A Tool For Personal Discipleship

A Guide for Spiritual Mentoring

Discipler Training International

"A non-denominational discipleship ministry providing discipleship lessons for spiritual growth, discipling others, and training disciplers."

www.disciplers.org
This discipleship material continues to be a work in progress, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance. We welcome comments and/or suggestions to enhance accuracy or clarity. Our desire is to make these spiritual concepts as understandable as possible for all believers, especially newer and immature believers.

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Mission Statement

Training Disciplers to help every Christian grow to maturity and fruitfulness in Christ

We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me. (Col. 1:28-29)

These discipleship materials are not designed to be given to the typical newer believer with the expectation that they will be able to understand them on their own, without personal mentoring.

The lessons are intended to serve as a tool to stimulate conversation between the mentee and the discipler / spiritual mentor which will, hopefully, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, help the discipler to identify and address spiritual needs and gaps in the disciple’s spiritual understanding and lead that disciple to depend on the Holy Spirit for guidance.

For more resources and videos to help you along the way go to www.disciplers.org/mentor-training
Greetings,

Crosspointe Church exists for the purpose of *Seeing Lives Transformed By The Power Of Jesus Christ and His Cross*. We believe this happens, *One Life at a Time*.

We also believe that God has chosen His people to be a part of the transformation that happens in other people’s lives. The way God has designed this to happen, is for faithful and knowledgeable followers of Him to train up others who are seeking to learn and know more about Him.

At Crosspointe, we have partnered with Discipler Training International (DTI) to provide the tools needed, and a guide to follow, for those seeking to learn and know more about God and His Word. This is an exciting journey of one-to-one mentoring, where together, each person has the opportunity to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ and with one another.

The leadership of Crosspointe Church are participants of Discipler Training International and want to encourage every member of our church to join in with us. If you truly desire to see your life being transformed by the power of Jesus Christ, then DTI is for you.

Much Love & Prayers,

Pastor Jon & Daniele
Introduction to
A Tool for Personal Discipleship

Many times when a person accepts the gift of salvation, they are hungry and open to understanding how to live the victorious Christian Life – maybe saying “I’m saved, now what?”

A Tool for Personal Discipleship is intended to help believers discover the answers to the “now what?” question by stimulating conversations between a mentee and their spiritual mentor that encourage spiritual growth and walking in dependence on the Lord under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

These discipleship materials are not designed to be given to the mentee with the expectation that they will understand them on their own without personal mentoring. This is not academic material to be studied just to acquire knowledge, although having Biblical knowledge is important.

DTI emphasizes the relationship with the Lord (heart attitude) rather than behavior manipulation. The focus is on allowing God to inwardly transform a believer’s thinking which will lead to Godly conduct.

The DTI process, even for long-time believers, will help identify gaps in spiritual understanding and address spiritual needs in order to strengthen their relationship with the Holy Spirit.

The purpose and goal is spiritual maturity, spiritual fruitfulness and spiritual reproduction, and just like in the natural world, growth takes time.

A Tool for Personal Discipleship can be used:

- In one-on-one mentoring relationships
- In group study
- In training faithful believers who want to mentor others

The discipleship curriculum is available to download at no charge, from the DTI web site – www.disciplers.org.

The Tool has three phases:

1. Understanding the Christian Life (Phase 1)
   • Foundational lessons of the mentoring process

2. Mentor Training (Phase 2)
   • Tips and training for those who want to spiritually mentor other believers

3. Amplified Discipleship Concepts (Phase 3)
   • Lessons to expand understanding of the principles from Phase 1
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Mentee Assessment

These are two diagnostic tools to help you as the mentor discern the spiritual maturity level of the mentee and possible gaps in their understanding, so that you may be better prepared as you go through Phase 1 with them.

It will also help you to develop thought-provoking questions, based on where the mentee is in their “spiritual walk”.

It will help you avoid the pitfall of assuming the mentee is more spiritually mature based on observations of external behavior – especially if you are mentoring a believer who has been in the church a long time.

Note, this is an optional step.

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Discussion and Explanation for the Mentor

We have found that there are gaps in understanding of many Christians, gaps that are not immediately evident by just interacting with them for 1-3 hours once a week during a Sunday meeting. These gaps will only come out in intentional, deeper conversations based on Biblical truths.

While these gaps in understanding will usually become evident as you go through Phase 1, you can also discern them now, using these two tools. Then as you begin to meet using Phase 1 you can pray for wisdom in developing questions that will lead the mentee to think deeply about “What am I supposed to be doing in my Christian life and what is God’s purpose for me?”

CAUTION: this is NOT an occasion for you to preach at them!

5 BIBLICAL CONCEPTS EVERY BELIEVER NEEDS TO KNOW

- The Five Concepts covers Salvation, Lordship and Abiding, which are the critical ideas you will dig deeper on in Phase 1.
- Read the scriptures in each point (alternating with the mentee) and discuss, using open-ended questions to stimulate conversation.
- Based on the discussion, evaluate what gaps they may have and use that information as you proceed through Phase 1.
- This tool can also be used when you have only 30 minutes to an hour with someone you may never see again, such as in a prison ministry.

WHERE AM I AS A CHRISTIAN?

- Have the mentee read each of the descriptions for Groups 1-4. Then ask “Where would you place yourself on this diagram?” “Which one of these groups best describes you?” Follow up with, “Why do you think that?”
- Your response to their answer for each of the four groups could be as follows:
  Group 1. “We recognize new Christians require personal guidance in their walk with the Lord, and that’s why we are meeting.”
  Group 2. “Unfortunately, many Christians find themselves in the desert experience, not because they chose to be, but because it was never explained, that God wants you to live in your Spiritual Promised Land, not the spiritual desert, and that’s why we are meeting.”
  Group 3. “I’m glad you’ve said to the Lord in one way or another that you want Him to be in charge of your life but now we need to help you learn how to consistently abide. And that’s why we are meeting.”
  Group 4. “I’m excited that you have a hunger to know more, and it may be that you have the pieces to the puzzle illustrating the Christian life, but now it’s a matter of putting them in order so that you see the ‘big picture’. And that’s why we are meeting.”

Throughout the mentoring process, follow the guidelines found in Lesson 2-5.
Five Biblical Concepts Every New Believer Needs to Understand

*(To Help Maximize Spiritual Growth And Help Minimize Frustration!)*

(Important - Underlined words/phrases may require further discussion.)

1. **As my Savior** – Jesus wants me to know that all my sins have been **forgiven**, and I now have eternal life.

   - John 5:24 “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.”
   - Rom. 4:7-8 How joyful are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered!
   - How joyful is the man the Lord will never charge with sin!
   - Rom. 8:1 Therefore, no condemnation now exists for those in Christ Jesus.
   - Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children.
   - Rom. 8:31 What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us?
   - Rom. 10:13 For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.
   - 1 John 3:24 … the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us.
   - 1 John 5:11-13 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn’t have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

2. **As my Lord** – Jesus wants me to know that I have been **bought** with a price, and I am no longer my own.

   - John 13:13 You call Me Teacher and Lord. This is well said, for I am.
   - Romans 11:33-12:1 … For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things… Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship.
   - Rom. 14:7-8 For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
   - 1 Cor. 6:19-20 Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.
   - 1 Cor. 7:22-23 … he who is called as a free man is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; 2 Corinthians 5:15 And He died for all so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for the One who died for them and was raised.

NOTE: Point # 2 could be threatening, if it were not for the absolute truth that God loves me and will always do what is in my best interest.

*So, if God loves me, can only do what is in my best interest, and never makes mistakes, what would be a logical reason for not embracing Him as my Master?*
3. I am very special and God has a marvelous, unique design for my entire life, and He wants to manage His plan for me.

Psalm 139:16  Your eyes saw me when I was formless; **all my days were written in Your book and planned** before a single one of them began.  
Prov. 3:5-6  **Trust in the Lord** with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about [acknowledge] Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths.  
Jer. 29:11  “For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”  
Matthew 11:28-30  *(Jesus said)* “Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and **I will give you rest.** All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”  
Romans 8:31-32  What then are we to say about these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?** He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; ***how will He not also with Him grant us everything?***

4. God wants me to know that the Holy Spirit alone is capable of guiding me and revealing God's plan to me.

Isa. 55:8-9  “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways.” This is the Lord’s declaration. “For as heaven is higher than earth, so **My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.**”  
Jer. 10:23  … a man’s way of life is not his own; **no one who walks determines his own steps.**  
John 14:26  But the Counselor, **the Holy Spirit**—the Father will send Him in My name—will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.  
John 16:13-15  … **the Spirit of truth** … will guide you into all the truth… He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you….  
1 Cor. 2:9-14  … **What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind**—God prepared this for those who love Him… **no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God,** Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God.

5. God wants me to know that the Holy Spirit will train me to recognize, follow and obey His guidance.

Psa. 32:8  **I will instruct you and show you the way to go:** with My eye on you, I will give counsel.  
Luke 9:23-24  Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, **he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.**…”  
John 10:27  *(Jesus said)* “My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me.”  
John 12:24-26  *(Jesus said)* “… If anyone serves Me, **he must follow Me.** Where I am, there My servant also will be.”  
Rom. 11:36-12:2  … Do not be conformed to this age, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, **so that you may discern** what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.
GROUP #3
I have acknowledged His Lordship over my life, but my Christian growth seems to have plateaued, and I often find the Christian life difficult and unfulfilling.

GROUP #1
I am a new believer. As a “little child” in the “family” of God, I need a spiritual mentor to walk alongside of me to answer questions and help me understand how to listen and follow the Lord and grow spiritually.

As a new Christian I have a learner’s disposition making this the ideal time to spiritually mentor me; otherwise I may learn to adapt my behavior to match what other Christians are doing.

The danger is I may end up defeated, living in the “spiritual desert”. (Group #2)

GROUP #2
As a Christian, I have been living defeated, in a desert experience. This is often characterized by ongoing spiritual symptoms such as lack of peace, worry, anger, irritability, unbelief, addictive behavior, a critical attitude, a sense of defeat, disobedience, complaining and dissatisfaction.

My attitude has been that God is there to help me with my plans, rather than my fitting into His plans for my life. I rely more on my own understanding and wisdom, rather than relying on God’s character.

Will God allow a crisis in my life to humble me, so that I will be willing to acknowledge His authority and Lordship over my life?

GROUP #4
I have acknowledged His Lordship over my life but hunger to know more about abiding in Christ and spiritually mentoring others.

Tribunal of Christ for rewards, and loss of intended rewards!

Where Am I As A Christian?

Crisis

“Desert” experience

“Promised Land” experience

Lordship decision

Birth

Physical

Psychical

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PHASE 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

Imagine the Christian Life as the Boxtop of a “Jigsaw Puzzle” and portions of Biblical truth are presented as “pieces of the puzzle”.

GOAL = SPIRITUAL MATURITY, FRUITFULNESS and SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION - that we may bear fruit for God (Rom. 7:4)

Rewards Ceremony For Believers
No punishment 2 Cor. 5:9-10

Physical Death

Judgment of believers for rewards, and loss of rewards!

Heaven

Rewards based on what I, by faith, allow the Holy Spirit to do through my life (His fruit)

Judgment of unbelievers

Rev. 20:11-15

Eternal existence without God (Hell)

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Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

Explanation of the “Jigsaw Puzzle” Diagram

The main purpose of this lesson is to understand a practical overview of the Normal Christian Life. As I acquire Biblical concepts and knowledge I want mentally to connect the pieces to God’s overall plan for my life.

Consider a jigsaw puzzle. Imagine trying to fit together the pieces of a puzzle without being able to refer to the picture boxtop. It is much less frustrating when the boxtop picture is available for reference.

The second diagram (on the next page), the “Abbreviated Overview”, is like the puzzle boxtop, while the pieces represent bits of Biblical knowledge.

Typically, I accumulate information from the Bible, friends, books, sermons, podcasts, conversations, etc. I may have difficulty knowing how this new information fits into my everyday life here on earth, or worse yet, I may arrive at wrong conclusions which can distort my understanding of God and the Christian life.

Some newer Christians become frustrated and return to their secular life style. Some may focus only on behaving correctly and develop a list of “do’s and don’ts”. Others may compartmentalize their life, resulting in a perceived “spiritual life” separate from a “secular life”. They may attempt to live an acceptable spiritual life before others, while at the same time concluding that Biblical principles somehow don’t apply to their secular everyday life.

My response should be to view the various components of my everyday life as a unit, and involve God in every aspect of my life.

My goal is to understand how to integrate Biblical knowledge into my daily relationship with God and others, and to protect me from falling into the common practice of simply archiving Biblical information.

As I grow, I will become increasingly more aware of my need to walk continually before the Lord (24/7), seeking His approval, and less dependent on the need for approval from others.
Abbreviated Overview of the “Normal” Christian Life

GOAL = SPIRITUAL MATURITY, FRUITFULNESS and SPIRITUAL REPRODUCTION
- in order that we might bear fruit for God. (Rom. 7:4)

1. Before Christ
   Bondage / Slavery

2. The unsaved build on sand.
   (Matt. 7:21-27)

3. Salvation
   Believing God / Faith (trust)

4. “Spiritual Parenting”
   1 Thess. 2:3-13
   - Seedling, Sapling, Adult, Child, Adolescent

5. The Rewards Ceremony
   For Believers
   No punishment
   2 Cor. 5:9-10

   Rewards based on what I, by faith, allow the Holy Spirit to do through my life (His fruit)

6. The Holy Spirit builds with gold, silver, precious stones - worthy of eternal rewards
   1 Cor. 3:10-15

7. Judgment of unbelievers
   Eternal existence without God (Hell)
   Rev. 20:11-15

Jesus - our Rock and Foundation

Earthly Parenting
- I can build a temporal structure of wood, hay and stubble.
  1 Cor. 3:10-15

Heaven

The Tribunal of Christ for rewards, and loss of rewards!

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Discuss the explanations below for each component of the jigsaw puzzle “boxtop”, all of which will be covered later in more detail in the following lessons.

1. **Birth to Rebirth** – We should each be able to easily identify ourselves as having gone through this period, alienated from God, living in spiritual darkness, and without hope.

2. If a person rejects Christ and dies during this period, that person who has built their house upon the sand without a foundation, will go to the **judgment of unbelievers** to spend eternity separated from God. It is important to understand that this judgment has **nothing to do with believers**, only unbelievers.

Matt. 7:24-27 *(Jesus said)* “Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn’t collapse, because its foundation was on the rock. But **everyone who hears these words of Mine and doesn’t act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. And its collapse was great!”*

Rev. 20:11-15 *(The apostle John wrote)* “Then I saw a **great white throne** and One seated on it. Earth and heaven fled from His presence, and no place was found for them. I also saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged according to their works by what was written in the books. Then the sea gave up its dead, and Death and Hades gave up their dead; all were judged according to their works. Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone **not found written in the book of life** was thrown into the lake of fire.”

3. **The Cross** – This event is by far the most important happening in my life. From God’s perspective I have passed from “death” (without His life) to “life” (the Lord indwelling), from hopelessness to hopefulness.

John 5:24 “I assure you: Anyone who **hears** My word and **believes** Him who sent Me **has** eternal life and will **not** come under judgment but has passed from **death to life**.”

4. **The New Life** – It is important that I understand the event of salvation is the **entrance** into a new life with God, prepared by Him to completely meet my every need as I fit into **His** design. I am introduced to the concept of fitting into **God’s plan** for my time here on earth, which is but a small part of His **eternal** plan for me. Two Biblical analogies can illustrate my Christian life: that of a plant growing from a seedling to a tree, and that of a human growing from a baby to an adult. Again, the event of salvation is just the **beginning** of the new life of learning to walk with God. During this period of time it is **very important** for a new believer to be **discipled** (“spiritually parented” / **mentored**).
1 Thessalonians 2:7-13  … we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own children. We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. … like a father with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the message of God, which also works effectively in you believers.

5  The Intended Objective (Goal) – Just as I would expect a healthy sapling to grow into a fruit-bearing tree, and a healthy infant to grow into an adult and become a parent, so God’s intention is to make of a healthy spiritual infant a spiritually mature and fruitful Christian.

6  God’s Foundation and My Building Options – God has laid a Foundation, Jesus Christ, which represents my salvation. This is equally true for all believers. However, each of us individually has a choice as to how we will build on that Foundation. The buildings represent the use of my resources (time, energy, possessions) during my physical life here on earth. If I allow the Holy Spirit, as the Master Building Contractor, to use my resources, He will use those building materials to create for me an eternal structure of gold, silver and precious stones. That which I deny Him use of will produce a structure of wood, hay and stubble.

1 Cor. 3:10-15  (Paul wrote) According to God’s grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one’s work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one’s work. If anyone’s work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire.

7  These verses speak of a future rewards ceremony called The Tribunal of Christ (or The Judgment Seat of Christ) at which time each believer will individually appear before Jesus Christ to be rewarded (for eternity) for what he/she has allowed the Holy Spirit to do through their life while living here on earth.

There should be no fear of punishment at this event, although I need to be aware of the potential for loss of eternal rewards, since all that is wood, hay and stubble will be turned into worthless ashes. It is important to note that no unbeliever will be present at this event.

2 Cor. 5:9-10  Therefore, whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the tribunal of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or worthless.

Matt. 6:20-21  But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don’t break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Knowing God

God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him. From birth until I received Christ as my Savior, I formed habits of worldly understanding.

Now He wants to gradually transform my understanding of Him so that I increasingly view life from His perspective. A godly perspective produces godly behavior. It does not please God if I simply attempt to change my outward behavior without allowing Him to transform my inward thinking.

If I want my relationship with God to grow, I need to make conscious choices to seek Him wholeheartedly, in much the same way that a marriage relationship needs to be nurtured.

In order not to hinder God’s work in and through me, I need to maintain an open, honest and teachable attitude towards Him. Since He alone really knows me, my role is to willingly allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my understanding. Jesus is the visible picture of God’s character, and the One in whose image God will mold me, as I allow Him.

God desires for me to know Him intimately, in a way that goes beyond mere knowledge “about” Him.

**Godly behavior is the natural outcome of His continuing inward transformation of my convictions and values**

1 Sam. 16:7... *Man does not see what the Lord sees, for man sees what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart."

1. My attitude
   a. God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him, to know His heart.

   Jer. 9:23-24  This is what the Lord says: The wise man must not boast in his wisdom; the strong man must not boast in his strength; the wealthy man must not boast in his wealth. But the one who boasts should boast in this, that he understands and knows Me,…

   John 17:3  (Jesus said) This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.

   Rom. 12:2  …do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. (see also 2 Cor. 3:18)

   Eph. 3:16-19  … that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, and to know the Messiah’s love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

**The highest goal of learning is to know God!**
How Do I Grow into His Perspective?

God desires for me to grow in my understanding of Him. In Romans 12:2 God tells me that He wants to transform my thinking so that I increasingly think more like Him. That change will result in an attitude adjustment resulting (over time) in behavior that is acceptable to Him.

Use the following three steps to understand this critical process.

Read from the BOTTOM to the TOP beginning with Romans 12:2, then move UP to Box #1.

1. **Mind Thinking**
   - I willingly choose to allow Him to make the appropriate changes in my understanding.
   - God wants to gradually transform my understanding of Him so that I increasingly view life from His perspective.

2. **Attitude**
   - I need to make conscious choices to seek Him wholeheartedly in my daily spiritual walk.
   - I need to maintain an open, honest and teachable attitude towards Him.

3. **Behavior**
   - As I am abiding in the Holy Spirit, my transformed perspective will produce behavior that is pleasing to Him.

Romans 12:2  *Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*
b. In order to grow I need to actively pursue a closer relationship with Him.

Psa. 63:1  (David wrote) God,… I eagerly seek You. I thirst for You….
Prov. 2:1-5  (Solomon wrote) My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.
Matt. 7:7-8  “Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”
1 Peter 2:2-3  Like newborn infants, desire the pure spiritual milk, so that you may grow by it for your salvation, since you have tasted that the Lord is good.

2. God’s Word

Truth does not originate from me, or from any other human, but only from God himself. Therefore, all “perceived truth” must be compared to, and verified by, God’s word – the Bible.

a. One way God transforms me is through His Word. His Word is trustworthy.

Psa. 119:89  Lord, Your word is forever; it is firmly fixed in heaven.  (see also 1 Peter 1:25)
Matt. 24:35  (Jesus said) Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.
John 14:6  Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life….”
John 17:17  (Jesus said) Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth. (See also Psa. 119:160)
Rom. 15:4  For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.
Eph. 4:21  … the truth is in Jesus.
2 Tim. 3:16-17  All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
1 John 5:6  …And the Spirit is the One who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

b. God’s Word should become as essential as food in my daily life.

Deut. 6:5-9  “…These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. … Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (See also Deut. 11:18-21)
Job 23:12  (Job said) “I have not departed from the commands of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my daily food.”
Psa. 119:16  I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.
Psa. 119:103  How sweet Your word is to my taste—sweeter than honey in my mouth.
Matt. 4:4  But He (Jesus) answered, “It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”
c. **Memorization and meditation** on His Word will help me grow.

Psa. 1:1-3 How happy is the man who … his delight is in the LORD’s instruction, and he **meditates on it day and night**. He is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psa. 119:11 I have treasured Your word **in my heart** so that I may not sin against You.

Psa. 119:97 How I love Your instruction! It is my meditation **all day long**.

Psa. 145:5 **I will speak of Your splendor and glorious majesty and Your wonderful works**.

Prov. 22:17-18 Listen closely, pay attention to the words of the wise, and apply your mind to my knowledge. For it is pleasing if you **keep them within you and if they are constantly on your lips**.

Col. 3:16 **Let** the message about the Messiah **dwell richly among** you, **teaching** and **admonishing** one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Suggestions:
- Record a Bible verse with your phone and play back as you drive or do chores.
- Write a verse on a card and tape it where it is visible or write it on your mirror with a dry erase marker.
- Meditate on that verse during the day.

d. **God’s Word is like a light shining into my life, disclosing the secrets of my heart and helping me to see myself as God sees me.**

Psa. 119:105 Your word is **a lamp** for my feet and **a light** on my path.

Psa. 119:130 The revelation of Your words brings **light** and gives **understanding** to the inexperienced.

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes **from what is heard**, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ.

Heb. 4:12-13 … For the word of God is living and effective … It is able to **judge** the ideas and thoughts of the heart. … all things are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account.

e. **God alone gives understanding of His Word. Even though some portions may appear difficult to understand, as I am honest and open to Him, He will reveal His Word to me as I have need.**

Deut. 29:29 The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but **the revealed things** belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law.

Luke 24:45 Then He (Jesus) **opened their minds** to understand the Scriptures.

1 Cor. 2:12-14 … Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, **so that we may understand** what has been freely given to us by God. We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those **taught by the Spirit**, explaining spiritual things to spiritual people. But the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God’s Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; **he is not able to understand it** …

2 Pet. 3:15-16 (Peter wrote) … our dear brother Paul has written to you according to the wisdom given to him. He speaks about these things in all his letters in which there are some matters that are **hard to understand**….
3. Prayer - conversing with God

I should think of Prayer as an intimate conversation with my Creator and Master, who is majestic in His creation and control of the universe, while at the same time so loving and caring that He wants to be involved in the most minute details of my life.

I should approach God with a reverent awe, always conscious of the fact that His accessibility is only due to the merit of His Son, not a result of any goodness on my part. I should count it an extreme privilege to approach the God of all creation.

As in any conversation, **listening is a major component**. Occasionally my time with God will consist mostly or entirely of contemplating and **listening to Him** as He speaks to my heart or reveals to me something new. He wants me to look to Him with expectation.

One way of honoring God and giving Him His rightful recognition in my heart is by actively seeking and accepting His priorities. This will necessitate forming the habit of not giving Him the leftovers of my time, energy and possessions, but rather offering Him the best of my resources.

**a. Conversation with God will be enhanced by a heart preparation, an honest assessment of my priorities, and an awareness of His majesty.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scripture</th>
<th>Passage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psa. 5:3</td>
<td>At daybreak, LORD, You hear my voice; at daybreak I plead my case to You and watch expectantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psa. 37:7</td>
<td>Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for Him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psa. 119:147</td>
<td>I rise before dawn and cry out for help; I put my hope in Your word.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prov. 3:5-6</td>
<td>Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isa. 50:4</td>
<td>… He awakens Me each morning; He awakens My ear to listen like those being instructed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matt. 6:31-34</td>
<td>“So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ … your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 10:38-42</td>
<td>… He (Jesus) entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who also sat at the Lord’s feet and was listening to what He said. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, and she came up and asked, “Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to serve alone? So tell her to give me a hand.” The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has made the right choice, and it will not be taken away from her.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eph. 2:18</td>
<td>For through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Col. 3:2-3</td>
<td>Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with the Messiah in God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heb. 4:15-16</td>
<td>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tested in every way as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us at the proper time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Peter 5:6-7</td>
<td>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
b. Prayer includes adoration, thanksgiving (gratitude), and praise.

Psa. 145:2-3  (David wrote) I will praise You every day; I will honor Your name forever and ever. Yahweh is great and is highly praised; His greatness is unsearchable.
Psa. 146:1-2  Hallelujah! My soul, praise the LORD. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing to my God as long as I live.
Daniel 6:10 … Daniel … went into his house. The windows in its upper room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
Eph. 5:19-20  Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music from your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Phil. 4:6-7  Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
Col. 4:2-4  Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving …
1 Thess. 5:16-18  Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

c. Prayer includes confession, reconciliation and forgiveness of others.

Psa. 32:5  Then I acknowledged my sin to You and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You took away the guilt of my sin. (See Psa. 66:18)
Prov. 28:13  The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.
Matt. 5:23-24  So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
Mark 11:25  And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.
Rom. 12:18  If possible, on your part, live at peace with everyone.
1 John 1:9-10  If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

d. Prayer includes supplications, requests for my personal needs.

Prov. 2:6  For the LORD gives wisdom: from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.
Matt. 6:5-8  … But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you…. because your Father knows the things you need before you ask Him.
Matt. 6:25-34  … “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you…”
James 1:5  Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him.
e. Prayer – Battle in “The Secret Place

But when you pray, go into your private room, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. —Matthew 6:6

Jesus did not say, "Dream about your Father who is in the secret place," but He said, ". . . pray to your Father who is in the secret place . . ." Prayer is an effort of the will. After we have entered our secret place and shut the door, the most difficult thing to do is to pray. We cannot seem to get our minds into good working order, and the first thing we have to fight is wandering thoughts. The great battle in private prayer is overcoming this problem of our idle and wandering thinking. We have to learn to discipline our minds and concentrate on willful, deliberate prayer.

We must have a specially selected place for prayer, but once we get there this plague of wandering thoughts begins, as we begin to think to ourselves, "This needs to be done, and I have to do that today." Jesus says to "shut your door." Having a secret stillness before God means deliberately shutting the door on our emotions and remembering Him. God is in secret, and He sees us from "the secret place"—He does not see us as other people do, or as we see ourselves. When we truly live in "the secret place," it becomes impossible for us to doubt God. We become more sure of Him than of anyone or anything else. Enter into "the secret place," and you will find that God was right in the middle of your everyday circumstances all the time. Get into the habit of dealing with God about everything. Unless you learn to open the door of your life completely and let God in from your first waking moment of each new day, you will be working on the wrong level throughout the day. But if you will swing the door of your life fully open and "pray to your Father who is in the secret place," every public thing in your life will be marked with the lasting imprint of the presence of God.

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Suggestion: To minimize distractions when you meet alone with the Lord, have a notepad handy to write down any thoughts that you may need to act upon later.

f. Prayer includes intercession, requests for the needs of others.

2 Cor. 1:8-11 (Paul wrote of his afflictions in Asia) ... we even despaired of life....God ...He has delivered us from such a terrible death,... that He will deliver us again while you join in helping us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gift that came to us through the prayers of many.

Eph. 6:18-20 (Paul wrote) Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints. Pray also for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel. For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should.

Col. 4:12 (Paul wrote of Epaphras) ... always contending for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature and fully assured in everything God wills.
g. Prayer is continual, anytime, but should also include, as possible, regular daily special times set apart. It pleases God when I seek His direction for appropriate times and places.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Thess. 5:17</th>
<th>Pray constantly.</th>
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</table>

Psa. 55:17  I complain and groan morning, noon, and night, and He hears my voice.
Psa. 119:62  I rise at midnight to thank You for Your righteous judgments.
Psa. 119:164  I praise You seven times a day for Your righteous judgments.
Daniel 6:10  … Daniel … three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
Rom. 12:12  Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.

Note on 1 Thess. 5:17  “Continual prayer is not prayer that prevails without any interruption, but prayer that continues whenever possible. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., The Bible Knowledge Commentary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.)

h. Our Daily Bread (September 19, 2004)

Informing God

We cannot tell God anything He doesn't already know. When we pray, we simply put into words what He's been aware of all along.

That doesn't make prayer unnecessary; rather, it encourages us to pray. We find relief in talking to Someone who knows us and our situation fully. It's a comfort to know that God's response arises not from information we give Him, but from His perfect knowledge of our circumstances. He knows all conditions—past, present, future—that bear on our well-being.

"Your Father knows," Jesus said in Matthew 6:8. He knows our thoughts, our intentions, our desires. He is intimately acquainted with all our ways (Psalm 139:3). He knows the anguish of our heart, the strain of continual frustration, the enemies inside and outside that war against our souls.

So, can we presume to dictate the time and terms of our deliverance from trials or adversity? Can we say our way is better, more likely to develop our soul? No, we cannot teach God anything. He alone knows the way to bring us to glory. Out of all possible paths, He has chosen the best, the route most adapted to who we are and what He has in store for us.

We cannot teach God knowledge, but we can love and trust Him. That's all He asks of us.
—David Roper

The answer God may choose for me
Is sure to be the best,
So may I always thankful be,
And in His goodness rest. —D. De Haan

God knows the end from the beginning, so we can trust Him with everything between.

4. I must make it a priority to gather together with other believers on a regular basis, for teaching, prayer, Bible study, accountability and encouragement.

As I ask God, He will lead me to or confirm the Church body where I can be used by Him in service to others and participate with other believers in the fellowship that I need, continuing to learn and grow through teaching, praying and worshipping together.

Matt. 18:20  For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there among them.
Acts 2:42  And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.
Heb. 10:24-25  And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (ESV)
Acts 16:5  So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in number daily.

CONCLUSION: As I trust God, I can always be assured of His love, knowing He will only act toward me in my best interest, even though at times it may not appear that way. For Him to do otherwise would be contrary to His character.

Psa. 34:15  The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry for help.
Psa. 37:4-5  Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart’s desires. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act.
Psa. 86:5  For You, Lord, are kind and ready to forgive, rich in faithful love to all who call on You.
Psa. 145:18-19  The LORD is near all who call out to Him, all who call out to Him with integrity. He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him; He hears their cry for help and saves them.
Jer. 10:23  I know, LORD, that a man’s way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.
1 John 5:14-15  Now this is the confidence we have before Him: Whenever we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears whatever we ask, we know that we have what we have asked Him for.

Yet I am always with You; You hold my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterward You will take me up in glory. Who do I have in heaven but You? And I desire nothing on earth but You. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever.

(Psalm 73:23-26)
Salvation Principles

Like physical birth, spiritual birth is the entrance into a new life. The purpose of this lesson is to explain some things that happen to a believer at conversion. Obviously there are other principles and truths that can be added.

1. Mercy & Grace

“Mercy” = When I am not given what I deserve.
“Grace” = When I am given what I don’t deserve.

Illustration of Speeding Ticket -
“Good fortune” - if you’re not caught.
“Justice” - if you’re caught and given a ticket.
“Mercy” - if you’re caught, but not given a ticket.
“Grace” - if you’re caught, given a ticket, but the officer pays the fine.

2. The Apostle Paul describes what I was like before God saved me, and what God has done for me. (discuss terminology as needed.)

Rom. 3:10-12  As it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become useless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

Rom. 5:6-10  For while we were still helpless, at the appointed moment, Christ died for the ungodly…. But God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us! Much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by His life!

Eph. 2:1-9  And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously walked according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love that He had for us, made us alive with the Messiah even though we were dead in trespasses. You are saved by grace! Together with Christ Jesus He also raised us up and seated us in the heavens, so that in the coming ages He might display the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.

Eph. 2:12  At that time you were without the Messiah, … without hope and without God in the world.

Eph. 4:17-19  … darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God,…

NOTE: God does not judge us “on the curve”. We tend to evaluate ourselves as compared to others, whereas God compares us to Himself."
3. God’s principle of substitution

a. God’s grace was evident even when Adam and Eve first disobeyed Him.

Genesis 2:15-17 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it. And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”
2:25 Both the man and his wife were naked, yet felt no shame.

Genesis 3:
:6-7 Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.
:8-12 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. So the Lord God called out to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” And he said, “I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” Then He asked, “Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” Then the man replied, “The woman You gave to be with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.”
:13 So the Lord God asked the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “It was the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.”
:20 Adam named his wife Eve because she was the mother of all the living.
:21-24 The Lord God made clothing out of skins for Adam and his wife, and He clothed them. The Lord God said, “Since man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.” So the Lord God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

Adam & Eve were given one commandment, which they disobeyed. Then they tried to make themselves acceptable to God - represented by the fig leaf cover-up. They each blamed someone else. They got what they deserved - Justice. Then God gave them what they didn’t deserve - Grace - represented by His animal substitute. An innocent animal’s life was sacrificed as a result of their sin. This animal sacrifice was a representation of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sin of the entire human race.

b. The Passover - another picture of Christ’s substitutionary sacrifice.

Exodus 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:
:12-13 I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and strike every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. I am Yahweh; I will execute judgments against all the gods of Egypt. The blood on the houses where you are staying will be a distinguishing mark for you; when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No plague will be among you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.
Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go, select an animal from the flock according to your families, and slaughter the Passover animal. Take a cluster of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and brush the lintel and the two doorposts with some of the blood in the basin. None of you may go out the door of his house until morning.”

“When the LORD passes through to strike Egypt and sees the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, He will pass over the door and not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you.”

“Keep this command permanently as a statute for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the LORD will give you as He promised, you are to observe this ritual. When your children ask you, ‘What does this ritual mean to you?’ you are to reply, ‘It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, for He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He struck the Egyptians and spared our homes.’” So the people bowed down and worshiped.

Now at midnight the LORD struck every firstborn male in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the prisoner who was in the dungeon, and every firstborn of the livestock. During the night Pharaoh got up, he along with all his officials and all the Egyptians, and there was a loud wailing throughout Egypt because there wasn’t a house without someone dead.

John 1:29 The next day John (the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”
1 Cor. 5:7 … for Christ our Passover has been sacrificed.

The Israelites were in slavery to the Egyptians. A lamb was killed as a substitute. Wherever there was blood the inhabitants of the house were spared from God’s judgment. When the Lord saw blood on a doorpost, He could say, “Judgment has already been here”.

(Illustration: One of the safest places during a forest fire is where the fire has already burned).

c. Jesus Christ's sacrifice as our “Substitute” was God's plan for our salvation.

Isaiah 53:4-6 Yet He Himself bore our sicknesses, and He carried our pains…. But He was pierced because of our transgressions, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on Him, and we are healed by His wounds. We all went astray like sheep; we all have turned to our own way; and the LORD has punished Him for the iniquity of us all.

2 Cor. 5:21 For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]. (Amplified New Testament)

Gal. 3:13 Christ purchased our freedom [redeeming us] from the curse (doom) of the Law [and its condemnation] by [Himself] becoming a curse for us, for it is written [in the Scriptures], Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree (is crucified); (Amplified New Testament)

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ [the Messiah Himself] died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous (the Just for the unjust, the Innocent for the guilty), that He might bring us to God. In His human body He was put to death, but He was made alive in the spirit, (Amplified New Testament)
4. I have been saved by His love, not because I am deserving.

John 6:37  (Jesus said)  Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out.
John 6:44  (Jesus said)  No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.
Rom. 3:10-12  as it is written: …There is … no one who seeks God…
Rom. 4:4-8  Now to the one who works, pay is not considered as a gift, but as something owed. But to the one who does not work, but believes on Him who declares the ungodly to be righteous, his faith is credited for righteousness. Likewise, David also speaks of the blessing of the man God credits righteousness to apart from works: How joyful are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered! How joyful is the man the Lord will never charge with sin!
Eph. 1:3-8  Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved. We have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
Titus 3:3-8  For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit. He poured out this Spirit on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that having been justified by His grace, we may become heirs with the hope of eternal life. This saying is trustworthy…

5. What is the difference between “religion” and “Christianity”?

“Religion” worldwide teaches that there is something you can do to make yourself acceptable before God. “True Christianity” teaches that only what Christ has done on your behalf makes you acceptable before God.

John 14:6  Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”
Acts 4:12  “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people, and we must be saved by it.”

6. Jesus gave an overview of salvation. (John 5:24 - a great verse to memorize)

(Jesus said)  “I assure you: Anyone who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not come under judgment but has passed from death to life.”

Eternal life is not an object, but rather an endless quality of existence with God.
**The Spiritual Anatomy of a Christian**

1. **Mankind is a unique creation of God, set apart from the rest of His creation.**
   People alone have been given a “spirit”, through which they can know God.

   *Then the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.*

   Genesis 2:7

   **spirit - God awareness.** We interact with God through our spirit.

   **soul - self awareness.** We have personality, reasoning, emotions, mind, will, etc.

   **body - world awareness.** We interact with the physical world through our body senses.

2. **The entire animal kingdom was created by God.** (Gen 1:20-25) **However, the animal kingdom is limited in scope, and without a “spirit”**. (In Genesis 2:7, God breathed into man alone His “breath of life.”)

   **God cares for all animals as part of His creation** (See Psalm 147:9, Matthew 6:26-30)

   **soul** - varying degrees of instinctive personality, emotions, mind, will, etc.

   **body** - world awareness. Animals interact with the physical world through their body senses.
How I Received My Human Nature & God’s Divine Nature

1. **GOD**
   God’s Character as defined by Scripture
   Perfect, Holy, Sovereign, Loving, Faithful, Can do no wrong, Cannot lie, Totally trustworthy, Just, Never changes

2. Satan’s strategy is to distort God’s character (Satan is a liar by nature – John 8:44)

3. Adam / Eve

4. Gen. 3:6
   to gain wisdom (understanding)
   good for food (body)
   pleasing to eye (possess)

5. (Problem of humanity)
   Adam & Eve chose to seek to satisfy their “perceived” needs independent of God

6. Sinful Human Nature (Natural)

7. Jesus (2nd Adam)

   test God (understanding)
   make bread (body)
   kingdoms (possess)

9. Jesus chose to be “dependent on God”

10. Holy Spirit
    God’s Sinless Divine Nature (Spiritual)
How I Received My Human Nature and God’s Divine Nature - Guide

The main purpose of this lesson is to help clarify the events which have led to my present condition as a believer having two natures. A number of foundational Biblical principles will be introduced which should help me to more easily understand other truths as they are presented in subsequent lessons.

1. The Character of God --- It is important to understand the significance of Biblical terms that describe His attributes. His attributes will be reinforced, as I allow the Holy Spirit to speak to me through His written Word.

IMPORTANT: The main purpose of presenting the attributes of God’s character is to demonstrate how reasonable it is to trust Him. As an unbeliever I was accustomed to trusting in myself, but as a believer I need to form the habit of trusting God in my daily decisions. I must reason out that if God’s character is as portrayed in the Bible, then it is very logical to trust Him completely, and very illogical not to trust Him. There is no reasonable logic for not yielding to Him.

A major reason for distrusting God is my tendency to impute to God my character. If God were like me then it would be quite reasonable to distrust Him.

A Sampling of Verses Related to God’s Character

Take some time now to read (aloud if possible) the following verses on God’s character.

GOD IS LOVE

1 John 4:16 ... God is love....
Rom. 5:8 God proves His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!
John 3:16 “For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son....”
1 John 3:16 This is how we have come to know love: He laid down His life for us. ...

GOD IS SOVEREIGN

Job 34:14-15 If He put His mind to it and withdrew the spirit and breath He gave, every living thing would perish together and mankind would return to the dust.
Prov. 21:30 No wisdom, no understanding, and no counsel will prevail against the LORD.
Isa. 46:11 ... Yes, I have spoken; so I will also bring it about. I have planned it; I will also do it.
Dan. 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, and He does what He wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can hold back His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”
Acts 4:24 ... they all raised their voices to God and said, “Master, You are the One who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them.”
GOD IS RIGHTEOUS, HOLY AND PURE. HE CANNOT LIE, HE CAN DO NO WRONG

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! The Rock—His work is perfect; **all His ways are entirely just**. A faithful God, **without prejudice, He is righteous and true**.

Lev. 19:2 “Speak to the entire Israelite community and tell them: Be holy because **I, Yahweh your God, am holy**.”

Job 34:10 **It is impossible for God to do wrong, and for the Almighty to act unjustly**.

Psa. 18:30 God—**His way is perfect**.…

Isa. 57:15 For the High and Exalted One who lives forever, **whose name is Holy** …

Hab. 1:13 **Your eyes are too pure to look on evil**,…

Luke 1:49 Because the Mighty One has done great things for me, and **His name is holy**.

Heb. 6:18 … **it is impossible for God to lie**,…

Rom. 3:25-26 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. … **He did it to demonstrate His righteousness** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (NIV)

GOD IS PERFECT

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! The Rock—His work is **perfect**,…

2 Sam. 22:31 God—**His way is perfect**; the word of the LORD is pure,…

Matt. 5:48 … **your heavenly Father is perfect**.

GOD NEVER CHANGES

Psa. 102:25-27 Long ago You established the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, **but You will endure**; all of them will wear out like clothing. You will change them like a garment, and they will pass away. **But You are the same, and Your years will never end**.

Malachi 3:6 “**Because I, Yahweh, have not changed**,…”

James 1:17 Every generous act and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights; **with Him there is no variation or shadow cast by turning**.

GOD IS FAITHFUL, TOTALLY TRUSTWORTHY AND DEPENDABLE

Deut. 32:3-4 Declare the greatness of our God! … **A faithful God**,…

Psa. 33:18-21 Now **the eye of the LORD is on those** who fear Him—those who depend on His faithful love to deliver them from death and to keep them alive in famine. We wait for Yahweh; He is **our help and shield**. For our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name.

Psa. 34:4-8 I (David) sought the LORD, and He answered me and **delivered me from all** my fears. … This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him from all his troubles. **The Angel of the LORD encamps around those** who fear Him, and rescues them. Taste and see that the LORD is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psa. 36:5 **LORD, Your faithful love reaches to heaven, Your faithfulness to the clouds**.

Psa. 86:15 But You, Lord, are a **compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger** and **rich in faithful love and truth**.
Jer. 29:11  “For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the LORD’s declaration—“plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

Rom. 8:28  We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.

1 Cor. 10:13  No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.

1 Thess. 5:24  He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

2 Thess. 3:3  But the Lord is faithful;…

2 Tim. 2:13  If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

1 Peter 4:19  So those who suffer according to God’s will should, while doing what is good, entrust themselves to a faithful Creator.

Satan’s strategy --- is to persuade me that God is not trustworthy, by undermining my confidence in God’s character. Example: In Genesis 3:1-5 he sought to instill doubt, insinuating that God is a liar, suggesting that God did not have their best interest at heart, and implying that He was withholding that which in some way would be good for them. If God did not love them, how then could He be trusted?

Gen. 3:1-5  Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden’?” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, ‘You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.’  “No! You will not die,” the serpent said to the woman. “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

When Adam and Eve were created they were made perfect, as was all creation. They were complete and totally satisfied, not lacking in any way. Everything they did was in total harmony with God’s character. Death did not exist before that time.

Rom. 5:12  … just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all men, because all sinned.

1 Cor. 15:21-22  For since death came through a man, … in Adam all die,…

Adam and Eve believed Satan’s lie about God’s character and ate the fruit, choosing to pursue self-satisfaction “independent” of God. The choice to live independent from God was evident in three areas:

1. The human understanding (desirable for obtaining wisdom)
2. The appetites of the body (good for food), and
3. Possessions (delightful to look at).

(Temptations also fall into one of these three areas.) It is important to see this “predisposition toward independence” as the “root” problem of humanity and one of the driving forces behind the global and individual resistance to God.
Gen. 3:6 Then the woman saw that the tree was **good for food** and **delightful to look at**, and that it was **desirable for obtaining wisdom**. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Every person born into the **human race** inherits the sinful human nature (pictured as a dark tree) of Adam, **through their biological father**. Consequently, every human is born with a **disposition of resistance** toward God.

Gen. 5:3  … Adam … fathered a son **in his likeness**, according to **his image**.
Gal. 5:16-23  … For **the flesh desires what is against the Spirit**,…

Jesus was born into the human race, but **without a sinful human father**. As the **second Adam**, He was born with the same **sinless** human nature that Adam had before he fell. The righteous character of Jesus, as seen in His life, is what God had originally intended for Adam.

1 Cor. 15:45-46  … The first man Adam became a living being; the **last Adam** became a **life-giving Spirit**,…
Rom. 5:19  For just as through one man’s disobedience the many were made **sinners**, so also through the one man’s obedience the many will be made **righteous**.

9 Jesus was tempted in the **same three areas** as Adam, but Jesus chose to entrust Himself into God’s care instead of believing Satan’s enticement to seek to live independent of God.

**Upon believing**, I as a new believer was born into the **spiritual race**, and received the divine nature **in the Person of the Holy Spirit**. **Important:** The sinful human nature can **never** be improved. (See Gal. 5:17 below.)

John 3:3, 6  Jesus replied, I assure you: Unless someone is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Whatever is **born of the flesh** is flesh, and whatever is **born of the Spirit** is spirit.
Rom. 7:14-25  For I know that **nothing good lives in me**, that is, **in my flesh**. So I discover this principle: When I want to do what is good, **evil is with me**. For **in my inner self** I joyfully agree with God’s law. But I see a different law **in the parts of my body**, waging war against the law of **my mind** and taking me prisoner to the law of sin **in the parts of my body**. So then, **with my mind I myself** am a slave to the law of God, but **with my flesh**, to the law of sin.
Gal. 5:16-23  I say then, walk **by the Spirit** and you will not carry out **the desire of the flesh**. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are **opposed to each other**. Now **the works of the flesh** are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control.
How to Relate to the Holy Spirit

Note: During this lesson, discuss the consequences of not understanding each concept. For example, what would be the typical result of not thinking of the Holy Spirit as a Person? How was Jesus limited by a physical body, but the Holy Spirit is “omnipresent.”

1. I should interact with the Holy Spirit as a person, for He is God himself. I should not think of Him as just an “inspiration”, a “presence” or an “influence”, without personality.

Acts 5:3-4 … Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field? Wasn’t it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn’t it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God!”

1 Cor. 2:10-11 … the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man that is in him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. (see also Phil. 2:1)

Eph. 4:30 And don’t grieve God’s Holy Spirit. You were sealed by Him for the day of redemption.

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me…

The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is not an influence, or a force, or an inspiration, but God Himself. He is like a best Friend, yet so much more. My relationship with Him is in many ways to be similar to a good spousal relationship. What are the implications of such a relationship? Respect? Communication? Interaction? Nurturing? How would I treat a “force”?

2. He lives in me, His temple. He owns me (whether I believe it or not). His ownership does not become true after I believe it.

1 Cor. 3:16 Don’t you yourselves know that you are God’s sanctuary and that the Spirit of God lives in you?

1 Cor. 6:19-20 Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.

God’s ownership of the me is a factual truth, which is not dependent on my acknowledgment of it. I do not bestow ownership, I can only acknowledge and act upon what He states to be already true. What are the implications of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership?

New believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they don’t have preconceived ideas of God’s expectations. In contrast, older believers tend to accept this truth intellectually, but be resistant to the implications.
3. He is the seal (deposit, guarantee, evidence) that I am God’s child.

Rom. 8:9, 14-16 … if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. … All those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons…. The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children.

2 Cor. 1:21-22 Now it is God who strengthens us, with you, in Christ and has anointed us. He has also sealed us and given us the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts. (See also 2 Cor. 5:5)

Gal. 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts,…

Eph. 1:13-14 When you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed in Him, you were also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. He is the down payment (pledge, guarantee, deposit) of our inheritance,…

1 John 3:24 … And the way we know that He remains in us is from the Spirit He has given us. (See 1 John 4:13)

The Holy Spirit is God’s evidence of my salvation. I should actively seek after the Holy Spirit and be open to His guidance and instruction. As a disciple I should grow increasingly more dependent on the Holy Spirit and increasingly less dependent on a discipler (mentor). I should increasingly recognize the Holy Spirit’s promptings in my everyday life.

4. He has a plan for every day of my life. He wants me to learn to follow and obey Him. He does not expect to follow my plan.

Psalm 139:16 Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began.

Jer. 10:23 I know, Lord, that a man’s way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.

Jer. 29:11 “For I know the plans I have for you”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

John 14:16-17 (Jesus said) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever…. John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit—the Father will send Him in My name will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

John 16:13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you…. 1 Cor. 2:9-14 But as it is written: What eye did not see and ear did not hear, and what never entered the human mind—God prepared this for those who love Him. Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit,… Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God….

I need to fit into God’s plan for my life. God wants me to follow Him. He does not want me to view Him as my Servant, fitting into my plans and assisting me whenever I determine I need His help. I should feel free to make tentative daily and future plans, while always being mindful that He may want to change my plans.
5. **He intercedes to the Father for me and teaches me to pray.**

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<td>Rom. 8:26-27</td>
<td>In the same way the Spirit also joins to help in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings…. He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.</td>
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<td>Eph. 2:18</td>
<td>For through Him (Jesus) we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.</td>
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<td>Eph. 6:17-18</td>
<td>… Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert in this with all perseverance and intercession for all the saints.</td>
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<td>Jude 20</td>
<td>But you, dear friends,… pray in the Holy Spirit.</td>
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I need to maintain a continual active communication with the Lord, through conversational prayer, reading and studying the Word, listening to teachings, etc.

6. **He baptized me into the universal body of Christ, with all true believers (refers to “spiritual” baptism, not to water baptism).**

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<td>Matt. 3:11</td>
<td>(John the Baptist said) “I baptize you with water for repentance, but the One who is coming after me is more powerful than I. … He Himself will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”</td>
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<td>1 Cor. 12:12-13</td>
<td>For as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.</td>
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I need to understand my oneness with all members of the universal Body of Christ, the one and only true Church, bonded together by the Holy Spirit. There are some doctrinal and cultural differences between Christians that should not create divisions or resentments.

**NOTE:** Water baptism for a Christian speaks of “identification with” Christ. While water baptism has no merit before God for salvation, it is to be taken seriously as an outward witness of what He has already done inwardly in my life. I am expressing to others that I have died with Christ and died to myself, and that I want to live a new life in obedience to Him and through the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within me. (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 10:47-48; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3;) Recommendation: talk with your Pastor if you have questions on baptism.

7. **He wants to use me to testify about Jesus to unbelievers.**

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<tr>
<td>Mark 13:11</td>
<td>So when they arrest you and hand you over, don’t worry beforehand what you will say. On the contrary, whatever is given to you in that hour—say it. For it isn’t you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. (See also Matt. 10:19 / Luke 12:11)</td>
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<td>John 15:26</td>
<td>“When the Counselor comes, the One I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—He will testify about Me.”</td>
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<td>John 16:8-11</td>
<td>“When He (the Holy Spirit) comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment.”</td>
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<td>Acts 1:8</td>
<td>“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”</td>
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God desires to use me to attract unbelievers to a believing faith in Jesus Christ. This should be through spoken words as well as the example of my life yielded to Him. St. Francis of Asissi is quoted as saying – “preach the gospel – and if necessary use words.”
8. He wants to use the spiritual gift(s) He has given me for others.

Mark 9:35 … He … said to them, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”

Rom. 12:4-8 Now as we have many parts in one body, and all the parts do not have the same function, in the same way we who are many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another. According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If prophecy, use it according to the standard of one’s faith; if service, in service; if teaching, in teaching; if exhorting, in exhortation; giving, with generosity; leading, with diligence; showing mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Cor. 12:4, 7-11 Now there are different gifts, but the same Spirit. … the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:…. But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each person as He wills.

Phil. 2:3-4 Do nothing out of rivalry or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

1 Peter 4:10-11 Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, it should be as one who speaks God’s words; if anyone serves, it should be from the strength God provides, so that God may be glorified through Jesus Christ in everything. To Him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

Each disciple is unique in the plan and purposes of God. He wants to produce interaction and involvement between believers. (Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35) He wants to minister to other believers through me. He doesn’t want me to simply focus on how others can meet my needs.

How am I investing my resources (time, energy, possessions) in other believers to help them toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (spiritual reproduction)?

Important: In the physical human body each member functions to serve the body, not the body to serve the members.

9. He alone can produce spiritual life in and through me.

John 6:63 (Jesus said) “The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn’t help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

2 Cor. 3:6 … the letter kills, but the Spirit produces life.

Eccl. 3:14 I know that all God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of Him.

Anything of eternal value must have its origin in the Holy Spirit. I am, and will continue to be, tempted to rely on myself until I leave this body. I need to be aware of this tendency, and not think of it as abnormal.
The Normal Progressive Development of a Christian  
(Lordship and Surrender)

This diagram presents the Lordship decision as an event, which preferably takes place at conversion, followed by the growth process in which God's perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective.

This circle represents me as an unbeliever. At birth my mind was like an empty whiteboard.

Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, I must recognize my hopelessness, and make a “decision” to call out to the Lord for forgiveness and salvation.

As a new believer I receive eternal life (an event) and the Lord begins to dwell in me as the Person of the Holy Spirit. During this phase it is natural for me to be focused on “external behavior.”

This graphic represents my understanding about life, values, etc. that has been acquired from birth to conversion as a result of the influence and learning from my parents, peers, media, culture, etc. That understanding (my worldview) does not disappear at salvation. I now need to learn to walk with the Holy Spirit as a habit. The function of discipleship is to facilitate that process.

Note: Much of this understanding is contrary to God, but He alone can correctly manage the process of transformation.

Note: X = Understanding that is contrary to God  
O = Understanding that is not necessarily contrary to God.

In order for spiritual growth to continue, I need to come to an agreement with the Lord as to who is best capable of managing the growth process. Preferably this takes place at conversion, but often is not understood and accepted until later, unfortunately. Typically, there are three motivators that will help me make the decision to surrender and accept the Biblical Master-servant relationship. They are: 1) Persecution, 2) Crisis, and 3) Personal discipleship.

This graphic represents me, having made the decision to yield up my independence, and have acknowledged His rightful Lordship of Christ over my life. I understand that God alone is capable of overseeing my life.
CONSIDER: Surrender consists of two parts.

1. First I make the Lordship decision to surrender my will (an acknowledgment of His ownership of my life and the obvious implications of the Master-servant relationship.)

2. This decision is then followed by the daily process of yielding up areas of my understanding. The Holy Spirit seeks my cooperation in allowing Him to transform me into an increasingly mature and fruitful Christian.

CONSIDER: A one-time surrender of the “will” precedes a progressive yielding up of “behavior.”

"True surrender is not simply surrender of our external life but surrender of our will - and once that is done, surrender is complete. The greatest crisis we ever face is the surrender of our will. Yet God never forces a person’s will into surrender, and He never begs. He patiently waits until that person willingly yields to Him. And once that battle has been fought, it never needs to be fought again.”

Jesus says, "If you want to be My disciple, you must give up your right to yourself to Me."

“And after you surrender - then what? Your entire life should be characterized by an eagerness to maintain unbroken fellowship and oneness with God.”

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CONSIDER: “Inward transformation” will produce “outward behavior changes.”

To make a wild horse useful, there are 2 steps:
1) Break the horse’s will
2) Train him to be useful

Metamorphosis is a natural example of inward transformation

THE GROWTH PROCESS: As I allow Him, God will use His Word and circumstances to gradually illuminate areas of my understanding that He wants to alter. This process is called “Sanctification” (Rom. 12:1-2; Eph. 4:22-24) “Spiritual growth” is the process in which God’s perspective of life is increasingly becoming my perspective. God does not want me to be a mindless robot, but rather a servant companion who increasingly enjoys fellowship with Him.

“As a Christian is transformed in his mind and is made more like Christ, he comes to approve and desire God’s will, not his own will for his life. Then he discovers that God’s will is what is good for him, and that it pleases God, and is complete in every way. It is all he needs. But only by being renewed spiritually can a believer ascertain, do, and enjoy the will of God.” (Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., The Bible Knowledge Commentary, (Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc.) 1983, 1985.

Note: The G’s represent areas of my understanding that God has changed to His perspective.
The Abnormal Progressive Development of a Christian
(The Common Misconception of “Progressive” Surrender)

What is the important difference between this diagram and the previous one depicting the Normal Christian life?

The Lordship decision is missing from this Christian’s life, resulting in a perceived partnership relationship with the Lord, with the goal that “one day God will have 100% control of my life”. This diagram represents the abnormal development of a Christian.

This view of the Christian life usually results from a lack of personal spiritual mentoring and/or an unwillingness to surrender their will to His Lordship.

**CONSIDER:** If I view my relationship with God as depicted here, a critical error is to attribute to God, authority (Lordship) over only certain designated parts of my life, as if He had not bought all of me.

**CONSIDER:** If “Lordship” is presented as incremental surrender of my behavior, then I can conclude that the logical evidence of my “total surrender” (Lordship) is when I am totally obedient.

If I am in charge of this process, it can lead to cycles of frustration and discouragement, since I never see myself as being totally obedient.

**CONSIDER:** Since tithes and offerings are “God’s share,” doesn’t that imply that I have the right to manage the rest of my material wealth? (Read Malachi 3:7-10; 2 Cor 9:7-9; Mark 12:41-44; Proverbs 3:9-10; Matthew 6:19-33; 1 Tim 6:6-10; 17-19).

If “my time” at church on Sunday, reading my Bible daily, praying, etc. is understood to be God’s part (spiritual), doesn’t that imply that I have the right to manage the remaining hours in my day?
**Additional Problems Associated with Progressive Surrender:**

1. **It tends to result in my asking, “will God take advantage of me?”** such as:
   - a. “What will He ask me to do that I can’t do, or don’t want to do?”
   - b. “What will He keep me from doing that I want to do?”
   - c. “What will He take away that I hold dear?”
   - d. “Will God fail me if I entrust “this” to Him?”

2. **I view myself as being in charge of the process of spiritual growth**, making the determination as to what can and should be yielded up to the Lord. In other words, I set down the rules and limits. This perception is typically based on **pride**, an inflated view of my own discernment and capabilities, and a **distorted understanding of God’s character**. (If needed, review the Scripture verses related to “God’s Character” in Lesson 1-5.)

**CONSIDER:** There is no reasonable logic for rejecting His yoke of Lordship. A lack of acceptance is typically based on: 1) a fear of the unknown, 2) an unwillingness to relinquish perceived control, 3) an unwillingness to leave a comfort zone, or 4) an over-estimation of my own capabilities to determine and manage my future.

Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**” (Matthew 11:28-30  NIV)

Jesus did not say, “learn about Me, and if you like how I do things, then take My yoke!”

**CONSIDER:** The real question: **Is God trustworthy?** If God were like you or me, we would have good reason to be fearful. Ask: Does God love me? If God’s character is as described in the Bible, and if He promises to do only that which is in my best interest, what do I have to fear?

Did He design me? Did He give me life? Does He maintain my very existence? Who besides God knows what will really satisfy me? Does He alone know what is best for me? Does He alone know how to shape my life and use me for His eternal purposes?

**CONSIDER:** God’s **ownership** of me is a factual truth, which is **not** dependent on my acknowledgment of it. **I do not bestow ownership.** I can only **acknowledge** and **act upon** what He states to be already true. **New** believers will typically not be resistant to this truth, because they **don’t have preconceived ideas** of God’s expectations. In contrast, **older** believers tend to **accept this truth intellectually**, but be resistant to the implications.

What are the **implications** of ownership? What rights or authority are generally understood to be conveyed by ownership? Do I acknowledge that I live in a spiritual “**kingdom**”, not a spiritual democracy? What is the difference?

*Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body.** 1 Cor. 6:19-20

*If God’s intention is to harm or mistreat me, do I honestly think He needs to wait for my permission?*
Analogy: The Rooms of Your “House”

Does Jesus have access to all the rooms of my house?

A story of two believers...

When Jesus knocked at the front door of their hearts (Rev. 3:20) and asked permission to enter, both of these persons gladly received Him, realizing that His absence had been the reason for the emptiness they had always sensed (the Salvation decision).

As new believers each was overjoyed that Jesus was in their house and that their sins were forgiven. Each had a new happiness and an assurance of going to heaven. Jesus was allowed to occupy the “Guest Room” – which was always kept clean and presentable for visitors – and He was also allowed to reside in the “spiritual” room – where the believer went to church services, prayed and read the Bible.

But one day soon Jesus asked each of them for permission to make some changes in other areas of their houses, such as adopting new management procedures, rearranging items, throwing out worthless things, and bringing in some new items.

Jesus asked for access to every “room”. Each believer had a different response.
**Salvation decision ONLY**

The believer in the house on the left was reluctant to grant Jesus’ request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he would thoughtfully consider any suggestions, and might allow some minor changes that wouldn’t seriously disrupt his lifestyle and future plans.

Jesus informed him that He (Jesus) is the only One who is really capable of making the correct decisions as to the above changes, since He alone knows what is needed to make the house into a suitable dwelling for God, one that would be usable for His eternal purposes. Jesus clearly explained His good intentions, even guaranteeing that the believer would be more than totally satisfied with the finished product.

The believer replied that while the offer sounded very attractive, he considered himself to be a good judge of the appropriateness and non-disruptive pace of any changes, based on his past experience. He expressed his appreciation for Jesus’ presence and blessings, and his desire to make the Guest Room as comfortable as possible for Him.

He assured Jesus that as time went on, he would certainly give Him access to other rooms.

“Jesus, I’m thankful You live in my house! I’m really happy to know that I can count on You to be there whenever I find circumstances too difficult to manage on my own.”

While making the Lordship decision gives the Lord access to all the rooms in my house, He alone decides what needs to be changed. The Holy Spirit will manage these changes as He determines best. This is part of the continuing growth process.

**Salvation AND Lordship decisions**

The believer in the house on the right was also reluctant to grant Jesus’ request on the grounds that he was not yet prepared for major changes. However, he was aware that he had been bought at a great price and therefore Jesus was the rightful Owner.

He reasoned, “If Jesus owns me, how can I deny Him access to every room of His house?” (the Lordship decision to acknowledge Jesus as Master of his life).

The believer was somewhat apprehensive, as he didn’t understand how this decision would impact his future. But he reasoned that since Jesus had done so much for him already, it seemed logical that He was trustworthy to continue doing what was in his best interest.

“Jesus, I certainly don’t know what You have planned for my life, and to be honest I have some fears, but I do understand that You own me, and that I cannot possibly make the best decisions for my life since I don’t know what You want to make of me, nor what is involved in that process. I’m thankful that You do know, and I want to trust You alone to make the necessary changes. Thank you for letting me be part of Your plans. Wow!”

Don’t you know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms? I should prayerfully consider which “rooms” I have given Jesus access to – after all, He owns “my house.”

Note: Use the “Rooms of Your House” blank diagram on the next page to complete your own “personal inventory”.

Upon viewing the finished product, nobody will ever regret having made the decision to choose Him as the Master of their life.
WHAT ROOMS ARE IN MY HOUSE? Can I trust God with ALL the rooms?

I need to think carefully and prayerfully if Jesus has access to my entire house – after all, He owns it! Are the doors open or closed to all the rooms? Is there a “closet” in one room that I deny Him access to?

I need to pray honestly and sincerely about giving Jesus access to ALL areas of my life.
Review of Our Two Natures

This lesson builds on the discussion of my two natures introduced in lesson 1-5. Understanding how my two natures interact will lay the groundwork for studying abiding in the next several lessons.

1. The following three diagrams depict three spiritual conditions.

Diagram A portrays Adam as God intended (before he sinned) and Jesus while he was on earth (never sinned). Jesus was called the second Adam, because Jesus, a life-giving Spirit, was God’s plan for saving mankind due to Adam’s sin. (1 Cor. 15:45-49).

Diagram A

All behavior was in total harmony with God’s character, totally pleasing to God.

Adam made the decision to sin against God and fulfill his perceived needs independent of God. Jesus chose to remain dependent on God and not sin. Because we are from the race of Adam and because Adam sinned, everybody who was born in the lineage of Adam is like Diagram B.

Diagram B depicts the unbeliever who was born as a descendent of Adam and is dead spiritually, represented by the dark circle in the middle, indicating the spirit without God.

The dark tree represents the corrupted human nature, and the chain extending from the tree illustrates this person is in bondage to the sinful nature.

As an unbeliever, my sin nature is a barrier that separates me from God. God's purpose for showing us sin is so we recognize it, acknowledge it before Him, and let Him forgive it so that He can make us into the image of His Son. He continually woos and calls the unbeliever to come to Him.
Diagram C depicts me as a believer who has put my faith in Christ as my Savior, and in that moment the Holy Spirit came into my life and resides in my spirit. While the Holy Spirit resides in me, so does the sinful nature, which is not improved, changed or renovated and on its own cannot produce fruit that is acceptable and pleasing to God. However, as I walk in the Spirit, I will not carry out the desires of my flesh or sinful human nature.

All unbelievers

GOD

Without
God’s life

spirit

soul

body

The corrupted
human nature.

Their works (fruit) have no life (eternal), are imperfect (flawed), and therefore unacceptable to God.

Thought: God can only accept that which is perfect (100%, without blemish). Nothing that originates from the human nature has that quality. The unbeliever is devoid of His life. Only God alone can produce anything of eternal value.

All that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is temporal, without His life and not rewardable (wood, hay, stubble).
2. God uses trees and plants to contrast the two natures.


Jer. 17:7-8 The man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence indeed is the Lord, is blessed. He will be like a tree planted by water: it sends its roots out toward a stream, it doesn’t fear when heat comes, and its foliage remains green. It will not worry in a year of drought or cease producing fruit.

Psa. 1:3 He (a righteous man) is like a tree planted beside streams of water that bears its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Matt. 7:17-18 In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit. A good tree can’t produce bad fruit.

Gal. 5:17-23 ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

2 Pet. 1:4 ... He has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature.

... walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

The corrupted sinful human nature from the 1st Adam

Jer. 17:5-6 This is what the Lord says: The man who trusts in mankind, who makes human flesh his strength and turns his heart from the Lord is cursed. He will be like a juniper in the Arabah: he cannot see when good comes but dwells in the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives.

Matt 7:17-18 ... but a bad tree produces bad fruit.

Gal. 5:17-23 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, ... Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strifes, jealousies, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar.

3. James compares the human nature to a “salt water” spring and the divine nature of the Holy Spirit to a spring of “living water.”

James 3:9-12 ... Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water.

John 7:37-39 ... Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about the Spirit. ... (See John 4:13-14)
4. In Romans, Paul contrasts how we were before salvation, and how we are now as believers.

**NOTE:** In the following verses, “death” refers to “absence of life”, that is, devoid of life originating from God. (for example, a salt water spring).

a. **As an unbeliever I was dominated by my sinful nature, which resides in my physical body.**

   Rom 7:5  For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions operated through the law in every part of us and bore fruit for death (absence of life).

b. **Now, as a believer, I have been freed from bondage to the sinful nature.**

   Rom 7:6  But now we have been released from the law, since we have died to what held us, so that we may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old letter of the law.

c. **From God's perspective I have “died to” (freed from) the sinful nature, and have been joined to Christ.**

   Rom 6:18, 22 …and having been liberated from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. … you have been liberated from sin and have become enslaved to God, you have your fruit, which results in sanctification—and the end is eternal life!
   Rom 7:4 … you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—that we may bear fruit for God.

The fact is, Christians died to sin. The Greek past tense for “died” suggests a specific point when the action occurred, at salvation. Death, whether physical or spiritual, means separation, not extinction (Rom. 6:6-7, 14). Death to sin is separation from sin’s power, not the extinction of sin.

Being dead to sin means being “set free from sin” (Rom. 6:18, 22 above). That being true, Paul asked, “How can they live in it any longer?” Obviously believers cannot live in sin if they died to it.”

Abiding
Maintaining Continual Fellowship with the Lord

Introduction

“To Abide” simply refers to the moment-by-moment experience of walking in harmony (communion, fellowship) with the Holy Spirit; that is, without any “unresolved offenses” that are disrupting that communion.

The two diagrams below represent a snapshot of the same believer at two different points in time.

**Condition of “Abiding”**
The normal Christian Life
“walking in the Spirit”

| All that I allow the Holy Spirit to do through me is eternal and rewardable at the Tribunal of Christ (judgment seat) (gold, silver, precious stones). I Cor. 3:10-15 |

**Condition of “Not Abiding”**
Having unresolved issues(s) with the Holy Spirit
“walking in the flesh”

| All that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is temporal, without His life and not rewardable. (wood, hay, stubble.) I Cor. 3:10-15 |

![Diagram of Abiding and Not Abiding]

NOTE: the circular dotted line represents the “conditional” aspect of abiding.

**Explanation of the Conditional Aspect of Abiding:** Although I am a believer, I still have the sinful human nature and I can choose at any given moment to remove myself from fellowship with the Holy Spirit by allowing an unresolved issue(s) to come between the Holy Spirit and me.

While the Holy Spirit does not change, my relationship with Him is “conditional” upon my choosing to walk in the Spirit rather than walk in the flesh.
Abiding Principles

1. Why is it so important for me to abide?

a. God is looking for available vessels (instruments). God has eternal purposes that He wants to complete in and through my life. While I am abiding in fellowship, the Holy Spirit is free to produce His fruit through me as a usable vessel (conduit).

At any given moment I can allow myself to become unusable through my unwillingness to remain in fellowship with Him. I should picture myself as an instrument, a vessel, a water glass, etc. A vessel’s main function is to be available and usable by its owner, not to perform on its own. Is God as the Potter free to use me at any moment as He chooses? (Rom. 6:13,19; 2 Cor. 4:6-7; 2 Tim 2:20-21)

b. We tend to focus on performance, but this lesson is not about doing, but rather about being. What I do is a result of what I am being. What is the function of a branch? To be, or to do? (Jesus said) “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains (abides) in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.” (John 15:5) … For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart. (Matt. 12:34)

c. It will help to look at this lesson as if it were entitled “How To Live In Continual Harmony With My Spouse or Close Friend,” because this is the clearest model God designed and gave us. Examining the husband - wife model (or a close friendship) will give me many insights into my relationship with the Lord.

2. It may help to think of abiding as having three dimensions:

   **Width** could refer to the “daily” aspect of abiding. I should view my relationship of abiding in fellowship with the Lord as only encompassing “TODAY.” Yesterday’s issues should have already been dealt with, and I need to believe God’s promises that His grace will take care of tomorrow’s issues, when they become “today’s” issues. (discussed further in Lesson 1-11)

   a. The Lord promises to meet my “daily” needs.

      Matt. 6:8-11 … Give us this day our daily bread.
      Exodus 16:4-30 Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day,” … he who had gathered much had no excess, and he who had gathered little had no lack;…
      Psalm 68:19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burden,…

   b. Jesus said to take up my cross daily, anything greater can be overwhelming.

      Luke 9:23 … If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.
Thoughts to consider.

I must pursue the habit of keeping “short accounts” with the Holy Spirit, in other words, to consciously choose to acknowledge (confess) quickly any unresolved conflict when I have offended Him. The missionary Hudson Taylor stated, “We should never be conscious of not abiding in Christ” (Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Secret). The same holds true for fellowship with my spouse, or a close friend. We are told in Eph. 4:26-27: ... do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. Paul stated in Acts. 24:16: ... I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

Important: The Holy Spirit alone determines when I am being held accountable for offending Him, not me. Likewise, listening to the offended spouse (or friend) is usually the quickest first step to restoring fellowship.

During the time I am walking out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit I am forfeiting His intended blessings (eternal fruit), and will probably reap unintended consequences. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption (worthless fruit)... Gal. 6:7-8

God promises to meet my needs (Matt. 6:19-21, 25-34). Being prudent and responsible toward the future is appropriate. But if I allow that “concern” to negatively affect my relationship with the Lord, then “worry and anxiety” can easily become sin. He wants His peace to reign in my heart. Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down,... Prov. 12:25 (see also Col. 3:15)

Height could refer to “an open line of vertical communication” between God and me. I should jealously guard our fellowship by monitoring our communication moment by moment, being vigilant not to allow anything to disrupt it. I need to form the habit of not just waiting to check in from time to time at my personal convenience. It is a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week relationship.

Thoughts to consider.

I am told to pray continually. Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thess. 5:16-18) “Continual” prayer is not necessarily conversation without any interruptions, but prayer that continues whenever possible. The adverb for “continually” was used in Greek to describe a hacking cough. Paul was speaking of maintaining continuous fellowship with God as much as possible in the midst of daily living in which concentration is frequently broken. (Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.)

The husband-wife (or other close) relationship will also deteriorate unless it is consciously nurtured. (Ephesians 5:25-32)

Caution: Busyness can easily be a trap, causing me to neglect the Lord. Both the Holy Spirit and my spouse or close friend will be offended if I carelessly disregard or ignore them. Neglect often conveys unimportance. If I will ask Him, the Holy Spirit will always be faithful to reveal to me any unresolved problems between us. I should never allow what I am doing to become more important than my fellowship with Him.

Depth could refer to my deepening relationship with the Lord, getting to know Him, as in a marriage or close friendship. The concept of “spiritual growth” and the “maturing process” imply that there are things presently in my life that are displeasing to God. Even though the Lord is aware of those displeasing aspects of my character, He only holds me accountable for those issues that He wants to deal with today as He matures me.
a. Illustration.
If I look at the air in a room, it looks relatively pure (my perspective). If a ray of light appears, many dust particles would suddenly be visible (God’s perspective). Even though my sinful human nature is totally corrupted and unholy as compared to His holiness, He sees me “in Christ,” and He only holds me accountable for the issues (dust particles) that He is presently bringing to my attention. The dust particles existed, even though I was not yet conscious of their existence. My responsibility is to be attentive to the Holy Spirit so that He can easily show me what areas of my understanding and/or behavior He wants to change. He will never burden me with more than I can handle.

God deals with me according to my maturity level (just as good parents do with their children) and my willingness to learn from Him. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, ... He is mindful that we are but dust. (Psa. 103:10, 14)

b. As I allow Him, God prunes me so that I will bear more eternal fruit.
God’s process of making my life more fruitful is described as “pruning.” … every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2) Pruning is usually not enjoyable, but always results in more fruitfulness if I allow God to finish His project. An area of my life that appears to me to be beneficial or harmless, may from God’s perspective be distracting or harmful, and a hindrance to what He wants to do in my life. God determines what needs to be pruned. My responsibility is to be teachable and attentive to Him, careful not to allow my “good” things to rob me of God’s “best.” (e.g. Martha – Luke 10:38-42)

c. Caution: I should not be surprised by the sinfulness of my human nature.
As I grow spiritually, I will increasingly see my human nature as God sees it. Flaws become more visible as they are more exposed to light. The closer I am to God the more repulsive my human nature will become to me. (Everything exposed by the light is made clear, ... Eph. 5:13)

3. How do I know if I am not abiding – or out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit? I should ask Him if there are any unresolved issues between us.

Even though I am walking in fellowship with the Lord and have no unresolved issues, not all that I do is motivated by Him, or is even pleasing to Him. As I allow Him to grow and mature me, He will increasingly have more freedom to bear His fruit.

If I find myself out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, it is by my choice. I do not need to be out of fellowship with the Lord any longer than I choose to be. Restoration to the condition of abiding fellowship will take place immediately upon confession of the offense(s) for which the Holy Spirit is holding me accountable.

How can I know if I’m out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit?

Usually symptoms indicate an ailing body. Similarly look for on-going spiritual symptoms of the sinful nature, such as:

- stumbling
- impatience
- frustration
- dissatisfaction
- worry
- striving
- lack of peace
- sense of defeat
- complaining
- anxiety
- anger
- irritability
- addictive behavior
- critical or judgmental attitude
- other on-going symptoms?
4. Common misconceptions about the condition of abiding.

a. **Misconception**: As a believer I can keep myself in the condition of abiding through my own efforts. **Reality**: At salvation I was put into the conditional state of abiding fellowship with the Lord as a result of what Jesus did on the cross, not because I deserve it. My goal should be to please Him, and be sensitive to Him so that any issues He brings to my attention do not remain unresolved. Those unresolved issues can disrupt my fellowship with Him, just as in human relationships.

b. **Misconception**: God’s greatest concern about my sin is the degree to which it falls short of His standard of righteousness, and “avoiding sin” should be the primary focus of my Christian walk. **Reality**: God is most concerned with the disruption sin causes in His continual abiding fellowship (communion) with me, and that it consequently hinders Him from accomplishing His purposes in and through me. The writer of Hebrews tells us: ... *let us lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus,...* (Heb. 12:1-2)

c. **Misconception**: The condition of abiding is somehow “attained to.” **Reality**: Abiding is the birthright of every child of God; it is not about achieving a certain level of maturity. Does a child have to earn the privilege of being in fellowship with their parents? God has made provision for every Christian to live consistently in harmony with Him without extended periods of being out of fellowship.

d. **Misconception**: Abiding is restricted by my lack of knowledge, past experiences, or personal limitations. **Reality**: What hinders God from blessing and using me as He desires is only my choice(s) and unwillingness to acknowledge and confess unresolved issue(s). The Biblical “normal” Christian life is one of habitually abiding; not to abide is abnormal. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

e. **Misconception**: Since my natural tendency is to categorize or classify “acts of behavior” and build mental lists of “do’s and don’ts,” it is easier to follow “my list” of perceived expectations. **Reality**: As the Holy Spirit leads me moment by moment, I will increasingly form the habit of carefully looking at each choice, judging or discerning if it is pleasing to Him. What I tend to consider “insignificant” may be very significant to Him. It will help me to consider “sin” as “anything that is displeasing to God.”

**Example**: Do you think reading the Bible can ever be sinful? Imagine you are resting on a riverbank reading your Bible. You notice a child struggling against the current, being swept downriver. You faithfully continue reading. Suddenly, a mother appears frantically asking if you’ve seen her child. You tell her that you would have saved the child if you hadn’t been reading God’s Word. Imagine her response (and God’s)! This example may seem extreme, but it illustrates the danger of categorizing acts of behavior because what God deems “correct” today may be “incorrect” in a similar situation tomorrow.

| John 5:30  *(Jesus said)*  | I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. |
| 2 Cor. 5:9 | Therefore we also have as our ambition, ... to be pleasing to Him. |
| Eph. 5:8-10 | ... walk as children of Light ... trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. |
| Romans 14:23 | ... whatever is not from faith is sin. |
Verses and Illustrations Related to “Abiding”

1. As I am abiding I am depicted as a fruit-bearing branch on a tree.

John 15:1-6 (Jesus said) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes, and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” (Note: see Lesson 3-10 for a more detailed explanation of John 15)

:7-11 “If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you. Remain in My love. If you keep My commands you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commands and remain in His love. I have spoken these things to you so that My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.”

:12-16 “This is My command: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone would lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you slaves anymore, because a slave doesn’t know what his master is doing. I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from My Father. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you.”

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Does the branch produce the fruit, or is the branch simply a conduit (instrument, vessel) through which the life of the Vine flows?
2. a. As I am abiding I am depicted as a vessel, an instrument.

2 Tim. 2:20-21  Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver bowls, but also those of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a special instrument, set apart, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

A faucet with “living” water can be a useful illustration. Although the water pressure is always constant, the “on-off” feature has to be maintained in the “On” position for the water to freely flow. During the time I am not in abiding fellowship with the Lord the on-off feature is in the “Off” position.

b. As I am abiding, I allow God’s “living water” to flow through me as through a container or a serving vessel. (see also Ezek. 47:1-12)

| Jer. 2:13 | “For My people have committed a double evil: They have abandoned Me, the fountain of living water, and dug cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that cannot hold water.”… (see also Jer. 17:13) |
| John 4:14 (Jesus said) | “But whoever drinks from the water that I will give him will never get thirsty again—ever! In fact, the water I will give him will become a well of water springing up within him for eternal life.” |
| John 7:37-39 | On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to Me and drink! The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about the Spirit. Those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been received because Jesus had not yet been glorified. |
| James 3:8-12 | But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. We praise our Lord and Father with it, and we curse men who are made in God’s likeness with it. Praising and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things should not be this way. Does a spring pour out sweet and bitter water from the same opening? Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a saltwater spring yield fresh water. |
3. a. As I am abiding, I am depicted as a conduit or vessel through which God’s light is able to shine.

The *electricity* represents **GOD’S LIFE** flowing through me.
The *bulb* represents **ME** as a Christian
The *light* that is given off represents **the Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

As I remain in harmony (communion) with the Holy Spirit (*connected, light switch “On”*), I am allowing His life (*electricity*) to increasingly flow through me (*bulb*), which He will then use to influence and attract others (*light*).

**Matt 5:14-16  (Jesus said)** “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, *let* your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and **give glory to your Father** in heaven.”

**2 Cor 4:6-7** For God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God’s glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Now we have this treasure in clay jars, so that this extraordinary power may be **from God and not from us.**

**Phil. 2:15** …so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom **you shine like stars in the world.**

b. As I am abiding, I am walking in the light of God’s presence.

**1John 1:5-10** Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. If we say, “We have fellowship with Him,” yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. But **if we walk in the light** as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

**1 John 2:8-11** Yet I am writing you a new command, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The one who says he is in the light but hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn’t know where he’s going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

**John 8:12** Then Jesus spoke to them again: “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but **will have the light of life.**”
4. God has designed the on-going healthy harmony (communion) between a Christian husband and wife to be a picture of the on-going harmony (communion) between the Lord and a Christian.

One of the purposes of a God-centered Christian marriage is meant to be a demonstration to others of how He can bring about a consistent harmonious relationship between two unique individuals that are surrendered to Him.

If I am in doubt as to how I should relate to the Lord, I can ask myself, "how should I relate to a spouse (or to a close friend)?"

Eph. 5:21-33 …submitting to one another in the fear of Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. Now as the church submits to Christ, so wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, since we are members of His body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband. (see also John 17:11, 21-22 and Galatians 3:28)

Gen. 2:24 This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

1 Cor. 6:17 But anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Col. 3:18-19 Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and don’t be bitter toward them.

1 Peter 2:18 – 3:7 Household slaves, submit with all fear to your masters, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel. For it brings favor if, mindful of God’s will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if you sin and are punished, and you endure it? But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God. For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly…. In the same way, wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands…. Husbands, in the same way, live with your wives with an understanding of their weaker nature yet showing them honor as coheirs of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

Marriage consists of an event (a ceremony, a covenant), followed by a process. The ceremony represents a relinquishment of my right to make independent decisions, in favor of being joined (yoked together) with another. The marriage process is designed to be a growing relationship, learning to live and walk in harmony with a spouse. This process represents the manner in which a Christian learns to live and walk in harmony with the Lord. (See also Malachi 2:14)
Abiding Today - The Present - This Moment

God wants me to be free from the burden of “unresolved issues” of the PAST or the FUTURE, allowing Him freedom to produce His fruit through my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PAST</strong></th>
<th><strong>PRESENT</strong></th>
<th><strong>FUTURE</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Do I need to resolve issues from my past?</td>
<td>“Am I in fellowship with (“abiding with”) the Lord at this moment?”</td>
<td>• Do I have worries about the future disrupting my fellowship with the Lord?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do I need to forgive or reconcile with someone, or confess a wrong to someone?</td>
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<td>• Do I need to acknowledge my worry or anxiety as sin?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do I need to make restitution for harm done? (physical, financial, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Do I need to confess any sins to the Lord?</td>
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IF NOT, WHY NOT?

1. Issues related to others - in the past, or at this moment.
   a. If I think I can maintain good fellowship with God, and at the same time disregard relationships with others, I am deceiving myself.

   1 John 2:9-11  The one who says he is in the light but hates (see note) his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates (see note) his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and doesn’t know where he’s going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

   1 John 4:20-21  If anyone says, “I love God,” yet hates (see note) his brother, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother he has seen cannot love the God he has not seen. And we have this command from Him: The one who loves God must also love his brother.

   NOTE: “Love” is a choice “to do what is best for someone.” That is not necessarily the same as “doing what is pleasing to someone” (see also Heb. 12:6,11). I do not have to “feel affectionate” toward someone, but I do have to “love” them. In this context, don’t equate “hate” to “hostility” or “intense dislike”, but rather as “not doing what is in someone’s best interest.” (the absence of love or not loving).

   b. My unwillingness to forgive someone can limit my availability and usefulness to God, and can thus affect His fruit through my life.

   Mark 11:25  And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.

   Col. 3:12-13  Therefore, God’s chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive.
c. Does the Holy Spirit want me to apologize to someone I have offended? It is **my responsibility** to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matt. 5:23-24 So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something **against you**, leave your gift there in front of the altar. **First go** and be reconciled with your brother, and **then** come and offer your gift.

d. Does the Holy Spirit want me to pursue reconciliation with someone who has offended **me**? It is **my responsibility** to pursue restoration of fellowship.

Matt. 18:15 If your brother **sins against you**, go and rebuke him **in private**. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.

e. Does the Holy Spirit want me to make restitution to someone to whom I have caused loss? (Repay a debt? A loan? Taxes owed?)

Num. 5:5-7 The LORD spoke . . . When a man or woman commits any sin against another, that person acts unfaithfully toward the LORD and is guilty. The person is to confess the sin he has committed. **He is to pay full compensation** . . . to the individual he has wronged.

Rom. 13:8 **Do not owe anyone anything**, except to love one another,…

f. I am not responsible for someone else’s unwillingness to love or forgive me, but God does hold me accountable for loving and forgiving others.

Rom. 12:10 **Show family affection** to one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.
Rom. 12:16-18 . . . **Do not repay anyone evil** for evil. Try to do what is honorable in everyone’s eyes. **If possible**, on **your part**, live at peace with everyone.
Rom. 12:20-21 But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink…. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.
Phil. 2:1-4 . . . Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but **also** for the interests of others.

NOTE: Remember – “Love” is a **choice** “to do what is in someone’s best interest.”

2. Personal issues - just between the Lord and me.

a. Is there an unresolved personal issue(s) that the Holy Spirit wants me to acknowledge and confess to Him?

1 John 1:9-10 **If we confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
b. Important points to contemplate:

1) **Accountability** - Most Christians subconsciously reason that God leaves it up to them to determine when there is a problem between them and God that needs to be resolved. That is wrong! I am **not** the one who decides for what I am being held accountable. The Holy Spirit **alone** makes that determination. In a parent-child relationship, the parent’s responsibility is to **explain** to the child the nature of the problem. The child’s responsibility is to **attentively listen** and **respond**.

2) **Disagreements** - Newlyweds often have many differing opinions. Hopefully, as they nurture their relationship, many of those differences will diminish. Some will not. Some differences of opinion will remain until death. That is okay; we are each designed with a unique personality, and we should respect that difference in others. Do I really want everyone to think as I do? My goal should be to live in harmony (fellowship) with others, not to pressure everyone to hold my views. That is true of my spouse and my children as well as others.

I need to ask myself: Am I bothered by my spouse’s (or friend’s) behavior, or views, because it’s not the way “I” do things, or the way “I” think? Does God say their behavior or view is displeasing (sin) to Him? If I am bothered or offended by another’s beliefs or behavior, yet God does not say it is sin, then I may need to examine my own heart. Maybe I’m judgmental. Maybe God is trying to show **me** an area He wants to change in **my** life. It is perfectly normal to hold different opinions and yet maintain mutual respect and fellowship.

3) **Growth** - Having no unresolved issues for which I am being held accountable does **not** mean that everything I am now doing is pleasing to God. What does the concept of growth mean? We grow **to** something and **from** something. As we grow physically, we are advancing **from** a level of weakness **to** a level of increased physical capability. Likewise, as we grow spiritually, we are advancing from a level of reliance on **self** to a level of increasing reliance on **God**.

I need to understand that spiritual strength is not what **I** can do, but rather what God is able to do through me. There is only one thing that hinders the Lord from using my life, unconfessed sin (anything that displeases the Lord) for which He is holding me accountable. The term “growth” implies then that there are things in my life today that are displeasing to the Lord, hence the need “to grow.” Thankfully He does not hold me accountable for all that displeases Him. In fact, I am not even aware of all that He would like to change. If I am growing spiritually, I will become increasingly more sensitive to His voice. He wants me to learn to hear His whisper without having to shout at me.

Consider this age-appropriate growth example: My 6-month old baby messes in his diaper. Am I shocked? Do I scold him or spank him? Do I find it pleasing that he ruined his diaper? Of course not! I know that he does not yet understand. However, if he does the same thing when he is 6 years old, it will be quite different. That is the same way the Holy Spirit trains me, except that He is more patient and gentle than we tend to be.

Again, what I need to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the **only One** who is able to determine what is displeasing to Him. He is not waiting for me to make those determinations. Do you expect your baby to tell you the rules by which he will live in harmony with you? That would be ridiculous. Neither does the Holy Spirit expect **me** to tell Him what is acceptable!
3. Issues related to the future. God does not want me to be weighed down by either the past or the future.

a. It is good to be “concerned” about the future, but concern can become worry, and worry can become anxiety. I need to be careful to not allow those emotions to become a pretext for not trusting in God’s care for me.

| CONCERN | WORRY | ANXIETY | PANIC |

b. It is okay to be concerned (wise, prudent) and to plan and prepare for the future. Paul’s “concern” for the welfare of the believers was correct.

2 Cor. 11:28-29 (Paul said) … there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

Prov. 10:5  The son who gathers during summer is prudent; the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful.

c. But I am told to “not worry” about the future. I should not regard that instruction as just a “suggestion.” Worry and anxiety about the future can be the evidence of an unwillingness to trust God, and can become sinful.

Matt. 6:31-34  So don’t worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ … your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you. Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Phil. 4:6 Don’t worry about anything…

d. I can count on the Lord to faithfully and lovingly take care of my need.

Phil. 4:6-7 Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 5:6-7  Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your care on Him, because He cares about you.

e. I am told to “follow” Him, even though it is always tempting to “lead.” He wants me to allow Him to be intimately involved in all my future plans.

Prov. 3:5-6  Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)

Luke 9:23-24  Then He said to them all, “If anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me…”

James 4:13-17  Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” You don’t even know what tomorrow will bring … Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”
Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with The Lord

King David is a classic example of living out of fellowship for about a 9-month period. (2 Sam. 11:1-5, 12:1-14)

The “Normal Christian Life” - As I abide in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, He produces His fruit. (eternal and rewardable)

As I live out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, I can only produce fruit that is temporal and unrewardable.

The Holy Spirit is present—but is hindered from producing His fruit through this believer’s life.

The sinful human nature is dominating this believer’s life.

The sinful human nature is incapable of producing “perfect” eternal fruit.

Only the Holy Spirit is capable of producing “perfect” eternal fruit.

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Living Daily In (or out of) Fellowship with the Lord

This lesson is an overview of concepts previously covered. This lesson should help me understand my continual interaction with my two competing natures, and how that impacts my daily abiding relationship with the Lord.

After Salvation there are two paths for the new believer. Note that both of these paths represent believers.

1. One line gradually goes upward and into the "spiritual Promised Land." This upper path represents a believer who sees the Lord as his Master, that is, the One who oversees and manages his life.

2. The lower path leads into a “spiritual desert.” This lower path represents the believer who, either out of ignorance or choice, has not acknowledged the Lordship of Christ over his life.

Before salvation, I was an unbeliever, bound to the sinful human nature (represented by the chain around the darkened tree).

At the cross I was delivered from the "penalty" of sin (represented by the “broken chain” around the darkened tree). During this life, from the cross until death, I am being delivered from the "power" of sin. And at physical death I will be delivered from the "presence" of sin.

At the moment of salvation, I was freed from the mastery of the sinful human nature, and received the Holy Spirit, Who indwells the believer from that time forward. I started the Christian life abiding in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, and choose to take one of two paths: (#4 or #5/6)

It is important to note that while the believer has been set free from bondage to the sinful human nature, the sinful nature does not cease to exist and will continue in me until physical death occurs, at which time I will be freed from the presence of the sinful nature.

Upon believing, I was born into the spiritual race, and received God’s divine nature in the Person of the Holy Spirit. I am no longer bound to the sinful nature, although it is still present. Paul wrote: For we know that our old self was crucified with Him, ... so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin’s claims. (Romans 6:6-7)

The unbeliever has no option but to be mastered or dominated by the sinful nature, producing only flawed fruit. However, the believer is only dominated by the sinful nature by choice.
The lower wandering line represents the "abnormal" Christian life. If not spiritually mentored and instructed on how to follow the Holy Spirit, many believers find themselves modeling their behavior after other believers, rather than following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The typical result is that the believer will at some specific time ignore or discount the leading of the Holy Spirit, choosing rather to follow the example of peers.

As a result of spiritual ignorance, or by willful disobedience, if I am unwilling to allow the Holy Spirit to manage my life, I will find myself in a “desert” experience – never quite being able to gain victory over the pull of the sinful nature.

These believers typically see God as their "Junior Partner," rather than their Master. They conclude that "He is always there when they can't cope and they determine He is needed to deliver them out of circumstances." They typically consider their own goals and aspirations to be of greater importance than those of God. They desire for God to fit into their plans, rather than fitting into His plan. Their lives are characterized by a “disposition of self-dependence.” (As illustrated by King Saul – see Lesson 3-3)

Note that the Holy Spirit (His presence is represented by the dotted line just above the wavy line) is constantly wooing the believer to yield to Christ as Lord and Master of his life. The Holy Spirit is not the dominant force in this believer’s life. As a consequence He doesn't have the freedom to produce His fruit through the believer, who is forfeiting God’s intended fruitful Christian life.

The solid line at the bottom represents the dominance of the sinful human nature. This believer typically relies on his own understanding to make decisions. By not allowing the Lord to rule in his life, the human nature is allowed to rule. Submission to the human nature will cause problems for the believer, and hopefully he will become so dissatisfied and frustrated (usually through a crisis) that he will finally make a decision to acknowledge Christ's Lordship over his life.

These believers are described in the parable of The Sower (Matthew 13 & Luke 8) as being distracted, not maturing, resulting in not bearing eternal rewardable fruit, until they choose to acknowledge His authority over their life, and begin to “abide.” Although saved, they can potentially lose all rewards. If anyone’s work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire. (1 Cor. 3:15)

To believers that have habitually lived in a desert experience, often for years, the thought of consistently abiding in fellowship with the Lord seems unrealistic and "super spiritual." Such a biblical relationship with the Lord is often perceived as idealistic and beyond the attainment of the average believer. The simple truth is that it is not a matter of attaining to, but rather by faith taking advantage of what God has already made provision for.

If a believer simply understands the need to let the Lord manage his life (Lordship) and learns how to consistently abide in harmony, he will experience God's designed normal Christian life. It's not something you "attain to," it is yours through spiritual birth. Every Christian has a right to live in the spiritual Promised Land. For many believers this desert experience could have been avoided, or significantly shortened, had they been personally mentored (“spiritually parented,” “personally discipled”) when they first believed in Christ.
The short parallel lines, located at the fork in the believer's life, represent the "spiritual Jordan river" and the believer's choice to acknowledge His Lordship and enter the "spiritual Promised Land." This indicates the "event" in the believer's life to "choose" to let the Lord control and manage his life.

This is not a decision to "try my best," or to "behave better in my own strength," but rather a decision to **surrender my will**, **accept His yoke**, and **allow Him to live His life through me**.

(Jesus said) "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. All of you, take up My yoke and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for yourselves For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Mat. 11:28-30)

(Paul wrote) ... and **I no longer live**, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

Once the believer makes the Lordship decision, then the normal Christian life is one of consistently "abiding in fellowship (harmony)" with the Lord.

The solid line at the top represents the time in which the believer is in fellowship with the Holy Spirit ("walking in the Spirit"). The presence of the sinful nature in the spiritual believer is represented by a dashed line.

Notice that there are breaks in the line, which represent periods of time during which the believer is out of fellowship (not abiding) with the Holy Spirit.

The third dip depicts the example of King David. When King David climbed up to the roof of his house he may or may not have been in fellowship with the Lord. When he chose to commit adultery and murder, he was clearly out of fellowship. He remained out of fellowship with the Lord for approximately a nine-month period. Fellowship was not restored until just before the baby was born, when David was confronted by the prophet Nathan. As soon as David confessed his sin to the Lord he was immediately restored, even for murder and adultery. Yes, he suffered consequences through the rest of his life, but as far as God's forgiveness was concerned, he was **immediately** forgiven and restored into fellowship. Being restored into fellowship does not mean that there are no consequences, but it does mean that there is **complete** forgiveness.

As shown above, the acceptance of Christ's Lordship over one's life is no guarantee of continual unbroken spiritual fellowship. Abiding fellowship is **conditional**. At any time the believer may allow his fellowship with the Holy Spirit to be disrupted, and find himself "walking in the flesh" (submitted to the sinful nature). At any given moment we are either submitted to the Holy Spirit or we are submitted to the sinful nature. We are either "walking in the Spirit" or "walking in the flesh."

God has made provision for every believer to consistently "walk in the Spirit" (the "normal" Christian life). A believer may excuse sin using the pretext of "that's just the way I am," or cite verses from Romans 7, where Paul describes his struggle with the sinful nature. It should be noted however that Paul's spiritual life was better characterized by Romans 8. Certainly every believer will be out of fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times, but such periods should be the exception, not the rule. And those times of being out of fellowship (walking in the flesh, dominated by the sinful nature) should diminish in both frequency and duration as the believer matures.
The Holy Spirit will produce His fruit as we abide in Christ. Our part is not to strive to produce fruit. Or worry about it. Our part is to abide in fellowship with Him, and the fruit will come naturally. The Holy Spirit will only produce good fruit. I should not assume that everything I do while I am abiding is pleasing to God. He will only hold me accountable according to my maturity level, just as loving parents train their children. For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness. (Heb. 12:10)

During periods when we are out of fellowship (when we're not abiding) the Holy Spirit is not free to produce His fruit through our lives. The Spirit is the One who gives life. The flesh doesn't help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. (John 6:63)

God wants to reward every believer. He is preparing eternal rewards that cannot be compared with the things of this world. Jesus commanded us to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven, not here on earth. The treasures in heaven are so wonderful, they will make everything in this world that we're familiar with pale in comparison. Each believer has to decide if he wants to lay up eternal treasures in heaven or temporary treasures here on earth. Jesus said: But collect for yourselves treasures in heaven, ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matt. 6:20-21)

1 Cor. 3:10-15 speaks of potential "loss" at the Rewards Ceremony for believers. It is important to distinguish between "loss" and "punishment." Loss is not punishment. Consider a graduation ceremony as an example. You may go to a graduation where you receive a diploma. Others may receive accolades and awards in addition to their diploma. Because you only received a diploma it would not be correct to view yourself as being "punished." Those who have received special awards were honored because of their priority decisions. You could also have received special awards had you not chosen to forfeit them in favor of other priorities that you considered to be more important.

The believer who is walking in the flesh can do "good" things (from the human perspective), just as an unbeliever can. Anything, however small, that is motivated by the Holy Spirit is eternal and rewardable. Anything, regardless of outward appearance, that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit is flawed, less than perfect, and of no eternal or rewardable value.

Paul warns us: If I speak human or angelic languages but do not have love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I donate all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Cor. 13:1-3)

Only that which is produced by the Holy Spirit is perfect and can enter into eternity. Only the Holy Spirit can produce perfect fruit. It is not what I do "for" God that is important, but rather what I allow the Holy Spirit to produce through me. (see Eccl. 3:14)

The issue is not one of fruit or no fruit that we have to be concerned about. What we need to be concerned about is where does the fruit originate. As we abide in harmony with the Holy Spirit, He will bear His fruit through our life. It's as simple as that!

(Jesus said) “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and in Him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without Me.” (John 15:5)
The 3 Major Phases of the Normal Healthy Christian Life

**Salvation (Decision)**
John 5:24
I assure you: Anyone who **hears** My word and **believes** Him who sent Me **has** eternal life and will not come under judgment but **has passed from death to life.**

1 John 5:13
I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

**Lordship (Decision)**
Matt. 11:28-30 (Jesus said) … **take up My yoke** and learn from Me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find **rest** for yourselves. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Heb. 3:19, 4:11 … they (Israelites) were unable to enter because of unbelief. Let us then **make every effort to enter that rest,**…

1 Cor. 7:23 … he who is called as a free man is Christ’s slave. You were **bought at a price.**

**Abiding In Christ (Process)**
The goal is “continual” fellowship, To be a “usable” vessel (instrument)

John 15:1-17 …and He **prunes** every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **Remain in Me, and I in you.** Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me.

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the **light** as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Rom. 6:13 … do not offer any parts of it to sin as weapons for unrighteousness. But as those who are alive from the dead, **offer yourselves to God, and all the parts of yourselves** to God as weapons for righteousness.

2 Tim. 2:21 So if anyone purifies himself from anything dishonorable, he will be a **special instrument,** set apart, **useful to the Master,** prepared for every good work.

**As I Abide, God Increasingly Produces His Fruit Through Me**
Eternal spiritual fruit is whatever the Holy Spirit produces through my life

The Holy Spirit is producing His fruit through me
Gal. 5:22-23 But **the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

John 15:5 … The one who remains in Me and I in him produces **much** fruit,… (see also Rom. 7:4)

John 15:16 … I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should **remain,**…

God is glorifying Himself through me
John 15:8 My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit,…

He is maturing me
John 15:2 … and He **prunes** every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit.

He is using my spiritual gift(s)
1 Cor. 12:4-11 … A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial:…

He is preparing eternal rewards for me
2 Cor. 4:17 … **producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory.**

He is attracting others to Himself through me
Acts 1:8 (Jesus said) … you will be My witnesses,…
The following true story about “Vera”, illustrates the 3 Major Phases of the Christian life

1) Even though a Lordship decision should be made at conversion, sometimes it is not made until years later.
2) A true surrender of the will is followed by changes in behavior. (review lesson 1-7, if needed)

(This testimony is segmented to better demonstrate the major phases of the Christian life.)

1. Salvation (Decision)

Christ as “Savior”

Vera recalls her conversion in a little church in Kansas: "When the invitation to receive Christ as Savior was given, I knew I should go forward. But my feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally on the last verse of 'Almost Persuaded,' I went and made my confession of faith."

This new believer should have been personally discipled at this critical time, which probably would have averted the following years of desert experience.

2. Desert Experience

Vera recalls her conversion in a little church in Kansas: "When the invitation to receive Christ as Savior was given, I knew I should go forward. But my feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally on the last verse of 'Almost Persuaded,' I went and made my confession of faith."

This new believer should have been personally discipled at this critical time, which probably would have averted the following years of desert experience.

3. Lordship (Decision)

Christ as “Lord”

(After some years of wandering)

Vera relates. "I had been married several years when the Lord got my attention," "At home one day, I came under deep conviction, and knew I had to ask Jesus to be the Lord of my life."

After graduating from high school, Vera taught in an elementary school. Her teaching career ended when she married.

4. Abiding In Christ (Process)

Changed behavior brought about by the Holy Spirit’s transforming power

“Changes came that I can't explain, except that I know it was the Lord's work in me."

Vera contacted people she felt she might have wronged and apologized to them. She developed a hunger for Bible study. "As a child I'd learned John 3:16 and Psalm 23, but I hadn't been interested in learning anything else," she confesses. "Now I wanted to learn everything."

To further her search for understanding of God's Word, she tuned in to Gospel programs on her radio. And she began to make prayer a part of her daily routine.

Through the years, as she helped with farming and raising their son, Vera continued to study the Bible and maintain her prayer regimen. When Vera and her husband decided to retire, they moved and joined a Bible-teaching church, where Vera was soon recognized for her Bible knowledge and her faithfulness in prayer.

She didn't plan it, nor is her intercession organized, yet through telephone or personal visits she has encouraged many lives. Seekers have been counseled as Vera shares spiritual truths from a lifetime relationship with the Lord.

The source of this story is unknown.
Hardships, Suffering and God’s Sovereignty

Jesus clearly tells me that I cannot be His disciple unless I make the commitment to follow Him. Quite regularly, as I follow Him, He will allow me to encounter circumstances that I will perceive as unpleasant and often beyond my human ability to cope.

The purpose of this lesson is to help me understand the process in which every circumstance, even those that appear insignificant, whether good or bad, pass through God’s permissive will. He uses every circumstance in His process of transforming me into a holy and useful vessel through which He can accomplish His eternal purposes. In other words, I may not know in my lifetime on earth why He allowed a given circumstance.

A Christian who does not understand the significance of God’s sovereign control over all circumstances will typically respond with complaining, blaming, self-pity, anger or bitterness, because these events appear to be random. It pleases God when I choose to cooperate with Him by acknowledging to Him my acceptance of what He allows, and seek His direction for the appropriate and godly response, as well as for any lessons He may want me to learn.

1. **Is God in absolute control over all that happens in the universe and on earth?**
   Does there exist some person or force that can somehow affect God’s sovereign power? Does He always do what is right? Can God do wrong? Can He make mistakes? Is He totally trustworthy?

   Deut 32:4  The Rock—His work is **perfect**; all His ways are entirely **just**. A **faithful** God, **without prejudice**, He is **righteous** and **true**.

   Psa 18:30  God—His way is **perfect**; the word of the Lord is **pure**.….  

   Prov 21:30  **No** wisdom, **no** understanding, and **no** counsel will prevail against the **Lord**.

   Job 34:12-16  Indeed, it is true that **God does not act wickedly** and the **Almighty does not pervert justice**…. 

   Isa 46:11  … Yes, **I** have spoken; so **I will also bring it about**. I **have planned it**; I will also do it.

2. **Is God in absolute control over all the circumstances and details of my life?**
   (Read and contemplate Psalm 139.)

   Acts 17:25 … **He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things**.

   Jer 10:23 I know, Lord, that a man’s way of life is **not his own**; **no one** who walks **determines his own steps**.

   Jer 29:11 “For I know **the plans I have for you**”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

   Matt 6:25-27,34 “This is why I tell you: Don’t worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Isn’t life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the sky: They don’t sow or reap or gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. **Aren’t you worth more than they? Can any of you add a single cubit to his height by worrying? Therefore don’t worry about tomorrow**, because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”
Rom 8:28  We know that **all things work together for the good** of those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.
1 Cor 10:13  No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. **God is faithful**, and **He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation **He will also provide a way of escape** so that you are able to bear it.

3. **The Bible tells me that I should consider hardships and suffering a normal part of my Christian life here on earth.**

I should not assume that experiencing hardships and suffering is an indication of God’s displeasure. Nor can I assume that His blessings always imply my faithfulness. He is a loving God, and loves me even when I grieve Him.

**Note:** Consider hardships and sufferings [difficulties] as “anything that I personally find unpleasant.” We all understand physical suffering as undesirable. However, because of our diverse personalities, we may have different reactions to difficulties. In other words, one person may watch or participate in a sporting event or other activity and find it exhilarating, while another would view it as a totally unpleasant experience.

a. Here is one example of a believer who was suffering poverty from the world's perspective, but was rich before God. She was not being punished but was temporarily poor so God could make her eternally rich.

Mark 12:41-44 Sitting across from the temple treasury, He (Jesus) watched how the crowd dropped money into the treasury. Many rich people were putting in large sums. And **a poor widow** came and dropped in two tiny coins worth very little. Summoning His disciples, He said to them, “I assure you: This poor widow has put in more than all those giving to the temple treasury. For they all gave out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she possessed—all she had to live on.”

b. The apostle Paul did not view hardships as something unusual. In fact, this long list of hardships happened while Paul was **in the center of God's will**, seeking to please Him as His servant.

Acts 9:15-16  *(God said of Paul)* “… this man is **My chosen instrument** to take My name to Gentiles, kings, and the Israelites. I will show him how much **he must suffer for My name!**”
2 Cor 6:4-10  *(Paul wrote)* But as God’s ministers, we commend ourselves in everything: by great **endurance**, by **afflictions**, by **hardship**, by **difficulties**, by **beatings**, by **imprisonsment**, by **riots**, by **labors**, by **sleepless nights**, by times of **hunger**, by purity, by knowledge, by patience, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the message of truth, by the power of God; through weapons of righteousness on the right hand and the left, through glory and **dishonor**, through **slander** and good report; as **deceivers** yet true; as **unknown** yet recognized; as **dying** and look—we live; as being **disciplined** yet not killed; as **grieving** yet always rejoicing; as **poor** yet enriching many; as **having nothing** yet
possessing everything.

2 Cor 11:23-27  … with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, near death many times. Five times I received 39 lashes from Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods by the Romans. Once I was stoned by my enemies. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers; labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing.

Phil 3:7-11  … I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth,…

Phil 4:11-13  I don’t say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. I am able to do all things through Him who strengthens me.

2 Cor 1:7-9  And our hope for you is firm, because we know that as you share in the sufferings, so you will share in the comfort. For we don’t want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in Asia: we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

c. Neither did the other apostles find hardships and suffering to be unusual.

Acts 5:40-41  After they (Jewish leaders) called in the apostles and had them flogged, they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them. Then they went out from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored on behalf of the Name.

1 Cor 4:9 -13  For I think God has displayed us, the apostles, in last place, like men condemned to die: We have become a spectacle to the world and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ,… We are weak, … we are dishonored! Up to the present hour we are both hungry and thirsty; we are poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless; we labor, working with our own hands. When we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we respond graciously. Even now, we are like the dirt everyone scrapes off their sandals.

Rev 1:9  I, John, your … partner in the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of God’s word and the testimony about Jesus.
d. Neither should I find it unusual when I encounter hardships and suffering.

John 15:18-21 *(Jesus said)* “… because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you: ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. But they will do all these things to you on account of My name, because they don’t know the One who sent Me.”

John 16:33 “I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

Acts 14:22 “It is necessary to pass through many troubles on our way into the kingdom of God.”

Phil 1:29 For it has been given to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.

2 Tim 1:8 … share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

2 Tim 3:12 In fact, all those who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Peter 4:12-16 Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory. If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. But if anyone suffers as a “Christian,” he should not be ashamed but should glorify God in having that name.

1 Peter 5:10 Now the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.

Rom 8:35-39 Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?… No, in all these things we are more than victorious through Him who loved us.

4. God typically allows suffering for one or more of the following:
   a. To build character into my life
   b. As a consequence of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness
   c. To be “cast on the Lord” and not rely on myself
   d. To help me understand the needs of others
   e. To use my life to be a blessing to others

   a. God uses hardships and suffering to build character into my life and to shape me into a usable and holy vessel. He alone knows what influences and circumstances will best enable Him to bless me and use me for the purposes that He has designed for my remaining time here on earth.

Rom 5:3-4 … we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

Heb 5:8-9 *(speaking of Jesus)* Though He was God’s Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered….
Dear friends, don’t be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you as if something unusual were happening to you….

b. I may suffer the consequences of my own disobedience, neglect or carelessness. Even then, God is faithful and loving and may use my situation as a teaching experience to discipline me. For example, if I am careless with my diet, I may as a result experience physical discomfort or suffering.

1 Cor 11:27-34 (Paul wrote) Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy way will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly evaluating ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord, so that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather together you will not come under judgment. 

Heb 12:6-11 for the Lord disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He receives. Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? …, we had natural fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn’t we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but He does it for our benefit, so that we can share His holiness. No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the fruit of peace and righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

c. Sometimes God allows me to suffer, so I learn to depend on His faithfulness, power, and sufficiency, and not on myself, (Proverbs 3:5-6) and recognize my personal weaknesses. (If you are never in a battle, you can’t experience a victory.)

2 Cor 1:8-9 (Paul wrote) For we don’t want you to be unaware, brothers, of our affliction that took place in Asia: we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

2 Cor 12:7-10 … a thorn in the flesh was given to me, (Paul), a messenger of Satan to torment me, so I would not exalt myself. Concerning this, I pleaded with the Lord three times to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.
d. Sometimes God uses suffering to help me identify with the suffering of others in order to be able, with sincere compassion to be helpful to them.

2 Cor 1:3-5  (Paul wrote) … God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For as the sufferings of Christ overflow to us, so through Christ our comfort also overflows.

Heb 2:10, 17-18  … it was entirely appropriate that God … should make the source (Jesus) of their salvation perfect through sufferings. Therefore, He had to be like His brothers in every way, so that He could become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God…. For since He Himself was tested and has suffered, He is able to help those who are tested.

1 Peter 5:9-10  (Peter wrote) Resist him (the devil) and be firm in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. Now the God of all grace… will personally restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little.

e. Sometimes God allows me to pass through hardships in order for Him to shine through my life in a greater way so that others see Him through me. (A light is most visible and significant in the darkness.)

Matt 5:14-16  (Jesus said) “You are the light of the world…. let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

John 9:1-3  As He was passing by, He saw a man blind from birth. His disciples questioned Him: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered. “This came about so that God’s works might be displayed in him.”

Acts 16:22-34  Then the mob joined in the attack against them (Paul & Silas), and the chief magistrates stripped off their clothes and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had inflicted many blows on them, they threw them in jail, ordering the jailer to keep them securely guarded. Receiving such an order, he put them into the inner prison and secured their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the jail were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains came loose. When the jailer woke up and saw the doors of the prison open, he drew his sword and was going to kill himself, since he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul called out in a loud voice, “Don’t harm yourself, because all of us are here!” Then the jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he escorted them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” Then they spoke the message of the Lord to him along with everyone in his house. He took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds. Right away he and all his family were baptized. He brought them into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had believed God with his entire household.
5. God will sometimes require me to re-prioritize the things I hold dear [my idols], so He can replace them with His best, which will have eternal benefits for me and others (e.g. contentment, material possessions, friendships, health, etc.).

Matthew 5:11-12  (Jesus said) “You are blessed when they insult and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

Acts 4:32-35  Now the large group of those who believed were of one heart and mind, and no one said that any of his possessions was his own, but instead they held everything in common.... all those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles’ feet. This was then distributed for each person’s basic needs.

Rom 8:17-18  (Paul wrote) … seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us.

Heb 11:17-19  By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac….

1 Peter 1:6-7  You rejoice in this, though now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

6. My responses to His designed circumstances are an indicator of my willingness to accept what He has planned for me and to entrust myself into His care.

a. Jesus shows me by example what my attitude and response should be.

Matt 26:51-53  … one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest’s slave and cut off his ear. Then Jesus told him, “Put your sword back in its place … Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels?”

John 19:9-11  (Pilate) said to Jesus, … “Where are You from?” But Jesus did not give him an answer. So Pilate said to Him, “You’re not talking to me? Don’t You know that I have the authority to release You and the authority to crucify You?” “You would have no authority over Me at all,” Jesus answered him, “if it hadn’t been given you from above….”

Heb 12:2  …keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that lay before Him endured a cross and despised the shame and has sat down at the right hand of God’s throne.

1 Peter 2:19-23  For it brings favor if, mindful of God’s will, someone endures grief from suffering unjustly…. But when you do what is good and suffer, if you endure it, this brings favor with God. For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in His steps. He did not commit sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth; when He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He was suffering, He did not threaten but entrusted Himself to the One who judges justly.
b. The apostle Paul chose to entrust himself into God’s loving care.

Acts 20:22-24 … I (Paul) am on my way to Jerusalem, bound in my spirit, not knowing what I will encounter there, except that in town after town the Holy Spirit testifies to me that chains and afflictions are waiting for me. But I count my life of no value to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus,…

2 Cor 12:7-10 … He (God) said to me (Paul), “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, catastrophes, persecutions, and in pressures, because of Christ. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Phil 4:12 I (Paul) know both how to have a little, and I know how to have a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content—whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need.

c. Consider Job’s response to losing almost all he possessed (Job 1:4-19), including his children, and then his physical health (Job 2:1-8). Job’s response pleased God.

Job 1:20-22 Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, saying: Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. Praise the name of Yahweh. Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.

Job 2:10 …“Should we accept only good from God and not adversity?” Throughout all this Job did not sin in what he said.

d. Consider Joseph’s response to the hardships that God allowed.
- His jealous brothers hated him and sold him into slavery to foreign traders, who took him to Egypt (Gen. 37:3-36).
- Then he was falsely accused of attempted rape and innocently suffered in prison (Gen. 39:1-40:23 and Psa. 105:17-19).

In these verses, Joseph spoke of God’s faithfulness and sovereignty to his brothers.

Gen 41:52 … “God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Gen 45:5 And now don’t be worried or angry with yourselves for selling me here, because God sent me ahead of you to preserve life.

Gen 45:8 Therefore it was not you who sent me here, but God.

Gen 50:15, 19-20 When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said to one another, “If Joseph is holding a grudge against us, he will certainly repay us for all the suffering we caused him.”… But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me; God planned it for good to bring about the present result—the survival of many people.”
When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, "Of course it is." I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, "The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it."

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we've missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That's because most of us have been taught to believe that if we're on the right track God's goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that's a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God's love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we'll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good.

"No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came," Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. "If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well." —David Roper

*If some darker lot be good,*
*Lord, teach us to endure*
*The sorrow, pain, or solitude*
*That makes the spirit pure. —Irons*

No trial would cause us to despair if we knew God's reason for allowing it.

FOR FURTHER STUDY Go to [http://www.rbc.org/rtb/4rsn/](http://www.rbc.org/rtb/4rsn/)
“10 Reasons To Believe In A God Who Allows Suffering”

CONCLUSION: God is worthy of my trust. I can always count on Him to do what is in my best interest.

When I stand before Him in heaven, and understand what He was doing in my life here on earth, I will have no regrets for the times when I trusted Him fully.

He does not desire for me to look at hardships with solemn resignation, neither to pursue suffering for its own sake, but rather with childlike faith to accept what comes from a Father who loves me beyond human understanding.

I Peter 4:19  So those who suffer according to God’s will should, while doing what is good, entrust themselves to a faithful Creator
Psalm 33:18-21  Now the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him—those who depend on His faithful love to deliver them from death and to keep them alive in famine. We wait for Yahweh; He is our help and shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name.
Psalm 34:4-8  I (David) sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears…. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him from all his troubles. The Angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them. Taste and see that the Lord is good. How happy is the man who takes refuge in Him!
Rom 8:31-32  What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He did not even spare His own Son but offered Him up for us all; how will He not also with Him grant us everything?
1 Thess 5:16-18  Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
Making Right Choices, Discerning God’s Will

I can look at making choices as a pyramid. As a believer, God has intended goals for me, and as I make decisions, certain prerequisites need to be in place. My attitude should be surrendered to Him and then criteria helps me to discern His will.

Read from the bottom to the top for an overview of this lesson. Detailed discussion follows for each tier.

**MAKING RIGHT CHOICES**

   3. Circumstances.
   2. The Peace of God.
   1. The Word of God.

**CRITERIA – FOUR FACTORS**

4. A willingness to exercise faith.
   3. An openness to be changed by Him.
   2. Prayerfully seeking His will for me.
   1. A desire to allow God to fulfill His will in my life.

**A SURRENDERRED ATTITUDE**

2. I need to believe that God is sovereign and perfectly able to carry out His purpose and plan for my life.

1. I need to believe that God has a personal and individualized plan and purpose for my life, and He wants to reveal it to me.

**PREREQUISITES**

3. God wants me to be willing to let Him use me in His plan, resulting in my being blessed both here on earth as well as eternally in heaven.

2. God loves every person in the world, and He wants to use me in His plan to reach unbelievers with the good news of salvation and to bring believers to maturity in Christ.

1. God's desire for me is to love Him (demonstrated by my willingness to trust in His character and to surrender and obey Him), to grow in my understanding of how to please Him, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into His likeness.

**GOD’S GOALS**
"God will always give the very best to those who leave the choice with Him"

1. God's goals for my life serve as foundational guidelines:
   □ a. God's desire for me is to love Him (demonstrated by my willingness to trust in His character and to surrender and obey Him), to grow in my understanding of how to please Him, and to allow the Holy Spirit to transform me into His likeness.
   □ b. God loves every person in the world, and He wants to use me in His plan to reach unbelievers with the good news of salvation and to bring believers to maturity in Christ.
   □ c. God wants me to be willing to let Him use me in His plan, resulting in my being blessed both here on earth as well as eternally in heaven.

2. Prerequisites for understanding God's will.
   a. I need to believe that God has His tailor made plan for my life.

Psalm 139:16  Your eyes saw me when I was formless; all my days were written in Your book and planned before a single one of them began.
Proverbs 16:9  A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps.
Proverbs 20:24  A man’s steps are determined by the LORD, so how can anyone understand his own way?
Jeremiah 10:23  … a man’s way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps.
Acts 13:36  For David, after serving his own generation in God’s plan, fell asleep (died), was buried with his fathers, and decayed.

b. God wants me to know His will for me, He doesn't want to hide it from me. He may not give me as much evidence as I want, but He gives me enough to intelligently follow Him by faith.

Romans 12:1-2  Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.
Ephesians 5:17  So don’t be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.
Colossians 1:9-10  … since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.
c. God is sovereign and perfectly able to carry out His will.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that all God does will last forever; there is no adding to it or taking from it. God works so that people will be in awe of Him.

Proverbs 19:21 Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the LORD’s decree will prevail.

Isaiah 46:9-10 … I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and no one is like Me. I declare the end from the beginning, and from long ago what is not yet done, saying: My plan will take place, and I will do all My will.

Daniel 4:35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, and He does what He wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can hold back His hand or say to Him, “What have You done?”

Acts 17:25 Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things.

d. I must honestly want to know His will for my life, and prayerfully seek it.

Jeremiah 29:13 You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

Proverbs 2:1-6 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

James 1:5-8 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without criticizing, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. An indecisive man is unstable in all his ways.

e. Choices that have eternal rewards (that is, motivated by the Holy Spirit) always require a measure of faith, and include a perception of risk.

Someone has said, “Don’t ask if something is possible, but rather ask, ‘Is it God’s will?’, because if it is God’s will, He will make it possible”.

2 Cor 4:16-18 … we do not give up…. For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Gal 3:11 … the righteous will live by faith.

Heb 11:6 … without faith it is impossible to please God…

1 Peter 1:6-7 … now for a short time you have had to struggle in various trials so that the genuineness of your faith—more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
f. Choices based on faith may result in sacrifice and/or suffering. There is a price for obedience to His will. Trials ought not to be viewed as an enemy.

Luke 21:1-4 He looked up and saw the rich dropping their offerings into the temple treasury. He also saw a poor widow dropping in two tiny coins. “I tell you the truth,” He said. “This poor widow has put in more than all of them. For all these people have put in gifts out of their surplus, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.”

Heb 5:8 Though He was God’s Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

g. I need to choose to humble myself before God with a submissive attitude, "allowing" Him to teach me and change my priorities, as He deems best.

Psalm 25:9 He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them His way.

Psalm 32:8-9 I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with My eye on you, I will give counsel. Do not be like a horse or mule, without understanding, that must be controlled with bit and bridle or else it will not come near you.

Acts 13:22 … He raised up David as their king and testified about him: ‘I have found David the son of Jesse, a man loyal to Me, who will carry out all My will.’

3. Four factors to consider in making right choices:

1. THE WORD OF GOD: Does the Bible say something specific about the matter, or present principles related to it?

Psalm 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

1 Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice always! Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess 4:3-5 For this is God’s will, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality, so that each of you knows how to control his own body in sanctification and honor, not with lustful desires, like the Gentiles who don’t know God.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart.
2. THE PEACE OF GOD: Do I have God's peace?

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of the Messiah, ... control your hearts (that is: “act as an umpire”). Be thankful.

Philippians 4:6-7 Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses every thought, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

<<<CAUTION>>> "Feelings" and "desires" may be deceptive. My natural tendency is not to follow His direction, but rather to be independent. Be honest with yourself! It is often helpful to ask yourself (and God), “Would this be pleasing to God?”

Proverbs 16:2 All a man’s ways seem right to him, but the LORD evaluates the motives.
Proverbs 28:26 The one who trusts in himself is a fool, but one who walks in wisdom will be safe.
Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?
Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don’t do what you want.

<<<CAUTION>>> I need to confess any known sin.

Psalm 66:18 If I had been aware of malice in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.
Proverbs 28:9 Anyone who turns his ear away from hearing the law—even his prayer is detestable.
Proverbs 28:13 The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.
James 4:3 You ask and don’t receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your evil desires.
1 John 1:5-10 Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him. If we say, “We have fellowship with Him,” yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We don’t have any sin,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”
3. CIRCUMSTANCES: There is really only "One Circumstance" and that is God. Are circumstances suitable? Are doors opening? Or closing? Finances? (Caution: If not used carefully, credit cards (and/or credit) can be a hindrance to God’s freedom to use finances as an instrument to guide me.)

<<<CAUTION>>> Are the obstacles (problems) a "Trial" or "Direction?" The path of least resistance may not be God's will. Difficulties or suffering do not necessarily prove that I am not in the center of God's will any more than material and comfort blessings prove that I am in the center of His will.

2 Corinthians 1:8-9 (Paul) … we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life. Indeed, we personally had a death sentence within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead.

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (Paul, in the center of God’s will) Five times I received 39 lashes from Jews. Three times I was beaten with rods by the Romans. Once I was stoned by my enemies. Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea. On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers; labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing. Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches.

4. SPIRITUAL COUNSEL: I should seek godly and wise counsel. (My spouse may also "balance" me.)

Proverbs 1:5  A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance.

Proverbs 12:15  A fool’s way is right in his own eyes, but whoever listens to counsel is wise.

Proverbs 15:22  Plans fail when there is no counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 19:20  Listen to counsel and receive instruction so that you may be wise later in life.

<<<CAUTION>>> Counsel can be wrong.

Job 2:9  His (Job’s) wife said to him, “Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God and die!”

Job 42:7  … He (The LORD) said to Eliphaz the Temanite: “I am angry with you and your two friends, for you have not spoken the truth about Me, as My servant Job has.”

(See also: 1 Kings 13:1-26)
4. Two different methods for making choices:

   a. **“Active”** - Unless otherwise directed I cautiously move ahead in what honestly appears to be the best direction, consciously trusting God to confirm or to restrain, by either opening or shutting doors.

   (You can't steer a parked car, or a boat that's tied to the dock.)

   **Note:** This is usually the way we seek a spouse or a job, buy a house or a car; that is, things we desire.

   Psalm 37:23-24  A man’s steps are established by the LORD, and He takes pleasure in his way. Though he falls, he will not be overwhelmed, because the LORD holds his hand.
   Proverbs 3:5-6  Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)
   Isaiah 30:21  … and whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: “This is the way. Walk in it.”
   Acts 16:6-10  They (Paul and team) went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia and were prevented by the Holy Spirit from speaking the message in Asia. When they came to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, bypassing Mysia, they came down to Troas. During the night a vision appeared to Paul: A Macedonian man was standing and pleading with him, “Cross over to Macedonia and help us!” After he had seen the vision, we immediately made efforts to set out for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to evangelize them.

   b. **“Passive”** - I wait for God to do something “special” to confirm His guidance.

   I can often find myself using this method regarding things I may not desire to do. I am told to “wait” on the Lord, but I need to be careful that I don’t use that as an excuse not to move forward in obedience, especially if I already understand what I should do, but am reluctant to trust.

   **We need to be honest with ourselves.** Someone has said, “God will give us enough evidence to act upon, but usually not enough to convince”.

   Exodus 14:14  The LORD will fight for you; you must be quiet.
   Psalm 27:14  Wait for the LORD; be strong and courageous. Wait for the LORD.
   Psalm 37:7  Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for Him;…

5. A couple of basic questions to ask myself:

   - If I could choose one course for my life would it be one of my choosing or one of God's selection?
   - Do I prefer to know God's plan and purpose for my daily life while I'm still here on earth and am able to act upon it, or would I rather wait until I stand before Christ at the judgment of believers? (2 Cor. 5:10) It seems reasonable that each of us is going to become aware of His purpose and plan for our life, either here on earth -- or there.
Christian Maturity – A Summary

My level of spiritual maturity is the degree to which God’s perspective of life has become my perspective.

1. What does Growth in Spiritual Maturity refer to?

Growing in Spiritual Maturity refers to the process in which the Holy Spirit transforms my spiritual understanding (values, priorities) in order to increase the flow of His life (His Living Water) through me. As more of His life is free to flow through me, there will be an ever-increasing measure of His spiritual fruit in my life.

ABIDING FELLOWSHIP with the Holy Spirit has to do with whether or not His life is able to flow through me at any given moment.

SPIRITUAL MATURITY has to do with how much of His life is able to flow through me at any given moment (in the context of abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit).

2. Spiritual Maturity does not necessarily speak of how much Biblical knowledge I possess, but rather of how willing I have been to allow the Holy Spirit to transform my understanding of Him, and of life.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 … But the one who boasts should boast in this, that he understands and knows Me.… This is the LORD’s declaration.

John 17:3 This is eternal life: that they may know You.…

Rom. 12:2 Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

2 Peter 1:5-8 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Col. 1:10 … that you may walk … bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.

2 Peter 3:17-18 Therefore, dear friends, … be on your guard, so that you are not led away by the error of lawless people and fall from your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ….
3. I can limit the flow of His life through me by focusing on my perceived personal capabilities or limitations.

My natural tendency is to limit God according to my personal understanding of Him and how He acts. As He trains me, He will speak to me about different areas of my understanding that are restricting the free flow of His life in and through me. I need to continually maintain the attitude of a disciple (an apprentice learner), a child (eager to listen and believe), so as to minimize the time that the Holy Spirit has to expend teaching me in any given area of understanding. I need to consciously allow Him access to any area of my life, aware that He will never make any changes except what is in my eternal best interest.

Look at how we limit the Lord by only remembering what we have allowed Him to do for us in the past. We say, "I always failed there, and I always will." Consequently, we don't ask for what we want. Instead, we think, "It is ridiculous to ask God to do this." If it is an impossibility, it is the very thing for which we have to ask. (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 29 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

As I grow spiritually, my focus will shift from my capabilities to His capabilities.

CAUTION: It is an unyielding “strength to resist” that hinders God, not weakness.

2 Cor. 12:9-10 (Jesus told Paul) “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Therefore, I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may reside in me…. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

To honestly recognize my own capabilities is okay, but to limit God’s power to my perceived personal capabilities is an insult to Him.

4. Spiritual growth (learning process) should continue until I move on to heaven.

A trap that awaits me as I grow is the illusion that I will somehow arrive at a spiritual plateau after which spiritual growth will continue with minimal discomfort. God wants to exercise my faith and increase my understanding of how He thinks and acts, in order for me to increasingly think like Him, and to bear more eternal fruit. Even though every step of faith involves a “perceived” risk, I can rest in the assurance that I am never out of God’s sovereign oversight and care, and He will never allow me to suffer beyond His sufficient provision of grace to sustain me. The process will continue until I leave this earth and step into God’s presence. Growing believers find that their life is a constant warfare. There are no plateaus, just “rest stops.” Be aware of a tendency to be complacent and satisfied with your level of spiritual growth. We resist change.

Romans 5:3-5 … but we also rejoice in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. This hope will not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

1 Cor. 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful, and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape so that you are able to bear it.

James 1:2-4 Consider it a great joy, my brothers, whenever you experience various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But endurance must do its complete work, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.
5. Biblical illustrations of the maturing process:

a. Rivers of Living Water: A **trickle** becomes a **stream**, which becomes a **river**.

John 7:38-39 (Jesus said) “The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have **streams** of living water flow from deep within him.” He said this about the **Spirit**. … (See also John 4:14)

As I live in abiding fellowship with the Holy Spirit His “Living Water” is **free to flow** through my life. The **volume** of His Living Water that is able to flow depends on my spiritual maturity.

b. A Branch on a Vine: A **twig** becomes a **branch**. Obviously, as the **branch** grows (matures), more **fruit** can be produced through it.

John 15:1-2, 8, 16 (Jesus said) “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vineyard keeper. … and He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce **more** fruit. My Father is glorified by this: that you produce **much** fruit and prove to be My disciples. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. I appointed you that you should go out and **produce fruit** and that your fruit should remain,…”

Romans 7:4 (Paul wrote) … you also were put to death in relation to the law through the crucified body of the Messiah, so that you may belong to another—to Him who was raised from the dead—*that we may bear fruit for God*.

c. The Growth / Maturing Process: An **infant** (baby, child) becomes an **adolescent**, who becomes an **adult**.

**Characteristics of an infant / baby:** (1) **hungry**, (2) **dependent on others**, (3) **self-centered**.

**Stages of growth:** The immature Christian tends to focus on **self** needs, then as they grow, the **needs of others** become the focus, and as they mature, **God Himself** becomes the main focus.

Psalm 73:25 *Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire **nothing** on earth.*

- **Infants / Babies / Children:**

1 Cor. 13:11 (Paul writes) **When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.**

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn **infants**, desire the pure spiritual **milk**, so that you may **grow** by it for your salvation,…

1 John 2:12-14 I am writing to you, little **children**, because your **sins have been forgiven** because of Jesus’ name…. I have written to you, **children**, because you have come to know the Father.

1 Thess. 2:7 Although we could have been a burden as Christ’s apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own **children**.

1 Cor. 3:1-3 Brothers, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as **people of the flesh**, as **babies** in Christ. I gave you **milk** to drink, not solid food, because you were **not yet ready** for it. In fact, you are still not ready, because you are still **fleshy**….

Heb. 5:12-13 Although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the basic principles of God’s revelation again. You need **milk**, not solid food. Now everyone who lives on **milk** is **inexperienced** with the message about righteousness, because he is an **infant**.

1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, don’t be **childish** in your thinking, but be **infants** in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.
- **Young Adults:**

  1 John 2:14 *(John writes)* … I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, God’s word remains in you, and you have had victory over the evil one.

- **Adults:**

  1 Cor. 13:11 *(Paul writes)* … When I became a man, I put aside childish things.
  1 Cor. 14:20 Brothers, don’t be childish in your thinking, but be infants in regard to evil and adult in your thinking.
  Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature—for those whose senses have been trained to distinguish between good and evil.
  1 John 2:13-14 *(John writes)* I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know the One who is from the beginning.

- **All Believers (the Church):**

  Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.
  Eph. 4:11-15 And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head—Christ.
  Rom. 8:29 For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

- **The Spiritual Growth of Jesus:** *(Note: His spiritual growth had nothing to do with sin. He was never disobedient or less than perfect.)*

  Luke 2:40 The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom, and God’s grace was on Him.
  Luke 2:42, 46-52 When He was 12 years old, they (Joseph and Mary) found Him in the temple complex sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all those who heard Him were astounded at His understanding and His answers…. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and with people.
  Heb. 2:10 It was entirely appropriate that God, … should make the source of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
  Heb. 5:8-9 Though He was God’s Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. After He was perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him.

Congratulations on your continuing choice to grow in the Lord! However, Phase 1 is not the end of your spiritual growth but only a stepping stone to even more.

Prayerfully consider who the Lord would have you mentor / disciple and go through Phase I with that believer. To assist you, review the guidelines found in lesson 2-5.
A Tool for Personal Discipleship

PHASE 2

MENTOR TRAINING


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One Reason Why Personal Discipleship is Needed

Typical Modern Church Congregation

- **Followers** usually don’t feel they are adequately trained to disciple new believers and often believe it’s the Pastor’s role.
- **Pastors / Leaders** are perceived to be trained to disciple others, but don’t have the necessary **time** to devote individually to each new believer.
- **Pastors / Leaders** are doing their job supporting the church.
- **Followers** typically are OK with this model even though the problem leads to an anemic Church.

Solution: Implement a Better Model

“This and He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, **for the training** of the saints in the **work of ministry**, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a **mature** man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness.

Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. But speaking the truth in love, let us **grow** in every way into Him who is the head—Christ. From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by **every** supporting ligament, promotes the **growth of the body** for building up itself in love by the proper working of **each individual** part.”

Ephesians 4:11-16

- The role of Leaders (Pastors) is to “equip the saints” to disciple / spiritually mentor others. This can be done in corporate training sessions or modeled in one-in-one relationships.
- The role of the “saints” / followers is to have a surrendered attitude and learner’s disposition to be trained to mentor others.
- The result should be that personal discipleship / one-on-one mentoring is the norm rather than the exception. The expectation is that every believer is in the process of being discipled or discipling others.
- The ultimate goal is spiritual maturity, spiritual fruitfulness, and spiritual reproduction.
Each Church should seek to implement Balanced Discipleship

**BOTH** Personal & Corporate discipleship are needed for healthy spiritual growth

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**Overview:** We believe that wherever believers gather, “Balanced” Discipleship should be practiced. In other words, both “Corporate” and “Personal” discipleship are needed for healthy spiritual growth. The two types of discipleship each have their unique roles, and they complement each other.

**A Problem:** Many churches are heavily weighted towards corporate discipleship, which often has the appearance of being more “efficient.” Personal discipleship is generally more resource intensive (time, energy, finances), but we believe it is more effective for accelerating a newer believer’s spiritual development. Many church leaders would like to be available to give each believer adequate individual attention, but that is usually impractical, due to their numerous other responsibilities, and lack of time.
Is There A Solution? We believe an answer is for pastors and leaders to train “faithful” believers in the church body, who in turn can disciple (spiritually parent) newer believers. We are aware that many pastors and leaders need assistance in training disciplers, and one of the goals of DTI is to provide discipleship materials and assistance in training.

In many churches, discipleship has come to mean “the presentation of biblical truth.” Thus many leaders perceive that their responsibility is to present biblical truth, with the expectation that it is then the responsibility of each believer to allow the Holy Spirit to apply those truths to their own lives. However, since most newer believers are unfamiliar with the Holy Spirit, they need someone to personally help them to understand how to cooperate with Him in their personal spiritual development.

In many churches the idea is conveyed that to present God's Word correctly, seminary or Bible school training is needed. Certainly Bible school or seminary training has been used by God in the spiritual development of many leaders, but is it realistic to expect the typical Christian to have such training? Does this idea not lead many believers to consider themselves to be under-qualified?

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul says, “… some pastors and teachers, for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, … promotes the growth of the body for building up itself in love by the proper working of each individual part.

Should it not be the goal of leaders to see that “personal discipleship” and “spiritual reproduction” are the “norm” rather than the exception? Should we not expect every believer to be in the process of being discipled, or to be actively involved in the spiritual growth of other believers?

Corporate Discipleship: The Corporate side of this model: Preaching, Conducting a Seminar or Small Group, Training, etc. will often be led by a believer who has the gift of teaching. Bible school or seminary training would be helpful, but not essential.

Personal Discipleship: The Personal side of this model: the gift of teaching is not a biblical requirement for personally discipling (spiritually parenting) another believer. How many couples would have children if they had waited until they felt “qualified?”

The Four Components of The Personal Model:

God’s Word: “Teaching God's Word” is an essential component common to both the Corporate and the Personal side of all discipleship. God does not want the Bible to be seen simply as an academic text, but rather as a revelation of His character. The Bible is a means by which humans can “know” Him. This is eternal life: that they may know You… (John 17:3). The Holy Spirit’s guidance will always be in accordance with His Word.

Commitment: This has to do with the heart attitude of the discipler (spiritual parent) in regards to the spiritual welfare and development of the disciple. This is a commitment that goes beyond just presenting God's word. The biblical idea of a disciple is more of an “apprentice” than just a student.

Modeling: Hopefully the biblical disciple (apprentice) will end up with the passion of the discipler. The discipler is a model to the disciple, in ways that go beyond that of a teacher and student. How do you teach patience, or faithfulness, or passion? These things are seen more than heard.

Individual Attention: We are not interested in academically presenting points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to a disciple. The discipler should be prayerfully available to the Holy Spirit, to be used as an instrument as He develops the newer believer and addresses the particular needs of the disciple. The material from A Tool For Personal Discipleship is designed with the intent of stimulating questions and conversation that will promote spiritual growth both in the discipler and the disciple. Each discipler will have unique and personal experiences that the Holy Spirit can bring to mind and use in the discipling process.
What Is Personal Discipleship?

**PARTIAL TRUTH:**
To most Christians the term “Discipleship” simply equates to “Presenting Biblical Truth”.

**MORE ACCURATELY:**
We believe the concept of “Spiritual Parenting” more accurately reflects the Biblical meaning of discipleship.

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A Biblical Model for “Spiritual Parenting”

1 Thessalonians 2:3-13 includes all the components of spiritual parenting.

(From Paul, with Silas and Timothy)

**THEY WERE SINGLE-MINDED IN PURPOSE**
:3-6 … so we speak, **not to please men, but rather God**, who examines our hearts. For we never used flattering speech, as you know, or had greedy motives—God is our witness—and we didn’t seek glory from people, either from you or from others. Although we could have been a burden as Christ’s apostles,…

1. **THEY CARED FOR THE BELIEVERS AS A MOTHER CARES FOR HER CHILDREN**
:7-8 … instead we were gentle among you, as a nursing MOTHER nurtures her own children. **We cared so much for you** that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.

2. **THEY BECAME “ROLE MODELS” TO THE NEW BELIEVERS**
:9-10 For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers. **Working night and day** so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God’s gospel to you. **You are witnesses**, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers.

3. **THEY GAVE INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION AND INSTRUCTION AS A FATHER**
:11-12 As you know, like a FATHER with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored EACH ONE of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

4. **THE WORD OF GOD WAS AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF DISCIPLESHIP**
:13 This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, **the message of God**, which also works effectively in you believers.
Paul's concern for the believers went beyond that of just “a teacher.” He was committed to their spiritual welfare and growth.

2 Cor. 11:28-29 … there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?
2 Cor. 2:4 For I wrote to you with many tears out of an extremely troubled and anguished heart—not that you should be hurt, but that you should know the abundant love I have for you.
2 Cor. 12:15 I will most gladly spend and be spent for you…. Col. 1:28-29 … so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.
2 Tim. 2:10 … I endure all things for the elect:…

A goal of the discipler should be to help the disciple (apprentice learner) to mature, function, be fruitful, and to spiritually reproduce. The benefits to the discipler are secondary.

A discipler is a “model” (real, transparent) for the disciple. The goal is for the disciple to emulate the convictions and passion of the discipler.

1 Cor. 4:15-16 (Paul to the Corinthian believers) For you can have 10,000 instructors in Christ, but you can’t have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me.
1 Cor. 11:1 Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.
Phil. 3:17 (Paul to the Philippians) Join in imitating me, brothers, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.
Phil. 4:9 Do what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.
1 Thess. 1:6-7 (Paul to the Thessalonian believers) And you became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit. As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia.
2 Thess. 3:7-9 For you yourselves know how you must imitate us: We were not irresponsible among you; … to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us.
Heb. 13:7 Remember your leaders who have spoken God’s word to you. As you carefully observe the outcome of their lives, imitate their faith.
1 Tim. 4:12 (Paul to Timothy) … you should be an example to the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
2 Tim. 3:10-11 But you have followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, and endurance, along with the persecutions and sufferings …
Titus 2:7-8 (Paul to Titus) … Make yourself an example of good works with integrity and dignity in your teaching. Your message is to be sound beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be ashamed, having nothing bad to say about us.
Luke 6:40 (Jesus said) A disciple (apprentice) is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.
A newborn child requires an extra amount of individual attention. As the child matures, guidance can increasingly take place in a group setting. Since each child is unique, it should be expected that both group and personal attention would be needed on the road to maturity.

When you bring a newborn baby home from the hospital, you don't just set them down and say, "Welcome to the family, Johnny. Make yourself at home. The towels are in the hall closet upstairs, the pantry is right here, the can opener is in this drawer. No crying after 10 p.m. If you have any questions there are lots of people in the family who would love to help you so don't be afraid to ask.” You laugh and say that is ridiculous, but that is what usually happens to new Christians. Someone gets saved and starts going to church services, but never gets much personal attention. We devote 18 years to raising our children, but don't even spend six months helping a new Christian get started in understanding the spiritual world. As a result, many people have been Christians for many years, but have not grown very much. Hebrews 5:12 refers to this phenomenon. So, new believers need someone to give them guidance and help them grow.

(Above excerpt from http://bible.org/seriespage/stewardship-god’s-truth-through-discipleship)

“Until others learn to draw on the life of the Lord Jesus directly, they will have to draw on His life through you. You must literally be their source of supply, until they learn to take their nourishment from God.” (Taken from My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers – Feb. 9 (c) 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed (c) 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd., and is used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Box 3566, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.)

Notice what Paul states in 1 Thess. 2:7 … we were gentle among you, as a nursing mother nurtures her own children.

Some believe that a new Christian is not in need of individual special attention. If the Holy Spirit had not led Paul to include the idea of nursing it could be argued that this Scripture was referring to spiritual toddlers or even older spiritual children. But one must honestly ask, “How soon after birth does a typical baby need to be nursed?” When a baby nurses, as Oswald Chambers has correctly expressed, it is drawing nourishment through its mother. This would normally be expected to continue until which time it is weaned.

Paul recognized that each believer is unique and needs individual attention.

Acts 20:31 (Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus.) Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.

Col. 1:28-29 We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

1 Thess. 2:11-12 As you know, like a father with his own children, we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you …

Jesus commanded us to make "disciples," not just converts. In the Christian community there are many immature “converts,” but very few disciples. (See also Lesson 2-4)
Biblical truth is an essential component of Biblical discipleship.

A. A Christian cannot be spiritually mature without Biblical understanding, but a Christian may have much Biblical knowledge and yet not be spiritually mature.

1 Cor. 8:1-2  … Knowledge inflates with pride, but love builds up. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he does not yet know it as he ought to know it.
Eph. 4:11-16  … for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, growing into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ’s fullness. Then we will no longer be little children,…
Col. 1:28-29  We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ.
1 Thess. 2:13  This is why we constantly thank God, because when you received the message about God that you heard from us, you welcomed it not as a human message, but as it truly is, the message of God, which also works effectively in you believers.

B. There are inherent problems with the commonly held belief that “presenting Biblical knowledge” equates to discipleship, and that the other components are “optional.” If the other components are not given proper importance in the nurturing process, the Christian being mentored will typically have a difficult time growing to a reproductive spiritual maturity.

1. If Biblical knowledge by itself were the key to spirituality, we should have the most spiritual generation of Christians in history. Christian Book Stores are filled with books on every Biblical subject imaginable.

2. To propose that Biblical knowledge alone is the key to spirituality is akin to saying that food alone is the most important need of a child. Undeniably food is essential, but would it be accurate to convey to potential parents that love, commitment, nurturing, modeling, personal attention, etc., are somehow optional? Has God given us the process of raising a physical child as a model for raising a spiritual child? If so, should I not then ask, “How would a physical infant fare if left to tend for itself as the typical new spiritual child is?”

3. Most Christians would agree that as the Holy Spirit draws unbelievers to Himself, He typically uses Christians somewhere in the birthing process. How can the same Christians then conclude that their primary involvement in the new baby Christian’s growth is mostly limited to setting spiritual food on the table, and that the Holy Spirit now prefers to work alone in the other areas where the new believer needs help to grow?

To love to teach is good, but to love those you teach is better!

To know the Bible is good, but to intimately know and understand the One who the Bible reveals is better! (Jer. 9:23-24; John 17:3)
Guidelines for Discipling

1. What is the purpose of discipling? (See lesson 2-2)

   Every person is born with a predisposition toward independence from God. That disposition tends to harden as the child grows into an adult. If the person accepts His gift of salvation, God then begins a process of inward transformation (sanctification). The pace and depth of that transformation process is affected by the understanding and openness of the new Christian. The intent of discipleship (mentoring, “spiritual parenting”) is to help the new Christian to understand what God is doing, in order to significantly influence and accelerate that process.

   Romans 12:1-2 ... brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

   Colossians 1:28-29 (Paul wrote) We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ. I labor for this, striving with His strength that works powerfully in me.

2. Targeting (Seeking God's choices as to whom you should disciple)

   a. If you want to be an effective spiritual mentor (discipler), you need to prayerfully seek God's wisdom for discernment as to which Christian(s) will benefit from your investment of time, energy and possessions. Jesus let His Father make the decision.

   Luke 6:12-16 ... He went out to the mountain to pray and spent all night in prayer to God. When daylight came, He summoned His disciples, and He chose 12 of them—He also named them apostles.

   Note: Sadly, many Christians, especially those who have found a comfortable and acceptable Christian lifestyle, are not overly interested in being mentored on toward spiritual maturity and fruitfulness. If you are considering mentoring a Christian, look for the characteristics in Point 3. If they are not evident, then prayerfully look to the Lord for His confirmation, or to provide you someone else who does have a hunger to grow spiritually. There are Christians who would love to have someone take them under their wing to help them grow. Trying to disciple a disinterested person will usually lead to frustration! If you spend your limited time with a disinterested person, you may be neglecting someone else who sincerely wants to grow.

   Note: Timing is important. Someone not interested today may be interested at a later time.

   b. Where should we look for Christians to disciple?

      1. New believers Since they are now as little children in the kingdom, they tend to be spiritually hungry, and need someone to walk alongside of them.

      2. Christians who have been living in a desert experience (often for years), who through a God orchestrated crisis have found themselves humbled and finally willing to acknowledge that He can manage their life better than they can.

      3. Christians who have obviously accepted His Lordship over their life, want to walk with Him, but have either stagnated (or plateaued) in their Christian growth or don't understand how to consistently abide in fellowship with the Lord.
Target Groups for Mentoring

GROUP # 1
**New believers?** Since they are now depicted as little children in the “family” of God, they need someone to walk alongside of them to answer their questions and help them to understand how to follow the Lord and grow spiritually.

GROUP # 2
Christian's, who are living defeated lives, in a “desert” experience. (Often characterized by ongoing spiritual symptoms such as lack of peace, worry, anger, irritability, unbelief, addictive behavior, anxiety, critical or judgemental attitude, sense of defeat, disobedience, complaining and dissatisfaction.)

Their attitude is that God is there to help them with their plans, rather than them fitting into His plans for their everyday life.

They are relying more on their own understanding and wisdom rather than relying on God’s guidance and character. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Will God allow a crisis or other event into their life to humble them, so that they will be willing to acknowledge His authority and Lordship over their life?

GROUP # 3
Christians who have acknowledged His Lordship over their life, want to walk with Him but their growth has stagnated, because they don’t know how to constistantly abide in Christ.

This is usually the most effective “window of opportunity” for spiritually mentoring or personal discipleship.

Typically, the new believer begins the Christian life with a learner's disposition.

If this period of hunger and openness (“first love”) to personal discipleship is not taken advantage of, many new Christians will adapt their behavior to match the lifestyle being modeled by other “older” believers.

Is that what we want?
3. What characteristics should we look for in a disciple-to-be?

1. **A spiritual hunger.** Are they hungering and seeking after God? (Jesus said) **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed, for they will be filled.** (Matt. 5:6)

2. **A teachable attitude.** Do they have an openness to Him? Do they see themselves as a learner, apprentice?

3. **A RELIABILITY (DEPENDABILITY).** (Paul told Timothy) **And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.** (2 Tim. 2:2) Do they want to apply his truth to their life? Is spiritual growth a priority?

   **Caution:** It is not good if they think they’re doing you a favor.

4. Suggested guidelines for discipling another person.

   a. Arrange to meet together **at least** once each week for about 1½ hours or so. The time can vary depending on their spiritual hunger, assimilation of Biblical concepts, and maturity level.

   b. Plan on spending at least **3 to 9 months** with a disciple, meeting regularly.

   c. The purpose of the meetings is to explain Biblical truth and principles, and to give the disciple opportunity **to ask** questions, **share** spiritual struggles, and **discuss** related topics.

   d. It is important for you to be a thoughtful **listener**; it’s the best way to identify gaps in their spiritual understanding.

   e. **Be flexible** enough to allow the Holy Spirit to change the direction of the study or conversation, yet **orderly** enough so the time is not squandered on less significant matters.

   f. **Teach at the disciple’s pace.**

   g. The disciple should be encouraged to look to the Lord to apply Biblical principles to his life.

   h. A goal is for the disciple to increasingly understand and be able to clearly explain those Biblical principles to others. At some point the disciple should be ready to start mentoring another person, with your assistance.

   **NOTE:** We don’t want to imply that these lessons are the only valid ones. Christians have been discipled over the centuries using different portions of Scriptures. The **mentoring** and **nurturing** aspects are crucial. We believe the **concepts** presented in these discipleship lessons need to be **understood** by the disciple if you expect healthy growth and maturity.

   b. Seek to teach them **Biblical principles** to live by, not just Biblical knowledge. We don’t want to simply convey an academic perspective of these discipleship materials or the mentoring process.

   c. Make sure the disciple understands that you are **available** through the week. Even after your formal discipleship time is completed, you should plan to continue being available for the disciple, as you regularly monitor their spiritual growth.

   d. Regularly **pray for** the disciple, and **with** the disciple.

   e. Remember you are a **role model** for the disciple. **Include** the disciple in your spiritual life when appropriate.

   f. Your goal is to lead them into dependence on the Holy Spirit, and independence from you. We should expect the typical Christian, if correctly discipled, to become a “spiritual reproducer”.

   **The Disciple Won’t Care How Much You Know, Until They Know How Much You Care!**
Essentials for Discipling
(Role descriptions)

1. The discipler needs to count on the HOLY SPIRIT to:
   a. **Orchestrate encounters** with others who need to be discipled.
   b. **Create spiritual hunger** in the person to be discipled.
   c. **Guide** the discipleship process.
   d. **Give wisdom, discernment** and **clarity** to you as a discipler.

2. The DISCIPLER is responsible to:
   a. **Pray** and look to the Lord with **expectation**.
   b. Continue in fellowship (**abide**) with the Holy Spirit.
   c. **Study** the Word and **seek** to be prepared as a usable vessel. (2 Tim. 2:15)
   d. Be **available** to be used as a vessel by the Holy Spirit.
   e. **Cooperate** with the Holy Spirit as a partner in **His** work.

3. The **MATERIAL** that is used should:
   a. Emphasize the disciple’s need to be looking to the Lord to reveal Himself through His Word, the **Bible**.
   b. **Progressively** address the **needs** of a new Christian (as in building a house). (See 2-1, Point 10)
   c. Focus the disciple’s attention on his/her **relationship with the Lord**, rather than on external behavior.

- In the human physical realm there are three **OBSTACLES TO REPRODUCTION**:
  a. physical immaturity,
  b. a health problem, and
  c. lack of physical intimacy.

- Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators (navigators.org), has suggested that the same three obstacles can hinder spiritual reproduction.
  a. **Spiritual immaturity** – Due to being a newer Christian, or due to lack of spiritual growth.
  b. **Spiritual health problems** – Due to unresolved issues between the Christian and the Lord, and/or lack of correct spiritual understanding.
  c. **Lack of spiritual intimacy** – Due to busyness and/or other activities or things that infringe on the Christian’s intimacy with the Lord.
Recommendations for Effective Discipleship

A disciple has the goal of becoming like the teacher.

(Jesus said) A disciple (apprentice learner) is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40)

1. For the newer believer there is usually a significant emphasis toward behavior modification. Therefore, we should focus the believer’s attention on his relationship with the Lord, since inward transformation will produce the behavior that pleases the Lord. Our goal is for him/her to learn to habitually seek God’s approval, rather than man’s approval. (Rom. 12:1-2) (John 12:42-43)

2. As a spiritual baby, every new believer should be given personalized individual attention during the critical formative period of their new life with the Lord. CAUTION: Be careful to not interpret the new believer’s enthusiasm as an accurate indicator of spiritual well being, since this initial openness and hunger has a tendency to fade if not developed during this window of opportunity.

3. Biblical training should be orderly and progressive in nature, rather than random. Due to the new believer’s unfamiliarity with the Christian life, random information tends to be archived rather than applied. It is also very easy for the newer believer to unknowingly have gaps in their understanding of essential concepts. (Illustration: steps in building a house) (1 Cor. 3:10-15)

4. Disciples should be treated as apprentices, rather than as students simply seeking Biblical knowledge. As in any purposeful apprenticeship, there is a need for a significant amount of committed time and energy. Individual training is slower but tends to be deeper.

5. One-on-one training (spiritual parenting) should be balanced with corporate training, just as in any normal family. Neither one should be considered optional. One weakness of corporate settings is many times there is no requirement for serious interaction or dialog that addresses the individual spiritual needs of the disciple.

6. Serious consideration should be given to the inclusion of the following major components of discipleship, namely: 1) Commitment, 2) Modeling, 3) Individual Attention, and 4) Teaching. Use 1 Thess. 2:3-13 as a model for personal discipleship. It incorporates the major components of “spiritual parenting”.

7. Every believer should be seen as a potential discipler, and trained toward that end. There is no special spiritual gift for discipling, just as there is no special gift for witnessing. The command to make disciples was given to the universal church, not just to a few specially trained or gifted individuals. If human couples raised offspring at the same ratio as Christians spiritually parent new believers, the human race would probably be considered an endangered species.

8. At minimum, the disciple should understand and be able to explain to others an Overview of the Christian life, as well as the concepts of “lordship”, “sanctification”, “abiding” (walking in the Spirit), “the Rewards Ceremony”, etc.

9. The spiritual health of a Christian church should not be measured primarily by the activity of its leadership. A better indicator is the spiritual reproduction and growth that is occurring as a result of the main body of believers being equipped for the work of service. One should ask, “if the leader(s) were removed, would the body of believers be spiritually mature enough to continue to grow and spiritually reproduce?” (Eph. 4:11-16)

A Measure of Success is Indicated When the Believer You Are Discipling is Functioning as a Discipler.
Becoming Spiritual Mentors – Discussion Topics

1. Our desire is to present the concept of discipleship as a commitment to “spiritually parent” a disciple-in-the-making, in contrast to the prevalent idea that discipleship is simply a “transfer of Biblical knowledge” that takes place, usually in a classroom or group setting. We believe that group meetings do play an important part in healthy Christian growth, but they cannot take the place of personal one-on-one mentoring, which includes individualized teaching, modeling, encouragement, exhortation, etc. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of corporate meetings such as in a classroom setting, or a small accountability group. What are the advantages and disadvantages of one-on-one meetings?

2. Discuss the importance of each of the four major components of personal discipleship. Why is the initial period in a new Christian’s life so important for spiritual development?

3. If we see new believers as “spiritual babies” in Christ, then it seems logical to look at the characteristics of a typical human baby. There are at least three notable traits:
   1) They’re hungry
   2) They’re dependent on others
   3) They are self-centered.

   Are these characteristics also true of the typical new believer?

4. Often new believers are not presented with essential spiritual concepts because there is a fear of overwhelming them with too much complex Biblical information, concluding that the Christian life can really only be understood by advanced believers. None of the spiritual concepts presented in this discipleship curriculum are overwhelming if clearly explained. However, if left to their own, many newer Christians will conclude that God’s provision for a healthy Christian life is totally dependent on their outward behavior and/or Biblical understanding. That is overwhelming.

5. Some reasons for which many Christians are reluctant to make a commitment to mentoring a new believer are:
   (1) I don’t feel adequate
   (2) That’s not my gift
   (3) I don’t have enough Biblical understanding
   (4) I don’t want to be a hypocrite
   (5) I’m too busy, over committed; etc.

   These reasons are usually based on one’s appraisal of personal capabilities, rather than faith in God’s capabilities. Many such Christians would greatly benefit from being trained as disciplers. How many Christian parents would have kids if they had waited until they felt their parenting skills were adequate? Have any of these reasons affected you either in the past or present? If so, has God given you victory, or are you presently seeing God’s victory in your life?

6. How have you been personally impacted by the modeling of other Christians? Has it had a positive or negative impact on your life?
7. The excitement commonly observed in a new Christian’s life is often mistakenly taken to indicate a measure of spiritual understanding. They hear that they are “new creatures in Christ,” yet soon find themselves with temptations similar to what they experienced as unbelievers. Is it any wonder that so many Christians find themselves living like unbelievers after a few months of trying to live the “new” life that seems to be expected of them? Many continue to attend church services, and may be involved in Christian events and programs, but inwardly are defeated and struggling, “doing their best!” Does this resemble your personal experience in any way?

8. Personal discipleship serves to acquaint the newer believer with the general goals that God has for their life and with the process by which God typically accomplishes spiritual growth. Because each Christian is unique, only the Holy Spirit can be in charge of the spiritual growth process. Through personal discipleship, our intent is to shorten the time required for the newer believer to learn how to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the process of spiritual growth. What do you believe should be the anticipated spiritual results of healthy discipleship? Why?

9. Ideally every new Christian should be individually discipled in order to help them in the transition from self-reliance to an increasing God-reliance, as clearly contrasted in Proverbs 3:5-6. “Persecution” is one instrument that God uses to accelerate that transition. Often older Christians, who have not yet acknowledged His Lordship, will have an increasing measure of resistance to changes, since they typically will have become accustomed to a somewhat manageable Christian lifestyle. God often uses “crisis” to bring about that transition. We need to be alert for Christians who have recently passed through such a crisis and are now ready to acknowledge His Lordship over their life. It is the Holy Spirit’s job to coordinate crisis, and my responsibility to be available to Him when He wants to use me in the life of another who is responding to Him. If someone were to ask you to describe a “biblical disciple,” how would you respond?

10. Do you believe that you know what spiritual gift(s) you have been given by the Holy Spirit? If so, how have you drawn this conclusion? From observing the Lord’s involvement in your life? How has He been using you to spiritually benefit others? Has anyone else commented to you regarding your spiritual engiftedness? (See also Lesson 1-6, pt. 8)

*Jesus did not tell us to go into all the world and just make “converts,” He told us to go and make “disciples.”* (See Matthew 28:18-20)

*Every believer should be seen as a potential witness, and every believer should be seen as a potential discipler (“spiritual parent”).*
Art Barkley and his wife Toni served as tribal missionaries in Bolivia for about 20 years with New Tribes Mission. That’s where much of the groundwork for this discipleship material was set.

Art shares:

“Over the years one of the things that bothered me was watching many believers who had obviously accepted the Lord, were excited about their new Christian life, but who within a few months would be found involved with the things that they were involved with as unbelievers.”

“During times in the U.S., we would observe a similar pattern. Believers who had enthusiasm and excitement at the beginning of their new life with the Lord, way too often, after a few months, when outside of a Christian setting, could hardly be recognized as followers of Christ.”

“I often felt there was something missing in the equation, but for years I couldn’t figure out what it was.”

“Another thing that bothered me was the common perception on the part of many believers that the Christian life is too difficult to understand and live out. I have thought many times; if God designed salvation to be so simple that anybody could easily receive it, would He then design the Christian life to be so difficult to understand and live out?”

Then in 1990, God orchestrated circumstances in such a way that Art and Toni could not permanently return to Bolivia. He provided for Art to serve as an Associate Pastor at Reno Christian Fellowship for 7½ years. It was during this period that God led Art to start developing ‘A Tool for Personal Discipleship’, a work still in progress.

The purpose of this discipleship material is to provide believers who have a passion for the Lord, with a Tool to use under the direction of the Holy Spirit, to help other believers to grow and experience the joy of the Normal Christian Life. We have heard many believers lament, “I would like to be used by the Lord to help other believers to grow spiritually, but I don’t know what to teach.” This Tool is designed to help address that need.

In subsequent years, Art has been involved to varying degrees in the personal discipleship of hundreds of men. He and Toni have seen God change lives and count it a privilege to have a small part in God’s plan to grow and use believers through Personal Discipleship.

Art Barkley is President of Discipler Training International, and his wife Toni is involved in spiritual counseling and discipling women.