayer is a powerful discipline that will work only when practiced. Jesus assures us that when we ask, we will receive; when we seek, we will find; and when we knock, it will be opened to us. Discipline yourself to pray often. Pray God's Word against

the enemy of your soul. Read the writings of the apostle Paul and you will find much encouragement there for prayer.

### The discipline of good relationships

God calls us to establish relationships with people of the same mind, faith, and commitment. We are also called to avoid relationships that trap us into compromising situations. Many formerly godly and devout Christians have lost their way because of their refusal to break off destructive relationships. As a Christian you are part of God's family, the church, which includes many people of various backgrounds. The common denominator is our commitment to Jesus Christ. Look to form strong friendships with spiritually healthy people who are good examples. These are the kinds of people who will be genuinely concerned about how you are doing spiritually and in other areas of your life. They will pray for you and hold you accountable.

You may ask, "But what about my unsaved friends? How will they ever know about Christ if I cut them off?" God is not asking you to cut off all contact with non-Christians; rather, God expects your closest and most significant friends to be fellow believers. The truth is that as you get closer to Christ and become more like Him, some of your old worldly friends will probably cut you off! They will not find you fun anymore because you no longer find pleasure in sinful behavior. Remember, your verbal testimony to the unsaved needs to be backed by an equally powerful example of a godly life.

## **The Dependency of Sanctification**

### *Objective 6:*

*Point out the role of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification.*

### The Spirit's work

Sanctification is not simply the struggle and working out of human efforts. It is also a work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit begins, pursues, and completes

the process of sanctification in our lives. It is He who convicts us and purges us of our sins. He dwells within us as God's abiding resident and continually transforms us into the image of Jesus Christ. He works through the biblical disciplines mentioned in the previous section.

Listen to what Paul says about the work of the Holy Spirit: "For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13). With the Spirit's help we can put to death the deeds of the body, for the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

### Giving place to the Spirit

We must daily give place to the indwelling Spirit of God. Our struggle is between our flesh and the resident Holy Spirit. He is able to give us the victory against every obstacle of sanctification. Sin does not need to have dominion in our lives. We have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to live above sin's clutches and strongholds.

This is great hope for us! This life of sanctification and becoming more like Jesus is God's divine purpose for every believer. We must be confident that He who began a good work in us "will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God will be faithful to see us through our journey with Him. He does not abandon us. He is the supplier of our strength, peace, hope, and forgiveness.

### Daily cleansing available

As Jesus was preparing to wash the disciples' feet, Peter objected, not wanting Christ to wash his feet. Jesus responded with these words, "'Unless I wash you, you have no part with me'" (John 13:8). Peter was deeply convicted and invited Christ to wash not only his feet but also his hands and head. Jesus then shares these words of great truth, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean" (John 13:10).

As disciples of Jesus, we do not need to go back to the wash tub of initial conversion, but we desperately need the basin of cleansing. Our feet get dirty as we walk the pathway of life, and our hands get soiled from handling the world. When we fail, let us be quick to repent and call upon God's name. John reminds us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). The Holy Spirit is more active and instrumental in our lives than we realize. He is our Comforter and Enabler. Take time to fellowship with Him every day.

## Conclusion

A church member went by the new church construction site to watch the progress of the building. A stone mason caught his attention as he carefully and persistently worked on one unusually looking stone. He asked the mason, "What are you doing?" Pointing to the top of the building, the mason replied, "I'm chipping the last stone to fit in way up there."

In similar fashion, God is chipping away at us down here to fit us into His kingdom. This is the work of sanctification, and one day it will be complete as sanctification gives way to glorification. Enjoy your wonderful journey of sanctification.

## KEY SCRIPTURES FOR MEMORIZATION

Romans 8:13

1 Corinthians 6:11

2 Corinthians 7:1

Galatians 5:17

Ephesians 6:11

Colossians 3:5, 10

1 Thessalonians 4:1–3

1 Thessalonians 5:23–24

1 Peter 1:13–16

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *Sanctification is defined as*
  - a) *an act of separation from that which is evil and separating it to God.*
  - b) *God's pronouncement of sinners as righteous.*
  - c) *the process of imparting new life.*
2. *What is God's purpose for sanctification?*
  - a) *To teach us not to sin*
  - b) *To develop His holiness in our lives*
  - c) *To judicially free us from all condemnation*
3. *In the process of our sanctification, God*
  - a) *strips away our improper attitudes.*
  - b) *abandons us, for He cannot tolerate sin.*
  - c) *enjoys our pain and suffering.*
4. *When do we often grow to become Christlike?*
  - a) *While enjoying the mountaintop experiences of life*
  - b) *During the various trials we encounter*
  - c) *When we work harder at being good people*
5. *Those who commit their lives to the work of sanctification are devoted to being*
  - a) *God-performers, pretending to look after the things of God.*
  - b) *God-police, minding the affairs of others.*
  - c) *God-pleasers, passionate for the things of God.*
6. *The greatest things we will war against in becoming more like Jesus will come from our*
  - a) *family.*
  - b) *flesh.*
  - c) *fortune.*



7. *Whoever said that sanctification was going to be easy did not understand the*
  - a) *need for personal accountability and spiritual disciplines.*
  - b) *expectations placed upon you by church leadership.*
  - c) *challenge of answering these sanctification questions.*
8. *Spiritual discipline always includes*
  - a) *church membership and children's ministry.*
  - b) *giving of our tithes and keeping the law.*
  - c) *putting off the old nature and putting on the nature of Christ.*
9. *The key ingredient and empowerment in our becoming more like Jesus is the*
  - a) *spirit of determination and fortitude within us.*
  - b) *encouragement and edification given by others.*
  - c) *residential and transforming work of the Holy Spirit.*
10. *What analogy did the writer use to describe God's work and purpose of sanctification in our lives?*
  - a) *God is polishing us down here to shine for Him up there.*
  - b) *God is chipping us down here to fit us in His kingdom.*
  - c) *God is equipping us down here to be rewarded up there.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. a (10.1)
2. b (10.1)
3. a (10.2)
4. b (10.2)
5. c (10.3)
6. b (10.4)
7. a (10.5)
8. c (10.5)
9. c (10.6)
10. b (10.6)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 11

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# How to Deal with Temptation

In both the Old and New Testaments, we read that the temptation to sin will always be nearby. Therefore, the apostle Paul exhorts in 1 Corinthians 16:13, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong.” Later in the New Testament, the apostle Peter writes, “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). The devil has schemes to outwit and swindle us out of God’s blessings (Jeremiah 29:11).

The good news is that as Christians we are not at the devil’s mercy. God wants us to be aware of the enemy’s tactics (see 2 Corinthians 2:11). Therefore, God has provided us with His armor. Paul instructs, “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” (Ephesians 6:11). The armor is fully described as “the belt of truth,” the “breastplate of righteousness,” “the gospel of peace” for our feet, “the shield of faith,” “the helmet of salvation,” the “sword of the Spirit” which is the Word of God, and prayer (Ephesians 6:14–18).

## LESSON OUTLINE

What is Temptation?  
 Common Areas of Temptation  
 The Temptation of Jesus  
 How to Resist Temptation  
 The Law of Sowing and Reaping

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Define temptation.*
- 2: *Identify common areas of temptation.*
- 3: *Recount Jesus' temptation in the wilderness.*
- 4: *Explain how to resist temptation.*
- 5: *Discuss the law of sowing and reaping.*

### What is Temptation?

#### **Objective 1:**

*Define temptation.*

Temptation can be described generally as an enticement to do wrong, to enjoy a forbidden pleasure, to fulfill a desire that is contrary to God's will, even to return to the sins that enslaved us prior to meeting Christ. Before we were born again, it was natural for us to yield to temptation, for we were sinners. Paul writes that we were spiritually dead.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in

those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:1–5)

Being a Christian does not exempt us from temptation. Often we go through seasons of tremendous growth in which we gain wisdom, knowledge, and spiritual strength. But beware that temptation still lurks close by. If we are not careful, it can pull us in. While temptation can come at any time, we are more susceptible to it when we are tired, alone, or going through conflict. Temptation can rear its ugly head even while we are involved in ministry. Because we are in a constant battle, Paul warns, “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong” (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Facing temptation is not the same as falling into sin. Temptation is the experience we have prior to actually engaging in sin. God does not hold us accountable for facing temptation unless we willingly place ourselves in situations that can compromise our integrity. While we certainly can avoid some temptation, we cannot evade all of it. Even our Lord and Savior Jesus faced it head-on when He lived on earth. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

You, like all Christians throughout the ages, will have to make important choices and put God first in all areas of your life. Jesus addressed this in the Sermon on the Mount: “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6:24).

## Common Areas of Temptation

### *Objective 2:*

*Identify common areas of temptation.*

The Bible tells us that there are three main areas of temptation: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life. The apostle John writes, “For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16 NKJV). Let us talk about these three areas of temptation.

### Lust of the Flesh

In this case, the flesh refers to the physical body and its appetites. It is our flesh that lets us know we are hungry, thirsty, or tired. Our flesh is also affected by our sinful nature and may crave gratification in areas that are off-limits to Christians. These areas include immoral sexual pleasure, pornography, drunkenness, gluttony, wild parties, drugs, and so on.

Not even the apostle Paul, a man of unflinching integrity and purity, had confidence in his own flesh. He wrote in Romans 7:18, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” Jesus warned us that our flesh would be weak when it comes to temptations. Matthew 26:41 records, “‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.’”

You will find at times that there is a battle between the desires of your flesh and your spirit's desire to please God. Your spirit is that unseen part of you that is in relationship with God. Your body's wants need to submit to your spirit just as your spirit must submit to the control of God's Holy Spirit.

In Galatians chapter five, Paul provides two lists—“the acts of the sinful nature” and “the fruit of the Spirit.” There is nothing in the acts of the sinful nature that we should want, for these things will alienate us from the

presence of God. Such behaviors are “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies” (Galatians 5:19–21).

Now the honorable behaviors of the fruit of the Spirit are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22–23). Our goal should always be to live by the Spirit.

### Lust of the eyes

The lust of the eyes refers to our insatiable desire to acquire things. Perhaps you too feel that urge. Giving in to the lust of the eyes can lead to compulsive buying, stealing, debt, unscrupulous methods of earning money, and other serious problems. Moreover, having it all never really satisfies. Only God can make a person fulfilled.

Let us consider a couple of biblical examples of those who gave in to the lust of the eyes. First is the account of Eve taking the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. God had given so much to Adam and Eve but had withheld one thing from them—the fruit of one tree in the middle of the garden. It was a simple test, of course, to see if the first humans would honor and obey God. But one day after the devil convinced her that God was being unfair in withholding the fruit from her, Eve longed for and lusted after the fruit of the forbidden tree. She “saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye” (Genesis 3:6). Eve listened to the serpent and gave in to the lust of the eye. She ate of the fruit, gave to her husband who was with her, and he ate too (Genesis 3:1–19). Thus, that one act of disobedience opened the door to further acts of depravity. It forever changed the nature of humankind by creating a breach in the relationship between God and humanity.

Second, in the book of Joshua is the tragic story of Achan, who yielded to the lust of the eyes. In the conquest of Canaan, God had promised to go before His people, Israel, and give them great victory in dislodging and driving out the Canaanites, who were idolatrous



and corrupt. When Joshua and the armies of Israel went against the first city of Canaan, Jericho, God had warned them not to take any plunder. The city of Jericho was to be a memorial to the power of God. You may recall that God himself caused the famous walls to fall flat without any human weaponry (Joshua 6:20). The heaps of stones that had formerly been the impregnable walls of the city were to serve as a testimony to all who passed it that the God of Israel was great and mighty.

However, in the course of taking Jericho, an Israelite warrior named Achan plundered a silk robe, five pounds of silver, and more than a pound of gold and buried them in his tent. Because Achan gave in to the lust of his eyes and disobeyed God's sacred command to not take plunder, God withdrew His blessing from the Israelites when they next engaged the small town of Ai (Joshua 7). In this next battle, a number of Israelite soldiers lost their lives in combat, and Achan and his entire family perished.

Therefore, it is critical to beware of the lust of the eyes. God is not against your enjoying nice things, but consider whether the object of your desire is necessary, appropriate, wholesome, and pleasing to God. Also, consider whether it is the right time to acquire it.

### Pride of life

The pride of life is an arrogant assumption that we can accomplish things without the help of God or without obeying His commandments. In the ancient Greek world a few hundreds years before Christ, people believed the gods lived on Mount Olympus and were ruled by Zeus. The Greeks invented a complex, though terribly misguided, mythology about their gods, complete with family histories and amazing stories. It seems that their gods were not all good or all powerful; in fact, ancient Greek stories occasionally portray people who are able to outwit the gods. This was an attempt to demonstrate the humans' intelligence, ability, and sufficiency.

In contrast to the ancient Greeks, the Jews believed that man was created in the image of God and that God

was the ultimate authority. His ways and thoughts were higher than human ways and thoughts. He was able to perform mighty deeds that man could not, and He was eternal and infinite. Read through the Old Testament, and you will see how the ancient Hebrew prophets constantly pointed out these truths.

In our world today, many people arrogantly assume that they do not need God. They believe that they are capable of taking care of themselves. But Proverbs 16:18 warns, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” Our enemy, the devil, stands as a prime example of the menace of pride. He was created to serve as a glorious angel near God’s throne. He apparently guarded the presence of God. Many scholars believe that Isaiah records Lucifer’s choice to place himself above God: “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’” (14:13–14).

Lucifer fell into sin through pride and lost his place in heaven. His eventual fate in the lake of fire was sealed for eternity. Revelation 20:10 foretells, “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Sadly, the same fate awaits all who succumb to the pride of life and do not repent. If we attempt to put ourselves above God, we fall into the same trap as Lucifer and the one third of the angelic beings that followed him.

## The Temptation of Jesus

### *Objective 3:*

*Recount Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.*

As we pointed out earlier, the Bible tells us that Jesus was tempted in every way. This does not mean that He dealt with specific modern issues such as

internet pornography, X-rated movies, and credit card identity theft because such things did not exist at that time. However, Jesus, being fully human, dealt with the temptations common to all people. Therefore, He knows what we go through when tempted. Yet, He never succumbed to any temptation. He remained sinless.

Scripture offers numerous examples of those who were successful in overcoming temptation, but the preeminent illustration of resisting temptation is that of Jesus in the wilderness. This temptation occurred at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, just after He was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Satan himself came to tempt Jesus. Take a few minutes right now and read Matthew 4:1–11. In this passage, we see that the Holy Spirit led Jesus to the wilderness for a forty-day fast. Afterward, the devil arrived and tempted Jesus in all three areas we discussed earlier—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life. In each area of temptation, Jesus overcame the devil by using the Word of God.

The first temptation Satan brings to Christ is to have Him turn stones into bread. Bear in mind that Jesus is famished after having gone so many days without eating. The idea of bread is probably very appealing to His flesh, but any request from Satan must be ignored. This temptation falls under the category of the lust of the flesh. In dealing with this temptation, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3: "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." Later, Jesus tells His disciples, "'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work'" (John 4:34).

In the next temptation, Satan dares Jesus to throw himself down from the highest point of the temple in Jerusalem and let God's angels rescue Him from death. By performing this feat, Jesus could achieve immediate public attention and fame as the Messiah. The problem is that this act would be showy, dramatic, and

inappropriate. Satan perhaps hoped that Jesus would view it as a shortcut to popularity, avoiding the trials that would come His way over the next three years. But Jesus knew that it is best to follow the Father's plan and timetable. Thus, the Lord quotes Deuteronomy 6:16: "Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah." This temptation falls under the category of the pride of life, for it sought to make Jesus show off His power in a way not glorifying to God the Father.

The third and final temptation in the wilderness falls under the category of the lust of the eyes. The devil takes Jesus to a mountain and shows Him the splendor of the kingdoms of the world. Satan offers Jesus all that an ambitious person could want—riches, comfort, influence, and power. Satan knows that Jesus is destined to be the King of Kings and Ruler of the world—but only after great suffering. So he offers Jesus a shortcut to becoming the King. There is a catch, however. The devil wants Jesus to bow before him and worship him. Jesus instead rebukes the enemy by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13: "Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name." In each of the three temptations, Jesus quotes from God's Word in the Old Testament and resists the enemy's onslaughts.

## How to Resist Temptation

### *Objective 4:*

*Explain how to resist temptation.*

### Use the Word of God

In the previous section, we learned that Jesus overcame each of Satan's temptations by using God's Word. This approach to dealing with temptation is critical for us, too. We have access to Scripture and can use it in our battles with temptation. The Scriptures contain divine commands, promises, truths, and principles that we can memorize and use in bringing our flesh into conformity with God's will. We can also

use Scripture if under demonic attack. The enemy will eventually flee as we diligently stand on God's Word.

Jesus could have easily dismissed the devil with a brief command, but He chose to deal with Satan by using a tactic available to us all—quoting Scripture. This is one of the reasons why it is wise to memorize portions of the Bible so that you have a ready defense in the day of trouble.

### Look for the way of escape

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul wrote, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). God will always provide a way of escape.

Modern fighter jets have a way of escape for a pilot who feels that it is too dangerous to remain inside the plane. The pilot sits in an ejection seat that, in an emergency, is propelled out of the aircraft by a small rocket motor. Once clear of the aircraft, the ejection seat deploys a parachute and descends safely to earth. Many thousands of pilots have been saved by using this way of escape. However, it should be noted that the ride is not comfortable! The pilot who ejects experiences tremendous strain as the G forces pull at his or her body. Still, this discomfort is better than a crash and burn scenario.

When facing temptation, always look for the way out. God's way of escape for you may be changing the subject in an ungodly conversation, leaving a room where people may be watching something improper on the television, hanging out with godly friends rather than with a group of people who are scheming to do wrong, canceling your subscription to cable, satellite TV or certain magazines, or simply saying "No!" when confronted by temptation. You always have a choice! Doing the right thing may not be comfortable; it may

even be temporarily unpleasant. However, this is better than crashing spiritually and morally.

### Flee temptation

There are times when we must face temptations head on, and there are other times when we need to remove ourselves physically from the enticement. Paul advises Timothy, "Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Think about what it means to flee. Animals flee from predators that desire to eat them. People flee from natural disasters and other types of peril. The one who flees does not worry about his or her reputation or prestige. He or she does not worry about being called a coward. Flight is a proper response to certain kinds of danger. Do not be embarrassed to flee from strong temptation.

In Genesis is the account of Joseph. His older brothers sell him into slavery, and he ends up serving Potiphar, a powerful official in Egypt. Joseph demonstrates integrity and diligence in all he does, so Potiphar promotes him to the highest position a servant could have. Joseph is managing Potiphar's household. Things are going very well for Joseph when Potiphar's unscrupulous wife attempts to seduce Joseph. But Joseph resists her advances.

Potiphar's wife tries day after day to lure Joseph into bed with her, but he continually rejects her. Not one to give up easily, the woman attempts to ensnare Joseph when only she and he are at home. This time Joseph flees the scene and leaves the house. His behavior honors God though it infuriates Potiphar's wife. In revenge, she falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape, and Joseph is imprisoned. But God never forgot what Joseph did, and in due time, Joseph is released from prison and is promoted to the second highest position in all of Egypt (see Genesis 39–41).

Joseph's success demonstrates that you do not need to be ashamed of fleeing from temptation. So get used to the idea because you will probably have to flee temptation many times in your life.

### Keep your mind focused

The human mind is an amazing part of who and what we are. It is more than the physical organ we call our brain. The mind includes consciousness, memories, logical thought, and desires. Did you know you can train your mind just as you can train your body physically? Athletes learn to focus their training on the parts of their bodies coming under high demand. They work at building muscle memory and strength as they seek to increase endurance.

The mind can be taught to focus on things that please God. It takes diligent work to educate and coach the mind to focus on godly things, but the rewards are great. The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." As you focus your thinking properly, your mind will undergo transformation and renewal. Many temptations that used to plague you will vanish.

### Pray

When Jesus' disciples asked Him to teach them how to pray, He gave them a model prayer (see Matthew 6:9–13 and Luke 11:2–4). In this prayer, Jesus includes a very important petition: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). This petition does not imply that God is the source of temptation. Instead, the request is for God to lead the one praying away from temptation. Praying to God when you face temptation gets His immediate attention. God really wants you to be victorious over anything that would harm you spiritually and lead you astray.

## Rely on the Holy Spirit's guidance and strength

No one can force us to sin, nor can anyone force us to make right choices. We have free will. However, God has given us His Spirit to guide us into all truth. If we follow His leadership, we will avoid the snares of this world and of the enemy. If we have a desire to stay pure, the Spirit will also provide supernatural strength to help us resist temptation.

The apostle Paul warns, "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). We are to be continually filled with and led by the Spirit. Essentially, in the same way that being drunk with wine leads to debauchery or wicked behavior, being filled with the Spirit leads to righteous living. Thus, through the power of the Holy Spirit we are able to deny our old nature. The closer we get to God, the more we will desire to obey Him and the more sensitive we may become to temptation.

## **The Law of Sowing and Reaping**

### *Objective 5:*

*Discuss the law of sowing and reaping.*

You may have heard of the spiritual law of sowing and reaping. It is very similar to the natural law of sowing and reaping. When farmers plant seeds, they do so with the expectation of enjoying the harvest or reaping. Furthermore, when they sow corn seed, they do not get tomatoes; they get corn. They reap what they sow!

In Galatians 6:7-8, Paul tells the Galatians, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."

Before you were a Christian, you sowed bad seed, yielding constantly to temptation. What were the results? You got into trouble; people turned against you; you experienced emptiness, guilt and sorrow; and you



were spiritually lost. Coming to Christ broke that cycle. God forgave your sins and gave you a new life. Now, you are able to sow good seed, thinking and doing those things that please God. The result or the reaping is joy, peace, good relationships, and eternal life.

It is imperative for you as a Christian to reflect on the law of sowing and reaping, especially when you are tempted. If you continue sowing bad seed, you will not avoid the inevitably troubling and painful consequences. Let me illustrate this by pointing out one of the great tragedies in Scripture, King David's sin with Bathsheba (see 2 Samuel 11). Keep in mind that David was Israel's hero. Up to this point, he had led a virtuous life. He fought courageously in battle, he led the people in worship, and God's favor rested upon him.

The account begins with King David in Jerusalem, looking out over the city from the rooftop. It was night, so he could see into some homes where oil lamps were burning. It was spring, the time of year when ancient kings generally went off to war. In fact, the Israelite army was engaged in battle with the Ammonites. For some reason, David had stayed behind.

From his vantage point on top of the palace, David noticed a beautiful woman bathing, and he lusted after her. Now, David already had numerous wives and concubines, so he could have fled the rooftop to the comfort of one of his wives or members of his harem. Instead, David sought out this lovely female, and learned that she was a married woman named Bathsheba. He sent for her, engaged in sex with her, and dispatched her back to her house. But she became pregnant! David's sinful choice unleashed a series of events that ultimately led him to commit murder to cover up his deed.

Although David eventually repented of his sins and was forgiven, his sin had already unlocked the door for tragedies in his life. He had sown the sins of lust, adultery, and murder and reaped unimaginable sorrow. The Bible tells us the following:

- The baby born to Bathsheba died.

- One of David's sons, Amnon, followed the example of his father's immoral behavior, and he raped his half sister, Tamar. In retaliation, another of David's sons, Absalom, murdered the rapist. As a result, Absalom became estranged from and bitter toward his father.
- Later, Absalom attempted a coup in order to steal the kingdom from his father. This too ended in death, for Absalom was eventually caught and executed by Joab, David's military commander.

The lesson to be learned from this ugly series of tragedies is that we need to be victorious over temptation and avoid sin at all cost. We reap what we sow.

## Conclusion

We need to understand what temptation is and recognize the common areas where it will strike us. Jesus' use of the Word in resisting temptation provides a valuable example for all Christians. Since God has revealed in His Word numerous strategies for overcoming temptation, we must learn and use them.

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question and carefully circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *Temptation comes to*
  - a) *only people who are weak.*
  - b) *only people who do not go to church.*
  - c) *all people.*
2. *God is*
  - a) *the source of all temptation.*
  - b) *just waiting for us to yield to temptation.*
  - c) *never the source of temptation.*
3. *First Peter 5:8 identifies our enemy as*
  - a) *the devil.*
  - b) *those who do not like us.*
  - c) *leaders of cults.*
4. *According to Scripture, the three main areas of temptation are*
  - a) *alcohol, drugs, and tobacco*
  - b) *lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and pride of life*
  - c) *money, sex, and Internet.*
5. *The goal of temptation is to*
  - a) *swindle us out of the blessings of God.*
  - b) *show how weak we are.*
  - c) *show how strong we are.*
6. *Jesus counteracted Satan's temptations by*
  - a) *closing His eyes.*
  - b) *running away.*
  - c) *quoting and applying appropriate Scripture.*
7. *Yielding to the lust of the flesh is generally*
  - a) *giving in to our sinful nature.*
  - b) *being hungry.*
  - c) *being tired.*
8. *A practical escape out of temptation and into godly living is to*
  - a) *never leave your home.*
  - b) *shift an ungodly conversation into a wholesome topic.*
  - c) *yield to temptation.*

9. *True of Jesus' experiences on earth is that*
  - a) *Jesus was tempted at the beginning of His ministry.*
  - b) *Jesus yielded to the enemy's temptation.*
  - c) *Jesus was never tempted.*
10. *Yielding to temptation can lead to*
  - a) *our own fall from grace.*
  - b) *the destruction of our family.*
  - c) *all of the above*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. c (11.1)
2. c (11.4)
3. a (11.1)
4. b (11.2)
5. a (11.1)
6. c (11.3)
7. a (11.2)
8. b (11.4)
9. a (11.3)
10. c (11.5)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 12

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# The Fruit of the Spirit

Webster's dictionary defines fruit as "the effect or consequence of an action or operation." This fits well with the Scriptures' teaching on the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit develops as a direct result of the Spirit's action in our lives as Christians. In fact, the process begins the moment a person accepts Christ as Lord and Savior.

The apostle Paul writes, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:19–23). Paul makes a unique distinction between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh flow out of our sinful human nature, but the fruit of the Spirit is the result of the Spirit's activity in us. Growing the proper fruit is impossible without the Holy Spirit, but we also have a part to play in the process. We must willingly cooperate and respond to what the Spirit is doing in us.

## LESSON OUTLINE

The Role of Salvation in Bearing Fruit  
A Balanced Life  
The Nine Fruit of the Spirit

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Point out prerequisites for bearing fruit.*
- 2: *Explain the need for both the fruit and gifts of the Spirit.*
- 3: *Describe the nine fruit of the Spirit.*

### The Role of Salvation in Bearing Fruit

#### **Objective 1:**

*Point out prerequisites for bearing fruit.*

#### **Born again**

In order for there to be fruit, there has to be life. We must experience salvation through faith in Christ before we can bear fruit. This salvation is often referred to as regeneration, or the “born-again experience.” A true believer and follower of Christ is indwelt by the Holy Spirit who produces good fruit. Matthew records these words of Jesus, “Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:17–19). Regeneration is a prerequisite for bearing good fruit.

#### **Abiding in Christ**

A second prerequisite for fruit-bearing is an ongoing union with Christ by the Spirit. John records Jesus’

words, “‘I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned’” (John 15:5–6). Notice that Jesus is the vine, and we are His branches. We have to abide in the vine to grow and bring forth fruit. People who do not follow through on their commitment to Christ and stay in close fellowship with Him cannot produce spiritual fruit pleasing to God. If you uproot a flowering plant from the ground, you would not expect it to blossom. Likewise, when we are not rooted and grounded in a relationship with Christ, we will not bring forth fruit.

### Living in the Spirit

A third prerequisite for fruit-bearing is that there must be a desire to live in the Spirit. Paul says in Galatians 5:16, “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” Living in the Spirit is sometimes referred to as walking in the Spirit, and it indicates one’s yielding to the Spirit’s direction and guidance. To be led by the Spirit implies surrender to the authority and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Consider this brief illustration: When traveling in a foreign country, it is much easier to have a knowledgeable guide. The guide knows the geography and culture of the land and can make visiting a new place more interesting and enjoyable. So it is for the believer. When we are led by the Spirit of God, our journey on earth becomes far more God-pleasing and productive.

### Sowing and reaping

A final prerequisite for fruit-bearing is recognition of the law of sowing and reaping. Paul writes, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life” (Galatians 6:7–8). We need to ask ourselves what kinds of



things we want to reap in our lives. If we want the right kind of harvest, we need to sow properly. We sow good seed by doing what the Lord asks of us.

In his epistles or letters, the apostle Paul identifies a number of negative human attributes. He calls them the works of the flesh or the acts of the sinful nature. Some of these works are immorality, impurity, sensuality, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, drunkenness, and carousing. These are all the result of improper sowing. Knowing that God wants to produce good fruit in us, we have a responsibility to sow properly so that with the Spirit's help we reap a good harvest.

## A Balanced Life

### *Objective 2:*

*Explain the need for both the fruit and gifts of the Spirit.*

The gifts of the Spirit are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10: the message of wisdom, the message of knowledge, the gift of faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. As God's children, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we can personally experience the gifts of the Spirit. However, due to the often exciting nature of these spiritual manifestations, some people focus more on the gifts than on the fruit of the Spirit.

While recognizing the importance of the gifts, let us not lose sight of the significance of the fruit of the Spirit. There are nine fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5, and nine gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12. Both are divine and supernatural. A good way to understand the difference between the two is to remember that fruit is for developing Christlike character in our lives. Gifts are predominantly outwardly focused, to minister to the body of Christ and others. Fruit takes time to grow; gifts are given immediately.

People who exercise spiritual gifts have the greatest need to show the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual gifts do not measure the spiritual depth and character of a believer. In fact, the believer who operates in the gifts of the Spirit without much evidence of spiritual fruit can dishonor both his or her own testimony and that of Christ. Such inconsistency must be avoided at all cost!

Clearly, God places great value on the fruit of the Spirit. It is the quiet influence of a Christlike life rather than the seemingly explosive power of the gifts that truly validates a person's relationship with the Lord. The optimum condition is when fruit and gifts work harmoniously in the believer's life.

Christians are a work in progress. Growth in all areas of our lives is continuous and progressive. Furthermore, when we speak of the fruit of the Spirit growing in our life, we must remember two simple truths: the believer must cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and fruit produces visible change.

### Cooperating with the Holy Spirit

The Lord will not force development of spiritual fruit in our lives. He alone can produce fruit, but we must yield to Him. Therefore, we must avoid doing what displeases and grieves Him. If we want to see growth of spiritual fruit, we have to make a concerted effort to keep out the weeds or acts of the sinful nature and stay connected to the vine, the source of life.

### Fruit produces visible change

While the development of the fruit is ongoing and perhaps not as rapid as you wish, changes will be noticeable. People will see the fruit of the Spirit in your life and be amazed. This brings glory to God! While you are not yet the finished product of God's workmanship, you are also not what you used to be. God is pleased when He sees genuine progress, so do not be discouraged when the fruit seems to be growing too slowly. Remember that God does not see what we used to be; He sees what we will become.

## The Nine Fruit of the Spirit

### *Objective 3:*

*Describe the nine fruit of the Spirit.*

Paul writes in Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Let us look at each of these nine fruit of the Spirit.

### Love

Love produced by the Holy Spirit is different from human, natural love. This fruit of the Spirit goes beyond natural love in that it produces love for our enemies. When we love our enemies, we do not merely put up with them; we are motivated to do good to them. Jesus taught, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:43–44). This is the kind of love Jesus showed when He hung on the Cross and cried, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). And this is the love that Jesus wants to produce in each of us.

Love borne out of the Spirit is sacrificial and does not fail. It is in the area of sacrifice that natural love most resembles the spiritual fruit of love. When natural love is strong, a person may be willing to sacrifice for the one he or she loves, even to the point of death. This is what God did for us. Paul writes, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Thus, love that comes of the Spirit is sacrificial and never fades.

### Joy

The Spirit desires to produce joy in our lives. In fact, joy should be a dominant trait in every believer. Many Bible verses speak of joy. Jesus said, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). The psalmist writes also, "I

will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints will ever sing for joy" (Psalm 132:16). Isaiah continues, "And the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads" (Isaiah 35:10). Then, "In thy presence is fulness of joy" (Psalm 16:11 KJV).

There is a big difference between natural joy or happiness and spiritual joy. Natural joy is usually based on circumstances. When things go well or people experience good things, they feel joy. However, the fruit of joy produced by God's Spirit does not require comfortable circumstances. For instance, when Paul and Silas were in the Philippian jail, they chose to sing praises to God at midnight although they were in great physical pain (see Acts 16:25). Their attitude in the face of persecution showed the Spirit's joy.

## Peace

God's peace is brought into our hearts as a fruit of the indwelling Spirit of God. Its source is the atoning work of Christ on the Cross. Paul writes, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). We first experience God's peace when we are born again.

The fruit of peace fills our hearts so that even in times of great turmoil we still experience it. How is the fruit of peace different from the natural serenity that even unsaved people feel from time to time? Like the fruit of joy, the fruit of peace does not depend upon circumstances. God's peace passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

## Patience

Sometimes patience is described as "long-suffering." God is patient and long-suffering with humankind in general and even with His true followers. He is slow to anger, compassionate, and gracious. Read how God describes himself in Exodus 34:6-7: "And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, 'The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger,

abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.” Surely, patience is one of God’s most noteworthy attributes. The apostle Peter writes, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

As Christians, we need the fruit of patience. The journey of life is long, but we cannot lose heart. Though we desire to be with Christ and escape the trials of this world, we must be patient. Consider Paul’s desire for the Colossians. He prayed that they would be strengthened with all power according to God’s glorious might so that they may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified them to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:11–12).

Patience is essential in our dealings with people, both Christian and non-Christian. People will disappoint and fail us. They will wrong us and be slow to change. But just as God is long-suffering with us, we must be patient with others. No believer can afford to ignore this fruit of the Spirit if he or she wants to become a servant of God.

## **Kindness**

When you think of kindness, what comes to mind? Paul tells us that God’s kindness leads people toward repentance (Romans 2:4). We are commanded by Scripture to be kind in our spiritual life and our relationships with others. Peter writes, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith . . . brotherly kindness” (2 Peter 1:5–7). Paul advises in Colossians, “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with . . . kindness” (Colossians 3:12). In Ephesians 4:32, Paul writes again, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Notice in this verse that one of the ways we show kindness is by forgiving others when they have wronged us.

We see a great example of kindness in the Old Testament account of Joseph and his brothers. After having been sold into slavery by his older brothers and having experienced many other traumatic events, Joseph could have been very cruel to them. But he chose to show them kindness. Genesis records, "But Joseph said to them [his brothers], 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.' And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them" (50:19–21). Each of us, as Christians, has been shown kindness by God in that He saved us; the least we can do now is show kindness toward others.

### Goodness

A life of goodness is strong evidence that a spiritual and moral transformation is taking place in a person. Jesus said, "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him" (Matthew 12:35). Later, Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, "that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work" (Colossians 1:10).

Do not ever think that God is not concerned about good works. The Bible teaches us that we are not saved because of good works; however, good works must be evident once we are born again. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10 that we were "created in Christ Jesus to do good works." We are His workmanship. God saves us that we might serve Him and others. Read what Tim LaHaye (1993) writes, in the *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*, about the fruit of goodness.

Many a Christian has cheated himself out of the blessing of the Holy Spirit's inspired impulse to do something good or kind for someone else by not obeying that urge. Instead of bringing joy to someone else's life by an act of kindness, the self-centered person stifles the impulse and sinks deeper

and deeper in the slough of despondency and gloom. It is one thing to get good impulses; it is quite another to transmit them into acts of goodness.

### Faithfulness

Genuine faith produces faithfulness. Faithfulness can be seen in the way a believer conscientiously studies God's Word, prays, worships, serves, gives, lives, and carries out responsibilities. It affects every area of life. Paul writes, "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

Faithfulness, like all the other fruit of the Spirit, grows. It develops as we complete smaller responsibilities. Then, God entrusts us with greater tasks. This new life we have in Christ is lived from a position of trust. It is contradictory to trust God for eternity but not in our daily relationships and activities. Jesus promises that if we are "faithful, even to the point of death" He would give us "the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

### Gentleness

In Galatians 5:22, gentleness refers to having humility and meekness. While, today, gentleness is not always seen as a virtue, it should not be viewed as weakness. Let us look at an example in the Old Testament. God the Father is all-powerful, yet He deals gently with His people. The prophet Isaiah wrote of God, "He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young" (Isaiah 40:11). Note that the verses just before and after this text speak of God's infinite power and wisdom. Hence, though gentleness and power may seem to be in great contrast, in reality gentleness is power under control of the Spirit.

Gentleness also keeps us from inflicting injury on others. Sometimes older Christians set unreasonable standards for new Christians, forgetting to demonstrate gentleness while the new believers grow in their relationships with Jesus Christ. Just as parents do not

usually scold their children who fall while taking their first steps, but instead they deal gently with them and encourage them. So, too, seasoned Christians must be gentle with newcomers to the faith.

### Self-control

Self-control has been described as the thermostat that controls the operation of all the other fruit of the Spirit. Its appearance later in the list of spiritual fruit is no indication of lack of importance. The ability to control oneself is a great Christian virtue and a sure mark of growth. We all know people whose lives are dominated by dangerous habits and sins precisely because they lack self control. They may be grossly overweight because of overeating; may smoke or drink incessantly; may use obscene language; or may find themselves dependent on prescription or illegal drugs.

The Spirit's fruit of self-control is not attained by human effort; it is the product of the Spirit's help and grace in our lives. Because of this grace, even non-Christians can demonstrate some self-control. For instance, an athlete trains and disciplines her body for a particular game or event. She refrains from eating foods that will hamper her abilities. She may also force herself to perform in spite of pain or extreme fatigue. However, while commendable, human efforts at self-control have limitations.

The spiritual fruit of self-control provides a dimension of control that is beyond the natural ability. Let us go back to the issue of overeating. For many years, Christians have been encouraged to abstain from tobacco and alcohol because of the harm these pose to our physical bodies. Yet in the United States, many who abstain from strong drink or tobacco eat excessive amounts of food, to the point of gluttony. There are serious side effects of consistently overeating. These include diabetes, high blood pressure, fatigue, and lack of physical mobility. Some people cannot stop overeating on their own. They need the help of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of self-control. Take time now to think of areas



in your own life where greater self-control is needed. As you grow in grace, expect self-control to increase.

## Conclusion

The fruit of the Spirit is not the result of efforts at human self-improvement. Rather, it is the result of a new spiritual life from above. There are many religious people in our world who strive to improve their lives. They go to a church, temple, or mosque. They give offerings, pray, and do good deeds. This, however, does not make their lives acceptable to God. To be acceptable to God, we have to experience new birth through faith in Christ. This is God's design, and it will not change. Only after we have entered into a relationship with God on His terms can He begin to work in our lives to produce the qualities that please Him. May you give careful attention to your relationship with Christ and focus on those things that will bring about spiritual growth.

## Reference List

LaHaye, Tim. 1993. *Spirit-Controlled Temperament*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale.

## SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES FOR MEMORIZATION

Galatians 5:22–23

Galatians 6:7–8

John 15:4

Galatians 2:20

1 Corinthians 13:8

Psalms 16:11

Romans 5:1

Matthew 12:35

1 Corinthians 4:2

Revelation 2:10

## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *The fruit of the Spirit develops in a person's life*
  - a) *all on its own.*
  - b) *by trial and error.*
  - c) *as a result of the Spirit's action.*
2. *To bear spiritual fruit, you must*
  - a) *be a part of the right church affiliation.*
  - b) *be a member of the royal family.*
  - c) *have a born-again experience.*
3. *The greatest showing of spirituality comes when*
  - a) *fruit and gifts work together.*
  - b) *one attends church all the time.*
  - c) *one prays often.*
4. *For the fruit of the Spirit to develop and for our character to mature, we must*
  - a) *join a church body.*
  - b) *stay in fellowship and communion with Christ.*
  - c) *speak in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance.*
5. *Growth in the life of the believer is*
  - a) *a thing of luck.*
  - b) *something we have no control over.*
  - c) *continuous and progressive.*
6. *The love that Paul speaks of in Galatians 5:22 is*
  - a) *romantic and easy.*
  - b) *possible only through the Holy Spirit.*
  - c) *emotional and temporary.*
7. *God's long-suffering leads to our*
  - a) *indifference.*
  - b) *nervous breakdown.*
  - c) *repentance.*
8. *The fruit of the Spirit is not the result of improving the natural character; it is the result of*
  - a) *being a good person.*
  - b) *new spiritual life from above.*
  - c) *reading the Bible and praying every day.*

9. *One benefit of having the fruit of the Spirit is*
- a) liberty to say and do whatever we want without consequences.*
  - b) having God force His will on us.*
  - c) that the fruit produces visible change.*
10. *The law of sowing and reaping teaches that*
- a) what one sows one reaps.*
  - b) we must be good farmers.*
  - c) our thoughts do not affect our actions.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

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Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. *c* (12.1)
2. *c* (12.1)
3. *a* (12.2)
4. *b* (12.2)
5. *c* (12.2)
6. *b* (12.3)
7. *c* (12.3)
8. *b* (12.3)
9. *c* (12.2)
10. *a* (12.1)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

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## LESSON 13

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# Beating Fear and Anxiety

When you were a child, what places, events, or persons scared you most? What still scares you as an adult? What is it about fear and anxiety that make them such powerful emotions? Fear is certainly one of the most common human emotions, as everyone is afraid of something. People are frightened of heights, darkness, confined spaces, open spaces, animals, and so many other things. Fear can make people do strange things. Consider the following fear-induced situations:

- Joseph Stalin was so afraid of being assassinated that he had eight different bedrooms in his home, all of which could be locked up like a bank vault. And no one knew in which of those rooms he would sleep on any given night (De Jonge 1986, 450) (Grey 1979, 457). Similar things were said of Muammar Kaddafi in Libya and Saddam Hussein of Iraq.
- A Japanese soldier in World War II hid in a cave on the Island of Guam when the area was being retaken by Allied forces. He stayed there 28 years after Japan surrendered and hostilities ceased. He survived by eating rats, frogs, snails, nuts, and mangoes. The soldier made those choices because he feared that if he turned himself in he would be executed.
- A woman who had just returned from a trip to the desert thought she heard a rattlesnake in her overnight bag. She threw the bag out the window and called the police. When they arrived, they too heard the ominous buzzing and approached the bag cautiously, only to find that the noise was coming from a cordless electric toothbrush.
- An open truck carrying an empty coffin stopped to pick up a hitchhiker. As the hitchhiker rode along

in the back of the truck, rain began to fall. So he opened the coffin, crawled inside, and fell asleep. Meanwhile, the driver stopped to pick up two more hitchhikers. Later, the first rider awoke, opened the coffin lid, and said, "Oh, has it stopped raining?" The other two men were so terrified that they jumped from the speeding truck and were seriously injured.

We all live with fear, but we do not have to be bound by it. In Isaiah 41:10, God assures His people: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." The psalmist David also proclaims, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Then in 2 Timothy 1:7 is the affirmation, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

## LESSON OUTLINE

Fear and Anxiety  
 Healthy and Unhealthy Fear  
 Causes of Fear and Anxiety  
 What the Bible Says About Fear  
 Steps to Overcoming Anxiety

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

When you complete this lesson, you should be able to:

- 1: *Define fear and anxiety.*
- 2: *Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy fear.*
- 3: *Explain why people become fearful and anxious.*
- 4: *Point out what the Bible says about fear.*
- 5: *Discuss steps to take in overcoming anxiety.*

## Fear and Anxiety

### Objective 1:

*Define fear and anxiety.*

We all know what it is to experience fear and anxiety, but there is probably much about fear itself that we do not know. An important first step, then, is to be able to define fear and anxiety. The Bible uses words like *afraid, terror, dread, anxious, tremble, shake, and quake* to describe fear. Essentially, when a person is experiencing fear he or she is said to be alarmed, nervous, fainthearted, apprehensive, upset, disturbed, scared, frightened, aghast, and anxious or worried. For most of this lesson, we will use the words *fear* and *anxiety* interchangeably.

Specific fears are called phobias, and there is an extensive list of these phobias in our world today. The chart below includes only a few phobias. Do not be surprised if you have not heard of all of these.

| Phobias        | Meaning                    |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Acrophobia     | fear of heights            |
| Agoraphobia    | fear of large, open spaces |
| Aichmophobia   | fear of sharp objects      |
| Ailurophobia   | fear of cats               |
| Arachnophobia  | fear of spiders            |
| Astraphobia    | fear of thunderstorms      |
| Claustrophobia | fear of confined places    |
| Hydrophobia    | fear of water              |
| Micro-phobia   | fear of germs              |
| Mysophobia     | fear of dirt               |
| Nyctophobia    | fear of the dark           |
| Phobophobia    | fear of fear               |
| Xenophobia     | fear of strangers          |
| Zoophobia      | fear of animals            |

In addition to phobias, fear is also described according to its relative degrees. For instance, fear



can be felt more or less intensely. Three such degrees of fear are distrust, paranoia, and terror. Distrust is the period of warning before the actual fear begins. Distrust is sometimes explained as the inward feeling of caution, and it is usually focused towards a person or object. Distrust is a lack of faith or belief in something questionable or unknown.

Paranoia is a term used to describe a fixation on fear, related to a false perception of being persecuted. This perception often causes one to change one's normal behavior in radical ways. And, after time, the individual's behavior may become extremely compulsive. Finally, terror is pronounced fear when someone becomes overwhelmed with a sense of immediate danger to the point of making irrational choices and demonstrating non-typical behavior.

## Healthy and Unhealthy Fear

### *Objective 2:*

*Differentiate between healthy and unhealthy fear.*

There are healthy and unhealthy forms of fear. Healthy fear is an emotional response stimulated by a real threat or problem. There is usually good reason to be afraid. Healthy fear benefits us by warning us of danger and pain. It also teaches us the consequences of disobedience and helps us know our limits. The healthiest fear of all is the fear of God. Proverbs 9:10 says that such fear "is the beginning of wisdom."

Unfortunately many people, including Christians, confuse a healthy fear of God with being afraid of God. They see God suspending them over the pit of hell; they fear they may have committed the unpardonable sin; they fear the return of Christ; or they fear the mark of the beast. This, however, is not God's intent in our relationship with Him. A healthy fear of God should not strike terror in our hearts, but should give us wisdom in making better decisions daily.

Dissimilarity between healthy and unhealthy fear is also seen in the difference between fear and anxiety. Although up to this point I have used the terms *fear* and *anxiety* interchangeably, there is some distinction between these two. As already stated, healthy fear is a response that is stimulated by a real threat or problem. Anxiety, on the other hand, is fear in the absence of an adequate cause. Anxiety does not have a specific object; it is more of an undefined feeling of apprehension or uneasiness. Anxiety produces worry. The word *worry* comes from a combination of two words which mean “mind” and “divide.” Thus, worry means literally “to divide the mind.”

John Haggai (2001) in his book, *How to Win Over Worry*, writes,

1. Worry divides our feelings—Our emotions lack stability.
2. Worry divides our understanding—Our convictions are shallow and changeable.
3. Worry divides our perception—Our observations are faulty and even false.
4. Worry divides our judgment—Our decisions are often unjust.
5. Worry divides our will—Our plans and purposes, if not scrapped altogether, are not filled with persistence.

## Causes of Fear and Anxiety

### *Objective 3:*

*Explain why people become fearful and anxious.*

Following are several causes of fear and anxiety. It will help you in your Christian development and mental health to be aware of these causes.

### Exhaustion and Loneliness

People worry more when they are physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. All their reserves are

spent, and they are no longer able to think rationally or objectively. This vulnerability then makes them more susceptible to fear and anxiety.

Beyond tiredness, people also tend to become more fearful and anxious when they are alone than when they are with people they know and trust. Humans have an inherent need for community, for other people. The lack of such community creates anxiety.

### Loss of Control

All of us fear what we cannot control because threat of danger exposes our inability to preserve what we most deeply cherish or value. Thus, people become more anxious when they feel they are losing control of a situation.

### Inadequacy and the Unknown

Personal inadequacy increases our fear of failure and rejection. Sometimes fearful or anxious people try to cover up their feelings by acting overly confident, or they feel threatened by anyone who questions their abilities. So many people choose to live safe lives, where neither failure nor success is likely. Such people never take risks, never accomplish any real service, and never make a difference. Fear of failure paralyzes them.

Furthermore, most people feel apprehensive about the unknown or unfamiliar. And, sometimes, their overactive imagination even conjures up frightful situations that may not even exist.

### Physiological and Emotional Makeup

Other people are physiologically and emotionally “wired” to be more cautious or apprehensive by nature. This may be an inherited or learned trait passed on to them by previous generations who behaved in much the same way.

## What the Bible Says About Fear

### Objective 4:

*Point out what the Bible says about fear.*

**Read Matthew 14:25–33, and select the responses you think best answer the following questions.**

1. *Were you in the boat with the disciples during the storm, how would you have reacted if you had seen someone walking on the water?*
  - a. *I would not have believed my eyes.*
  - b. *I would have closed my eyes and waited for things to return to normal.*
  - c. *I would have done what Peter did.*
  - d. *I probably would have had a heart attack.*
  - e. *I do not have a clue about how I would have reacted.*
2. *Why do you think Peter reacted so differently from the rest of the disciples?*
  - a. *He loved to take risks.*
  - b. *He had more faith than the rest of the disciples.*
  - c. *He was the most impulsive of all the disciples.*
  - d. *He always needed to be “one up” on the other disciples.*
  - e. *He had to be a little crazy.*
3. *When it comes to taking risks, how would you describe yourself?*
  - a. *Cautious: I do not take any unnecessary chances.*
  - b. *Impulsive: I am always trying new things.*
  - c. *Calculating: I want all the facts before I decide.*
  - d. *Procrastinating: I put off making a decision as long as I can.*
  - e. *Apprehensive: I am scared stiff most of the time.*
4. *Where do you think God is inviting you to “get out of the boat” right now?*
  - b. *In my job/career: taking on a new challenge, putting in for a promotion*
  - c. *In my family: being willing to be more open and vulnerable with them*
  - d. *In my spiritual walk: trusting myself fully to God*

- e. *In my future planning: trying something I have always wanted to do*
  - f. *In my personal life: facing a lifelong challenge*
5. *How could God help you deal with your fears?*
    - a. *Do not push me into being brave.*
    - b. *Give me a lot of support.*
    - c. *Give me a push.*
    - d. *Assure me that it is okay to fail.*
    - e. *Get out of the boat with me.*
  6. *How could others help you deal with your fear?*
    - a. *Leave me alone to work it out.*
    - b. *Encourage me, but do not try to force me.*
    - c. *Be a safe harbor for me to return to.*
    - d. *Talk me through the process from the sidelines.*
    - e. *Walk with me through the process.*

Now read Philippians 4:4–9, and use the following questions to help you think through the passage.

1. What did Paul mean when he said, “Rejoice in the Lord always?” What could help you rejoice when you are facing a fearful situation?
2. Do you sometimes let anxiety keep you from rejoicing in the goodness of God? What could you do to prevent that?
3. How does remembering the Lord is near help in conquering fear and anxiety? What are some things you could do to remind yourself of His nearness?
4. How does bringing your needs to the Lord in prayer keep you from being anxious or fearful? What elements should you include in your prayer besides presenting your requests to God?
5. What does it mean to have the peace of God guarding your heart and mind? In what two areas of your life does God’s peace operate?
6. How would changing what you allow your mind to dwell on help you beat anxiety? What more positive things could you focus on when you are feeling anxious or fearful?

7. What have you learned from this passage that could help you cope with fear and anxiety? How will you put these truths into practice in your life?

## Steps to Overcoming Anxiety

### *Objective 5:*

*Discuss steps to take in overcoming anxiety.*

We need not live our lives bound by fear and anxiety. We are not helpless victims of our emotions. There are some positive things we can do, with the Lord's help, to beat anxiety. Dealing with our fears usually involves the following five steps.

### Confront your fears

Do you remember how it felt to walk into a dark place? Your first impulse was to turn and run in the other direction. What did you do when you thought something was under your bed? You finally mustered the courage to turn on the light and look. That is the decision you have to make in defeating all your fears—confront them and stand your ground. God has given you the ability to conquer your fears and bring your anxieties under control. He did not give you a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). Running away only adds to the feeling of panic and makes matters worse. It helps if you can talk honestly about your fears with someone you trust. As you talk about this, your fears may become less overwhelming.

### Expose your fears to the truth

Most fears often exaggerate situations. If you are habitually fearful, you will have to work harder at exposing your fears to facts. This is because your self-talk tends to out-argue the facts. But if you persist in exposing your fear to truth, the Lord will help you minimize your fears. Again, it will also help if you can talk about your fears with someone else. Another

person's perspective can make us see the irrationality and illogicality of our thinking.

### Confess your faith, not your fears

Sometimes we talk ourselves into a state of panic. When we constantly think and talk about our fears, we give power to those thoughts and words. Listen to Job's confession about the effects of his thinking: "What I feared has come upon me; what I dreaded has happened to me" (Job 3:25). Therefore, you must learn to verbalize your faith and trust in God, not your doubts and fears. Adopt an *as if* rather than *what if* approach to living. This is what Jesus encourages us to do: "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (Mark 11:24).

### Practice the Lord's presence

One of the most powerful verses to help us overcome fear is Psalm 23:4: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." The psalmist David knew how to practice the presence of the Lord when confronting frightening situations. We can learn to do the same by putting the power of an anointed imagination to work. Most fearful people seem to have very active imaginations. So why not use those imaginations to overcome fear? When you are facing a frightening situation, imagine the Lord Jesus, your Good Shepherd, walking with you through that situation. Hear Him saying to you, "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

### Listen to the Word of God

The best resource for conquering fear is the Word of God. The Word has power to do what no other resource can do. Here are a few verses that address fear:

- a. 2 Timothy 1:7, "God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

- b. 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment."
- c. John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
- d. Isaiah 41:10, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

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- Grey, Ian. 1979. *Stalin*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Haggai, John. 2001. *How to win over worry*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers.



## SELF-TEST

After studying the lesson, please read each study question carefully and circle the correct response. There is only one correct response for each question.

1. *Claustrophobia is the fear of*
  - a) *water.*
  - b) *heights.*
  - c) *confined places.*
2. *The word worry comes from two words which mean*
  - a) *"anticipate" and "expect."*
  - b) *"mind" and "divide."*
  - c) *"plan" and "failure."*
3. *Healthy fear is defined as*
  - a) *a response stimulated by a real threat or problem.*
  - b) *fear in the absence of an adequate cause.*
  - c) *fear that does not have a specific object.*
4. *The healthiest fear of all is*
  - a) *fear of things that are real.*
  - b) *fear of the unknown or unfamiliar.*
  - c) *fear of God.*
5. *Which is not a reason some people become fearful?*
  - a) *A thorough knowledge of the Word of God*
  - b) *Loss of control*
  - c) *Feeling of inadequacy*
6. *In walking on the water, Peter*
  - a) *selfishly jeopardized the safety of the other disciples.*
  - b) *was motivated by pride.*
  - c) *allowed his faith to overcome fear.*
7. *When we constantly think and talk about our fears,*
  - a) *we give added power to those thoughts and words.*
  - b) *we minimize their impact on our lives.*
  - c) *it helps build our faith in God.*

8. *In Mark 11:24, Jesus encourages us to*
  - a) *believe that we have already received what we asked for in prayer.*
  - b) *keep praying until we get what we ask for.*
  - c) *believe that we can have anything and everything we ask for in prayer.*
9. *The best resource for conquering fear is*
  - a) *the prayers and support of our Christian friends.*
  - b) *to remember past victories over fear.*
  - c) *the Word of God.*
10. *According to 2 Timothy 1:7, God did not give us the*
  - a) *spirit of fear.*
  - b) *faith to believe.*
  - c) *wisdom to discern.*

## ANSWERS TO SELF-TEST

Note: If you answered a study question incorrectly, you can find the objective it was drawn from by looking at the reference in parentheses.

1. c (13.1)
2. b (13.2)
3. a (13.2)
4. c (13.2)
5. a (13.3)
6. c (13.4)
7. a (13.5)
8. a (13.5)
9. c (13.5)
10. a (13.1)

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS LESSON

Ron Held currently serves as District Secretary for the Assemblies of God of Wisconsin and Northern Michigan. He was the senior pastor at Racine Assembly of God in Racine, Wisconsin, from 1984 to 2005. Prior to pastoring, Ron was the director for the National Sunday School Department of the Assemblies of God in the United States.





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