

Lesson 4

Developing Our Personalities

Do you remember that you learned in the previous lesson that God's purpose is to restore His image in us? What a wonderful purpose! And this restoration takes place as our personality is developed.

Of all the things God has entrusted to us, our personality is the most valuable. It is what makes us persons, thus causing us to be different from the animals. It is also what has made us to be the crown of creation—God's masterpiece.

As God's stewards we have, then, the great and inescapable responsibility of faithfully managing what He has given us. In regard to our personality, our responsibility is to guard it and develop it until we become like Christ.

Our personality is made up of three main parts which are the intellect, the will, and the emotions. This lesson has been written in order to help you develop each one of these. In it you will find useful suggestions for ways you can enrich your intellect, strengthen your will, and use your emotions for the glory of God.

lesson outline

Our Intellect

Our Will

Our Emotions



lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- Understand what it means to be a steward of your personality.
- Describe several ways you can develop and use your mind, will, and emotions for God's glory.
- Appreciate the value of fulfilling God's purpose for each part of your personality.

learning activities

1. Follow the same steps in studying this lesson as you have followed for the previous lessons. Be sure to find each key word in the glossary, study the lesson development and objectives carefully, and answer the study questions.
2. After you have checked the answers you gave to the study questions with those at the end of the lesson, review the entire lesson. Then take the self-test and check your answers.

key words

analyze
attitude
climax
edifying

emotions
intellect
meditate

personality
submission
will

lesson development**OUR INTELLECT**

The intellect or mind is what enables us to think, understand, remember, or imagine. Man's improper use of it has been one of the main causes of the ills and wrongs which afflict the world. But if it is used properly, the human intellect can be a great blessing for mankind. For that reason we need to exercise it in ways that please God until it reaches its full development (1 Corinthians 13:12, Colossians 3:10).

Think About What Is Good

Objective 1. *Identify several ways we can help our minds to think about what is good.*

One of the ways of exercising our intellect is to think. Actually, thinking is the main activity of our intellect. Our thoughts determine our character because "what [a man] thinks is what he really is" (Proverbs 23:7). This is why God wants us to think about what is good and pleasing to Him (Philippians 4:8, Psalm 19:14). But how can this be done? There are two things you must do.

1. *You need to feed your mind.* Our mind can function well—that is, think on good things—if we feed it with good thoughts. Bad thoughts are to the mind what poison is to the stomach.

The Bible is the best food for our mind (Matthew 4:4). The Bible's thoughts are God's thoughts. So if you read it or hear it, you are allowing your mind to be filled with the best thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9). And then your mind will also be able to meditate on God's Word—that is, to think about it (Psalm 1:2; 119:97, 99).

The Holy Spirit is another source of good food for our mind. If you will pay attention to Him, especially when you are

praying, He will teach you precious truths (1 Corinthians 12:8, 1 John 2:27).

1 To meditate on God’s Word means to

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We can also feed our mind by reading good things. Paul told the Philippians to fill their minds with “those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable” (Philippians 4:8). In addition to the Bible, Christian books can give you excellent ideas to think about.

If you attend the meetings of your church often, the messages that are preached will enrich your mind for profitable meditation afterwards (James 1:21).

And last, wholesome conversation can also be a source of good thoughts. For this you need to keep away from those people who suggest bad thoughts to you (Psalm 1:1, 2 Timothy 2:16). On the contrary, seek conversations that are edifying (Ephesians 4:29).

2 Below is a list of things you can do to help your mind think good thoughts. Which of them are you doing? Mark an **X** in the first space beside them under *Am Doing*. Which of them could you start to do? Mark an **X** in the second space beside them under *Could Do*. You may wish to add some others not on the list.

	Am Doing	Could Do
Reading or studying the Bible		
Listening to the Holy Spirit		
Reading good books		
Listening to sermons (messages)		
Seeking good conversations		
Other:		

2. You *need to discipline your mind*. From the time you accepted Jesus as your Savior you have had a new mind. You feed it with good thoughts. Nevertheless, you have discovered

that at times it has been very hard to think about what is good. Don't be surprised or discouraged because of this. All Christians have this experience. Sometimes these come from our own human desires. But they may not be yours at all. They may come from Satan, who tries to bring them into your mind. He did the same to the first woman (Genesis 3:1-3) and to Jesus (Luke 4:3-9). The woman failed; but Jesus overcame. And since you have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16), you also can overcome.

When you are faced with an evil thought, here are some things you may find helpful to do:

- a. Don't take it in. Someone has said: "I can't keep the birds from flying over my head, but I can keep them from building a nest in my hair."
- b. Pray to God asking Him to help you overcome the evil thought.
- c. Think immediately of something good (Philippians 4:8).
- d. Quote verses of the Bible. This was what Jesus did (Matthew 4:3-11).
- e. Sing a hymn or chorus which will bring good thoughts into your mind.

3 We can learn from Christ's experience recorded in Luke 4:3-9 that we

- a) can overcome evil thoughts by using God's Word.
- b) will not be tempted by evil thoughts.
- c) can depend on our own wisdom to overcome evil thoughts.



Study Useful Things

Objective 2. *Select statements that show what value studying has for a Christian.*

We spent an important part of our life studying. When we were children, it may be that at times we didn't like to. But now

we have discovered how valuable it was to have done so. For the same reason many believers who stopped their studies during their childhood are continuing them today. Others who never went to school are learning to read by going to night school.

It may be that until now you haven't done anything in the Lord's work because you believe you don't have the preparation that is needed. This is your opportunity. You may begin studying the Bible (Acts 17:11) along with other Christian books that will help you to know the Scriptures better, be a more mature believer, and serve effectively in the ministry (2 Timothy 2:15). The fact that you are studying this course shows that you are already doing this. Why not also study other subjects that are good to know and will enable you to do the work you are involved in?



People who aren't Christians often consider believers to be ignorant and uneducated. Many times they have reason to do so because some believers don't try to educate themselves. It is true that Jesus came to the unlearned (Matthew 11:25-26); but He came to teach them so they would come out of their ignorance! Why don't we, then, prepare ourselves for every kind of work in which we can be useful to the Lord so as to bring Him honor? An owner as wise as God needs managers who are prepared.

Studying, of course, requires more mental work than just thinking. But what a good investment it is! At the end of your studies your mental powers will be more developed and you will

know more things. And if you think that you don't have enough mental ability to study, ask God to help you. He certainly will (James 1:5). And while you are studying the Scripture, He will help you to understand it (Ephesians 1:18, 1 John 5:20).

4 Suppose a friend of yours were to ask you this question: "Why should I study if God reveals many things to people who are uneducated?" What would be the best way to reply?

- a) Agree with him that if he isn't going to become a pastor he shouldn't worry about studying the Bible or trying to get more education for himself.
- b) Point out that though God does reveal things to the unlearned, He also expects us to study His word so we can serve Him better, as 2 Timothy 2:15 says.
- c) Explain to him that many people in the world think that Christians are uneducated. Therefore it is important that we prove to them that we are educated.

Pray With Your Mind

Objective 3. *Choose descriptions of how we should use our minds when we pray.*

One would assume that every time we speak we use our mind to think about what we will say. Perhaps sometimes we haven't done this and have regretted it later. What is certain is that when we pray to God we are talking to Him. And one would assume that we would also use our mind to think about what we say to Him. The apostle Paul said in regard to this: "I will pray . . . with my mind" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

It doesn't seem, though, that people who pray needlessly long sentences, including words that are unimportant or repetitions of what they have just said to God are using their minds very much. Jesus condemned this practice (Matthew 6:7). If we give careful thought to what we want to say when we speak to someone in authority, how much more should we do so when we speak to the One who is the owner of the universe!

The Bible records many prayers. These can give you suggestions as to how to put your ideas in order when you pray

to God. You have, for example, the prayers of Abraham (Genesis 18:23-32), Moses (Exodus 32:11-13), Hannah (1 Samuel 1:11). You have the Psalms, the prayers of Elijah (1 Kings 18:36-37), Ezra (Ezra 9:6-15), the Levites (Nehemiah 9:5-37), Daniel (Daniel 9:4-19), Habakkuk (Habakkuk 3:1-19). In the New Testament you have the prayer that Jesus taught (Matthew 6:9-13), that of the disciples (Acts 4:24-30), and the many praises found in the book of Revelation.

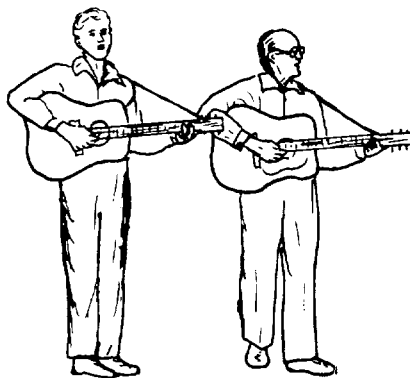
5 Using our minds when we pray means to

- a) repeat what we say so we are sure God has heard us.
- b) think of how we can make our prayers long.
- c) give careful thought to what we want to say.

Share Your Knowledge

Objective 4. *List a special skill or knowledge you have that you could share with others.*

Our minds can bring honor to God and be a blessing to others if we share what we know. Some of the ways you can do this are to testify about what Christ has done in your life (Acts 23:11), or to preach (Acts 8:4) and teach God's Word (1 Timothy 4:6). You could also teach nonreaders to read or share with others something special that you know. Do you know how to play a musical instrument? Teach others in your church. Do you know how to sew, weave, or embroider? Work together with the ladies' group in your church by giving some classes.



6 What special skill or knowledge do you have?

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Who could you share it with?

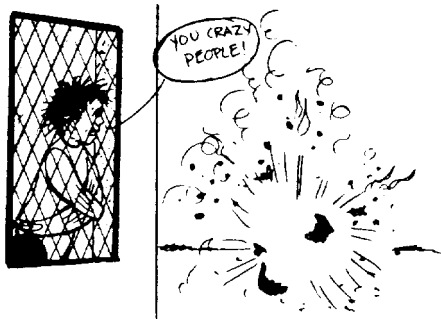
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Be Sensible

Objective 5. *Identify a description of the Christian’s attitude towards his mental abilities.*

Someone once said that what we call common sense doesn’t seem to be all that common. And the Word of God supports this. In fact Paul the apostle had to say to the Corinthians: “Do not be like children in your thinking . . . but be grown up in your thinking” (1 Corinthians 14:20).

The story is told that during World War II a bomb fell in the courtyard of a home for the insane. Fortunately it didn’t cause serious harm to the building, but it did create a panic among the inmates. One of them commented: “What’s going on? It looks like the world has gone crazy!” What insight there was in that comment! In fact, there are many things in the world that don’t make sense because men are not using their minds the way God wants them to.



But we, as God’s stewards, have the responsibility of growing mentally. This means that we ought to develop our mental powers until we reach maturity (Hebrews 5:11-14).

7 Which person has the right attitude towards his or her mental abilities?

- a) Marian accepted Jesus as a very young child. She is much older now, but she continues to study the Bible so she can understand God’s ways better.
- b) Jim went to Bible school for a year. He thinks that he has learned enough and feels that he does not need to study the Bible any more.

OUR WILL

Objective 6. *Choose examples and descriptions of four ways we can use our will as God’s stewards.*

Our will is the part of our personality from where our desires and decisions come. As God’s stewards, we recognize that He is the owner of our will. Because of this, we have the responsibility to use it the way He wants. But how can we do this? Here are some instructions that may be useful to you.

Obey God

Obedience to God is the submission of our will to His will. This is the way to show that we acknowledge that we are only stewards of our will. It is better than anything else we can do to please God (1 Samuel 15:22).

The will needs the help of the mind in order to obey God. If the mind doesn’t know what God wants, the will cannot obey Him. Our mind needs to be filled with the Word of God. It needs to be taught and directed by the Holy Spirit. Then it can instruct our will to obey God.

OUR MIND	}	+ OUR WILL = OBEDIENCE TO GOD
+		
GOD’S WORD		
+		
HOLY SPIRIT		

Some believers seemingly find it impossible to obey God in certain situations. But what these believers should realize is that they are “joined to Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:17). God made us over again and for that reason we are *equipped* to obey Him.

Obedience to God helps make our will become strong. People who don’t obey God often find themselves having to do what others say. They do not want to obey them; but they are afraid of their threats or ridicule. Notice, however, how the apostles successfully resisted the threats of their enemies (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28-29). Thousands of believers throughout the centuries have had similar experiences. And the enemies of God know that the strongest wills belong to obedient Christians!

Our will cannot obey God of its own accord. It has to learn to obey. And God has left us with the responsibility of sending it, so to speak, to school! This is a process which lasts all our life. Many times we may also have to say: “Not my will, however, but your will be done” (Luke 22:42). But as we are learning we may count on the help of the Holy Spirit, until we are able to say: “How I love to do your will, my God!” (Psalm 40:8).

8 What is the lesson we can learn from Saul’s life as shown in 1 Samuel 15:22?

- a) God doesn’t want sacrifices from His people.
- b) We can decide how much of God’s command to obey.
- c) It is very important for us to completely obey God.

Avoid Every Kind of Evil

You may discover that at times you feel a conflict within yourself. Your mind knows what is good (Romans 7:23); but your will is too weak to obey the instructions your mind gives it (Romans 7:15, 19). Does this conflict have to continue all your life long? Will our account to God be a history of more failures than victories? Thank God, no! He is not the kind of owner who just abandons His manager and leaves him to his own devices.

The apostle Paul, the same person who tells us about the failures in Romans 7, shows us the way of victory in Romans 8. The Holy Spirit comes to help us, weak as we are (Romans 8:26). God’s power is strongest when we are weak (2 Corinthians 12:9). With this confidence, we can become one of those who “were weak, but became strong” (Hebrews 11:34). No wonder then, that Paul would say: “Avoid every kind of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). This is what God desires for us, and during the test He makes available the strength to endure it and so provides us with a way out (1 Corinthians 10:13). But we must exercise our will to receive His help.

9 Is it possible for us to overcome temptation even though we may be weak? Why?

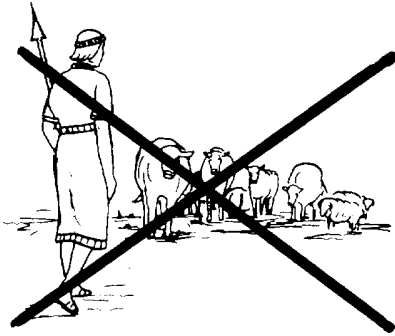
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Choose What Is Right

When God gave man a will, He entrusted him with something very dangerous and sensitive. It was like giving him a high-powered weapon—because man’s will is free. He has the power to choose. By means of his will the manager can even reach the point of rebellion against the owner! (John 5:40). How great is our responsibility, then, to manage our will the way God wants us to!

Choosing implies making a decision. You decided to accept Christ instead of rejecting Him. You decided to get up this morning instead of staying in bed, to read this book instead of another. God appeals to this power of choice when He says: “If you will only obey me . . . But if you defy me. . . .” (Isaiah 1:19-20).

What we are is the result of our good and bad decisions. Of course, God wants us always to choose what is right (Deuteronomy 30:19). A well managed will produces good decisions, while if it is badly directed the result may be bad decisions. You judge a manager by the decisions he makes! For example, Daniel made a good decision (Daniel 1:8); but the one Saul made was wrong (1 Samuel 15:9-11).



10 Match each principle given on the right with the Bible verse or verses that illustrate it on the left.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a Deuteronomy 30:19 | 1) God helps us when we are weak. |
| b Isaiah 1:19-20 | 2) We have the power of choice. |
| c Romans 8:26 | |
| d 1 Corinthians 10:13 | |
| e 2 Corinthians 12:9 | |

How can a person make good decisions? If you find yourself confronted with a situation in which you can't decide what to do, here are a few suggestions:

1. Determine what the Bible says about your situation.
2. Pray to God for guidance.
3. Ask your pastor or a more mature believer for advice.
4. Think over a similar situation in the past and analyze the decision you made then. If it wasn't right, why make the same mistake again?
5. Consider the decisions made by other people who faced the same situation or a similar one. Analyze the results of their decisions.

11 How should we use our will when making decisions?

- a) Decide to wait until someone else tells us what to do.
- b) Make a good decision based on God's Word and His guidance.
- c) Realize that God doesn't want us to make our own decisions.

Do Good

There are a lot of people in this world who have good intentions. However, they never translate those good intentions into actions. God wants us to use our will not only to produce good desires but above all to produce good works (James 1:22, Matthew 5:16). Paul said: “We should do good to everyone” (Galatians 6:10).

How grateful we should be to those faithful managers who have used their strong will to promote and do good things! This world is a better place because of them. In our day the existence of many of the institutions that benefit society and do good seems altogether natural. But they have come about because of Christian men and women who put their wills at the service of God and humanity.

12 In what four ways can we use our will to glorify the Lord?

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OUR EMOTIONS

Objective 7. *Identify statements that express what our emotions have to do with our Christian life.*

The emotions or feelings are another very important part of the human personality. God gave man an emotional nature, but he has managed his emotions very badly. As a result, they have been uncontrolled and misdirected. Anger has become hatred; love and joy are linked to what is bad and not to what is good. Christ came to put our emotions under control and in their rightful channel. Therefore, as God’s stewards, we have the responsibility of keeping watch so that our emotions will be maintained and developed as He wants.

Worship God

One of the ways of using our emotions as God wants is to worship Him. We express our love to Him because it pleases Him for us to do this (Matthew 22:37). We love Him too because He loved us first (1 John 4:19). We cannot remain

indifferent when we feel His wonderful presence and meditate on His many blessings! The joy that overwhelms our hearts causes us to burst out in praises to God (Luke 19:37, Acts 8:7-8).

Some people believe that the emotions are out of place in worship services. But perhaps these same people weep over the death of a loved one, laugh loudly at a party, and do not hesitate to show all their enthusiasm at a sports event. How much more does God deserve for us to express to Him the feelings of our heart! Jesus' answer to those who wanted to repress the enthusiasm of the crowd who were praising Him in loud voices is worth paying attention to: "I tell you that if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting" (Luke 19:40).

The book of Revelation shows us how the emotions of the redeemed will reach their climax in the worship of God. Their enthusiasm will be overflowing (Revelation 7:9-10; 14:2-3); their joy indescribable (Revelation 19:6-7). Let us confidently use our emotions, then, for God's glory.

13 Which Scripture would be the best to share with someone who is disturbed by a worship service in which people are praising God in loud voices?

- a) Matthew 22:37
- b) Luke 19:40
- c) 1 John 4:19
- d) Revelation 14:2-3

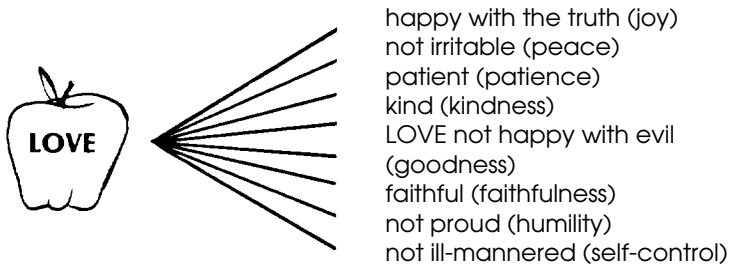
Grow Spiritually

The emotions fulfill a very important role in our spiritual growth. We will see this as we consider two aspects of this growth.

The Fruit of the Spirit

As in Adam's case, God has left us to care for a beautiful garden. It is the garden of our emotional being. We have the responsibility of uprooting the "weeds": bitterness, passion, anger, and other hateful feelings (Ephesians 4:31, Colossians 3:8). But the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, is the one who cultivates the garden so that beautiful "fruit" is produced (Galatians 5:22-23).

But you might ask: *Is it possible that our spiritual growth is mostly a matter of emotional growth?* Though it may be hard to believe, this is the way it is. Love is not a thought or desire. It is an emotion. And it is the highest of all! In addition, notice how the remaining parts of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23 are also emotions. And they are all intimately related to love according to 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. The following diagram will illustrate this:



It is when love has reached its fullest development that we can love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). Love for our neighbor is expressed by loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord (1 John 3:14), strangers (Luke 10:30-35), and even our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

The Attitude of Christ

We have arrived at the peak of our emotional development when we reach the place where we have the same “attitude” that Christ had (Philippians 2:5). Christ felt a deep compassion for the lost, the sick, and the hungry (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32). How moving was His lament over Jerusalem! (Luke 19:41-44). How great was the love with which He loved us that He gave His life for us! (Revelation 1:5). It is this attitude which has caused millions of believers to preach the gospel.

- 14** Our spiritual growth is related to our emotions because
- a) when we accept Christ we don’t have bad feelings any more.
 - b) our emotional growth is more important than knowing the Bible.
 - c) the fruit of the Spirit has to do with our emotions.

self-test

- 1** To discipline your mind means to
 - a) keep it from thinking.
 - b) read only the Bible.
 - c) overcome evil thoughts.

- 2** What do Psalm 1:1, Ephesians 4:29, and 2 Timothy 2:16 teach us about conversation?
 - a) We don't need to avoid listening to bad conversations; we just need to avoid actually following evil advice.
 - b) We need to avoid conversations that suggest evil ideas and thoughts, and we need to seek helpful ones.

- 3** Studying is valuable for a Christian because
 - a) only educated people can understand the things of God.
 - b) it makes him or her a better steward for the Lord.
 - c) Christians need to show that they are better than others.

- 4** Which person is using his mind in praying?
 - a) George studies the prayers in the Bible. When he prays, he uses some of the ideas he has studied to help him pray.
 - b) Tom begins praying, saying whatever comes into his mind. He repeats his ideas several times to make a long prayer.

- 5** The practice of using meaningless words when praying is spoken against in
 - a) 1 Samuel 1:11.
 - b) Daniel 9:4-19.
 - c) Matthew 6:7.
 - d) 1 Corinthians 14:15.

- 6** Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.
 - a** After a person is saved, there is nothing else he or she needs to learn.
 - b** The Christian needs to use his mental powers and always keep growing.
 - c** If a Christian is an adult, he doesn't need to grow any more spiritually.

7 Suppose you were teaching a group of new Christians that it is important for them to grow mentally. Which passage of Scripture would be the best to use?

- a) Matthew 6:9-13
- b) Matthew 11:25-26
- c) Acts 4:24-30
- d) Hebrews 5: 11-14

8 Match each example below (left side) with each phrase describing how the person is using his will the way God wants (right side).

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|--|---------------------|
| a George stays away from places where he is tempted to do things that are wrong. | 1) Obey God |
| b Mary takes some food to a needy family. | 2) Avoid evil |
| c John does what God wants, though his own desire is to do something different. | 3) Choose the right |
| d Tom decides to study a book that will help him be a better Christian. | 4) Do good |
| e Jim helps an elderly widow lady by doing some repairs on her house. | |

9 Circle the letter in front of each TRUE statement.

- a** God is not concerned that we express our love to Him because He already knows how we feel.
- b** A mature Christian has no need of outwardly showing his or her feelings towards God.
- c** God wants us to express our feelings of praise and enthusiasm when we worship Him.

10 Having the attitude of Christ means that we will

- a) be sinless and perfectly obedient.
- b) have a deep concern for the unsaved.
- c) love only those who are Christians.

answers to study questions

- 8 c)** It is very important for us to completely obey God.
- 1** think about it and consider what it means.
- 9** Yes, because God will give us strength to endure it.
- 2** Your answer. Have you put an X under “Could Do” for some of the things on the list? I hope that soon you will be able to answer “Am Doing” for all of them!
- 10 a** 2) We have the power of choice.
b 2) We have the power of choice.
c 1) God helps us when we are weak.
d 1) God helps us when we are weak.
e 1) God helps us when we are weak.
- 3 a)** can overcome evil thoughts by using God’s Word.
- 11 b)** Make a good decision based on God’s Word and His guidance.
- 4 b)** Point out that though God reveals things to the unlearned . . . would be the best answer. Answer a) is not good because all believers need to know God’s Word. Answer c) gives a reason, but a weak one. Christians should do things because God asks them to, not just so they can impress the world.
- 12** To obey God, to avoid every kind of evil, to choose what is right, and to do good.
- 5 c)** give careful thought to what we want to say.
- 13 b)** Luke 19:40. This would be the best Bible verse to share because it shows that Jesus did not try to quiet those who were praising Him. He accepted that kind of worship.

6 Your answer. I hope you will look for ways to use your skills or knowledge to help others.

14 c) the fruit of the Spirit has to do with our emotions.

7 a) Marian. Her attitude shows that she wants to keep developing her mind as Hebrews 5:11-14 suggests.