

—Introduction

Life as you know it may never be the same. No matter where you are in your faith walk, this curriculum will challenge you to take a step toward truth—about God, about faith, and about yourself.

It is for freedom that Christ set us free. That's what Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1, and Jesus Himself said that He came to earth so that we may have life and have it to the full (John 10:10). Just imagine that: life abundant. Not barely surviving, but truly living. It means days that begin with gladness and nights that end in peaceful sleep. It means days filled with hope, joy, and purpose. This is the kind of life God always intended for you to have.

God wants a relationship with you and He sent his son, Jesus, to bridge the gap between earth and heaven so you could know Him. It may not be easy, but it will be rewarding. During this semester, you will be the one who decides how far you are willing to go to find freedom. Here is a promise from Jeremiah 29:13: If you seek Him with your whole heart, you will find Him.

The pursuit of Freedom begins today.

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

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Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation (NLT). The other translations used in these materials are New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), The Amplified Bible (AMP), New American Standard Bible (NASB), and The Message Bible (MSG).

1



1

WEEK

Section One Video – Notes

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.... And the Lord God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”
(Genesis 2:8-9, 16-17, NIV)

The Choice

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says:

Getting to God means I must _____

The Tree of Life says:

Receive the fact that Jesus has already _____

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. (John 5:39-40, NIV)

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says:

Keeps you trying to get _____

The Tree of Life says:

Receive the fact that He _____

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8, NIV)

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil says: _____

The Tree of Life says: _____

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.... He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. (1 John 5:3, 12, NIV)

Four Responses

1. Fall in love _____

If you love me, you will obey what I command. (John 14:15, NIV)

2. Serve God through _____ **not** _____

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew 5:17, NIV)

3. Respond to all sin with _____

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1, NIV)

4. Guard your _____ **from going back.**

—What are you going to do to be godly?

(Deuteronomy 30:19, NIV) This day I call the heaven and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.

LIFE videos can be viewed at churchofthehighlands.com/life.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling or writing, occupying the central portion of the page below the question.

WEEK 2

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

“But the Lord God warned him, “You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die.”
(Genesis 2:16-17)

The Tree of Life is more than just a backdrop to a Bible story; it can be a way of life. To find out how, let's start at the beginning—Genesis, the first book of the Bible. In Chapter 1, the first Scriptures tell us about the creation of our world and define God as the Creator and Ruler who has authority and dominion. The second story in the Bible tells us about Adam and Eve, the first sin, and the two trees in the Garden of Eden. It's the second story for a reason: Everything else in the Bible hinges on it. From it we learn humanity has to choose everyday between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

THE TWO TREES

Let's look at some big ideas behind the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

Tree of Life

Freedom
Grace
Eternal life
God is good
God is forgiving,
not judgmental

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Bondage
The Law
Leads to death
God is only a judge
We are condemned

When we study Scripture, it's always a good idea to find the first place our subject is mentioned. In our journey to walk in communion with God and freedom, we must find out why we may be separated from God and why we may be in bondage. The first place in the Bible that separation from God is mentioned is in Genesis 3. As we will see, a bad choice by the first people caused this separation (Romans 5:12).

Prior to Genesis 3, Adam and Eve walked with God and enjoyed His presence. The Bible says that God walked with Adam in the cool of the day. Can you imagine their conversations? God revealing His master plan to man—it must have been incredible, a real up close and personal relationship. The Word tells us God made these two humans in His image and gave Adam dominion over everything He had created. God gave Adam authority through the relationship that He established. Without their relationship, there would have been no authority. When Adam and Eve sinned, they forfeited this authority.

Through deception and rebellion, the serpent took the authority and dominion that God had given to man. The Bible tells us that satan's desire was to exalt his throne above the stars of God (Isaiah 14:13). Until the fall of man, he lacked power and influence to set up rulership. Jesus called satan the ruler of this world (John 12:31).

Write out 1 John 5:19.

THINK ABOUT IT

Through Adam, sin entered the world, and caused death and separation.

Colossians 1:21 tells us that we were “once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions.” Sin separates, and this separation costs us our freedom and the authority over satan that God gives to His children (Luke 10:19).

Praise God that He made a way to end this separation! It was through Jesus that “God reconciled everything to Himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of His (Jesus’) blood on the cross” (Colossians 1:20).

Before we proceed any further, you should know that the starting point to a relationship with God and walking in freedom is accepting that you are a sinner and that Jesus paid the penalty for your sin by shedding His blood and dying on a cross.

Write out John 14:6.

The Bible says that if you confess with your mouth and believe with your heart that Jesus is Lord and that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

Write out Romans 10:13.

Ask Yourself:

Has there been a time when I asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my Savior? If not, below is a simple prayer that you can use to make sure that you are ready for this life of freedom and enjoyment.

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for dying on the cross and making a way for me to come to God. I receive this extravagant gift and ask you to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. I give you all of me and ask you to turn my life around for the glory of God. Forgive me of my sin, fill me with Your Spirit, and help me to live the life You died to give me, in Jesus name, Amen.

This is the first step to your life of freedom!

Separation and the First Sin

“The Lord God planted all sorts of trees in the garden—beautiful trees that produced delicious fruit. At the center of the garden He placed the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil... But the Lord God gave him this warning: ‘You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die’” (Genesis 2:9, 16–17).

Read Genesis 3:1–8 and notice who is doing what. In verses 7 and 8, what did Adam and Eve do?

Read Genesis 3:9. What did God do?

Don't miss this part: Adam and Eve hid; God came looking for them. The Bible says God is seeking after sinful man. God is in love with sinful man and sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue people.

Ask Yourself: Are there things in my past that have caused me to want to hide from God?

Read James 4:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:2. What do these passages teach us about our relationship with God?

Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit of a tree that was forbidden for them. This fruit was not just any fruit—it was the knowledge of good and evil. They mistakenly thought that this fruit would make them like God.

Learning the truth about this fruit will help us avoid making this mistake.

Ask Yourself:

Have I used knowledge of God as the basis of my relationship?

Four truths about the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

1. The fruit is knowledge.

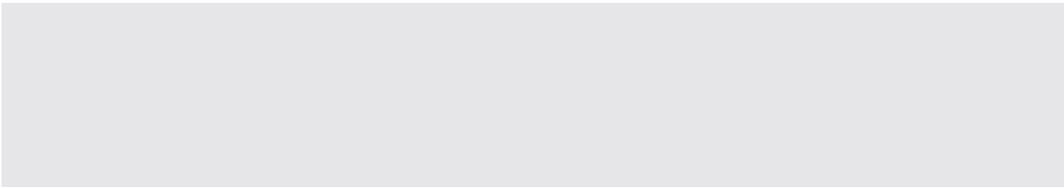
Most of us think of this fruit as some sort of apple, but it's not. The fruit of this tree is just what the Bible says: knowledge (information, data, ideas, world view, thought patterns); knowledge of good and evil. God was basically saying to Adam and Eve, "If you change your way of thinking, it will

create separation between us. If you change your world view, you won't be able to understand Me and relate to Me." Satan says, "It won't hurt you to think like that." Note that God didn't say it's wrong to have knowledge. In fact, God said to Israel through Hosea the prophet, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6, NKJV). Aren't we glad when the surgeon has knowledge to perform an operation or the mechanic knows how to repair an engine?

"We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Corinthians 8:1, NIV).

The issue isn't necessarily knowledge; rather, it's the motive behind its acquisition. In other words, why do we desire knowledge? Is it to gain God's wisdom and understanding, or is it to somehow exalt ourselves?

According to Colossians 2:3, what do we find hidden in Jesus?



2. The fruit is deadly.

The Lord God gave him this warning: "You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17).

Notice that God didn't say that the fruit is bad, He said that it is deadly. Eating from the tree of knowledge, consuming knowledge, in your pursuit of godliness is deadly. Satan didn't tempt Eve with blatant rebellion. He said, "Go ahead and eat this fruit. It will make you like God." Satan tempted Eve with her desire to become like God. Often the desire to know is in direct opposition to the desire to trust. We can set out to gain all the information, all the ideas, and all the data needed to run our lives, and in a sense we will become like God. We can control our lives and be self-sufficient, but in the end we would lose our lives.

Read Genesis 3:22–24. Why were Adam and Eve driven from the Garden of Eden?

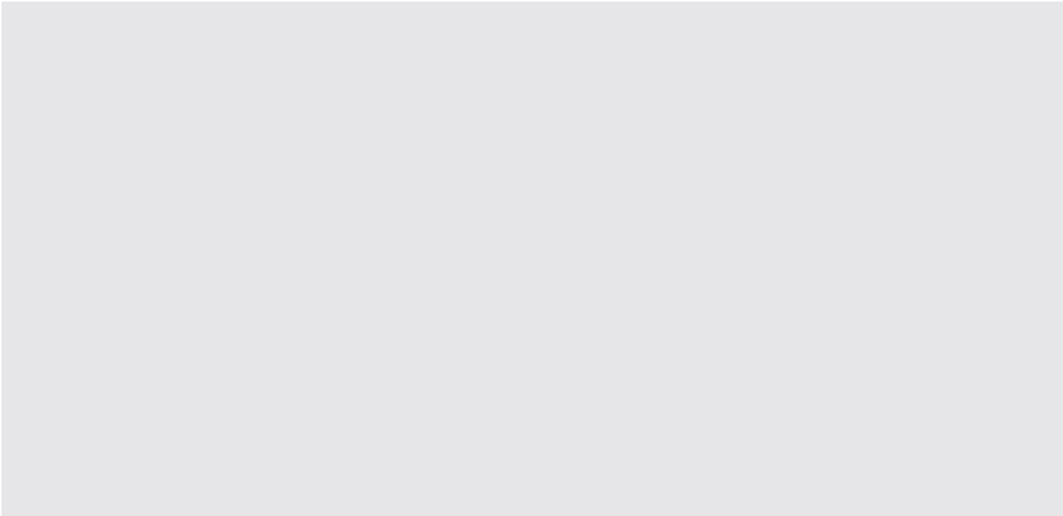
Adam and Eve didn't die physically when they ate from the Tree of Knowledge; they died spiritually. Through Adam's disobedience, death entered the entire human race, and we are all born spiritually dead in need of resurrection. The good news is that, through Jesus, we have access to the Tree of Life. If we pursue Life Himself in our desire for godliness, we will become truly like Him.

3. The fruit is consumed.

"The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too." (Genesis 3:6) Eating is not just putting food in your mouth. It literally means to consume or ingest. Ideas are ingested in our minds and then sin is conceived. How did the first sin come about? Eve talked to Adam about it—they had a conversation and began working with the idea. Consume means to take something outside of you and put it into yourself.

Parents especially understand the importance of this. For example, we don't want our kids watching horror movies because we know that, through their eyes, they can get something inside their minds that can torment them for the rest of their lives. We don't want them reading certain types of ideologies because we know that if they become infected or polluted by reading the wrong kind of books, it could cause them to fall into ruin and despair. Ideas are important.

Can you think of a personal example to illustrate the danger of consuming certain kinds of knowledge?



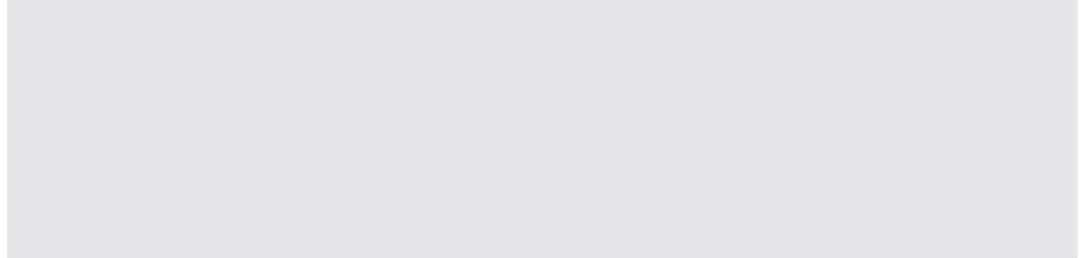
4. The fruit causes separation.

“The man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden”(Genesis 3:8, NASB).

Again, remember that it was man who hid from God. Many have been taught that Adam and Eve sinned and that God in His holiness and His righteousness turned His back on Adam and Eve because His holiness could not stand to be in the presence of sinful man. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible says Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened, they covered up, and then they hid. But God was walking in the garden, searching for them, and called out, “Where are you?” The truth is Adam and Eve made an incorrect judgment of God. He wasn't waiting behind a tree watching for them to fail so that He could judge them. They actually judged Him! God is not on His throne holding an axe and waiting to cut us off. God is love (1 John 4:8),

and the Bible says that love covers a multitude of sin (1 Peter 4:8). When we see His heart for us, we will run to Him instead of hiding from Him when we sin.

From Romans 8:38–39, name all the things that cannot separate us from the love of God.



Reasons why the fruit is deadly

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it” (Genesis 3:6, NIV).

The Bible says the fruit of this tree is good for food, it is a delight to the eyes, and it is desirable to make one wise.

How can that be so deadly?

Eve assumed that the fruit was good for food—in other words, it is very satisfying. What Eve thought would be good for her turned out to be deadly. Knowledge—even without love, wisdom, or understanding—can be satisfying. If we can figure out a system of right and wrong and do it right, we can be quite satisfied by doing the right things. Why is this deadly? Because God says we can come to Him only through grace, by faith—not by works. You can’t connect with God by simply doing more good things than bad things.

On several occasions Jesus rebuked the spiritual leaders and Bible scholars of that day for getting it all wrong. “You do not have His Word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves” (John 5:38–42 NASB).

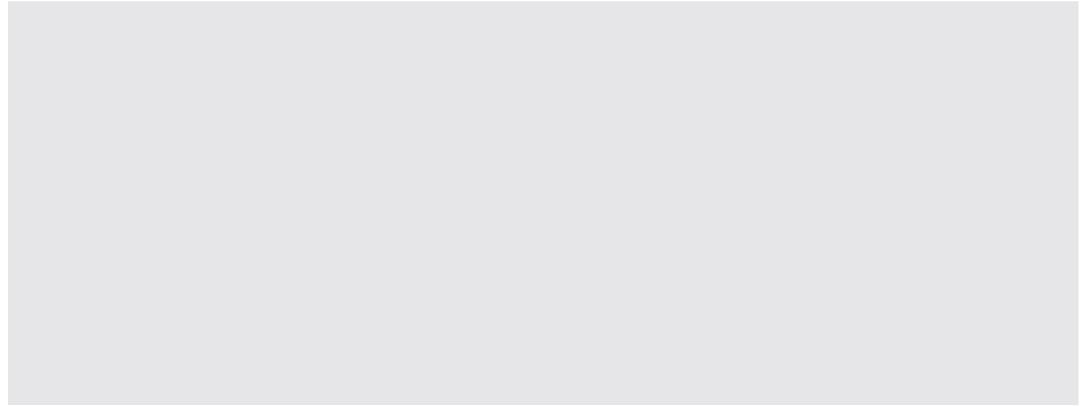
It’s a delight to the eyes. This kind of Tree of Knowledge thinking usually leads us to live by a set of rules that make us look very good on the outside to other people. The fruit is deadly because we become consumed with what others think of us rather than what God thinks.

Look up Matthew 23:27. What does this verse mean to you?

Has there ever been a time in your life when all looked good on the outside, but you knew there was death on the inside? Describe that time here.

The fruit is deadly because it is desirable to make one wise. But wisdom itself is not deadly. From the beginning, human beings have desired to be wise. God is actually pleased with this desire. In 1 Kings we have the account of God appearing to King Solomon in a dream at night and saying to him, “What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!” Solomon asked for only one thing: wisdom to govern the nation of Israel and the ability to discern good from evil. Read 1 Kings 3:10–13.

How did God respond to Solomon’s request?



Wisdom from above:

Pure, peace-loving, gentle at all times, willing to yield to others, full of mercy and good deeds, shows no partiality, always sincere

Wisdom not from above:

Jealousy, selfishness, earthly, unspiritual, motivated by the devil

When do we need wisdom? All the time! Constantly we are making decisions, and even the smallest ones can be made with wisdom from above. Using Godly wisdom produces the results listed above. James 1:5–8 says, “If you need wisdom—if you want to know what God wants you to do—ask Him, and He will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking. But when you ask Him, be sure that you really expect Him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. People like that should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. They can’t make up their minds. They waver back and forth in everything they do.” Worldly wisdom leads us to decisions to sin and therefore alienate ourselves from God.

Read James 1:13–15. What is the progression of sin?

This progression tells us that *sin does not begin with the act; it begins in our minds.* Like a train on track, the more we entertain thoughts that don't line up with God's Word, the faster we go down a deadly track. If we don't stop the thoughts, we go racing into deadly territory and crash into an act that brings us harm. We can't see sin from the outside at the point that it becomes sin, so we must develop a hunger for God and His wisdom and keep that hunger stirred up by having our minds constantly renewed to the Word of God. Otherwise, we will find ourselves separated from Him before we even realize it.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil produces shame and victimization.

“Adam replied, ‘I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.’ ‘Who told you that you were naked?’ the LORD God asked. ‘Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?’ ‘Yes,’ Adam admitted, ‘but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.’ Then the LORD God asked the woman, ‘How could you do such a thing?’ ‘The serpent tricked me,’ she replied. ‘That’s why I ate it.’” (Genesis 3:10–12)

Imagine a young teenage boy who has always been a delight to his parents. He's been bright-eyed and innocent. There's been no hesitation about him until one day when his mother notices a change. He becomes serious and angry and begins to come home with droopy shoulders, his head hung, and the sparkle has left his eyes. He barely speaks to his parents and goes straight to his room. One day while cleaning his room, his mother notices pornographic magazines under his mattress. She begins to understand: Her innocent, wonderful, bright, lively son has darkness and death inside of him. He has been polluted; he is no longer a little boy. All the things he saw in the magazine were true—the issue is that he didn't need to know. Because of what's inside him now, he can't relate to his parents the same anymore. He has become shameful. His parents haven't changed; it's he who has changed as he spent time looking at those pictures. His innocence has been polluted.

Shame causes us to separate ourselves from God so that we cannot operate in the freedom that Christ has for us. Shame is a veil that comes between God and us. It covers us completely, even our eyes, so that we can see only dimly who and where God is. God said to Adam and Eve, “Who told you that you were naked?” His tone was most likely like that of the mother in the story above, with great sadness and angst, “Who gave you those magazines? You really shouldn’t know that.” God said, “Who told you that you were naked? You’ve eaten from the Tree of Knowledge, and it has polluted you.”

Shame causes us to do all sorts of things that keep us from connecting with God. Shame is when we want to hide. Prior to eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve were both naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). Afterwards they came up with the idea of sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves, and then tried to hide from God’s presence in the trees of the garden.

THE RESULTS OF SHAME

- Covering up with religion and becoming works focused.
- Lying, deception, false pride.
- Making promises we can’t keep.
- Getting our self-worth from the things that we do.
- An inability to come to a place of honesty with God because we believe we have no true value.
- Concentrating on our sin instead of concentrating on our Savior.

Why is shame so deadly? Because it strips us of the power to change. It keeps us from receiving the provision God made for our sin through the blood of Jesus. There is a difference between guilt and shame. Guilt is about what we have done, but shame is about who we are. With guilt we can always get a fresh start. With shame we are caught in a noose, because the problem stays with us. In fact, with shame we are the problem. *The solution to getting rid of shame is to see ourselves as God sees us.*

Read Psalm 103:11–13 and 1 John 1:9. When are we to have shame and why?

Ask Yourself: Have you ever been overcome by shame?
What steps should you take to remove the barrier
of shame from your life?

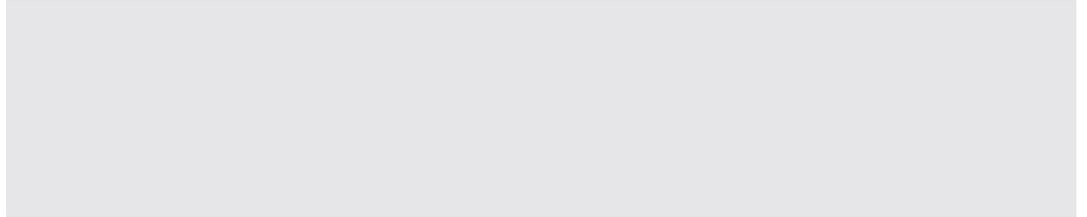
Victimization is a natural response to our sin: “The devil made me do it; the woman you gave me made me do it.” We blame others by displacing responsibility, and we point the finger saying, “You’re not good enough.” Or we blame ourselves and get into condemnation thinking, “I’m not good enough.” In blaming others, we look at everything in terms of right and wrong. We say, “If my husband would just treat me right, I wouldn’t be so unhappy and manipulative. If my family wasn’t so backbiting, I wouldn’t be so hurt. If everybody would just live like they are supposed to, everything would work right.”

THE RESULTS OF VICTIMIZATION

- We notice other’s sins, but not our own.
- We blame ourselves by saying, “I’ve just always been this way. I’ll never change. I’ll never be good enough.”
- We feel rejected.

Whether we blame others or ourselves with victimization, we are powerless to change! That’s why victimization is so deadly!

Are there any areas of your life—perhaps with your parents, others of your past, in your marriage, at work, with friends, or even at church—where you have taken on a “victim mentality?” How should you change your way of thinking regarding that situation?



The TKGE is counterfeit to a relationship with God. Your identity is not based on your own efforts, but on the finished work of Jesus.

With shame and victimization, we're either the Pharisee or the woman caught in adultery (John 8). We're saying either “You're not good enough” or “I'm not good enough”—basing our relationship with God and others on good works and bad works. That's just not the way He set it up. That's TKGE thinking, and it keeps us from changing and connecting with God. A reality we must understand is that the devil does not want us to change.

We must get to a point where, no matter what happens, we take responsibility for our own lives. We can no longer blame anyone else for our level of relationship with God!

The fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil lacks the power to transform the heart. It can provide facts and information, but it is powerless to give you Life.

“Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, ‘I am the light of the world. If you follow Me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.’” (John 8:12)

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling or writing.

the \mathbb{R}^n is a linear space over \mathbb{R} with the usual addition and scalar multiplication. The inner product is defined by

$$\langle x, y \rangle = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i \quad (1)$$

where $x = (x_1, \dots, x_n)$ and $y = (y_1, \dots, y_n)$ are vectors in \mathbb{R}^n . The norm of a vector x is defined by

$$\|x\| = \sqrt{\langle x, x \rangle} = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2} \quad (2)$$

The distance between two vectors x and y is defined by

$$d(x, y) = \|x - y\| = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i - y_i)^2} \quad (3)$$

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ is called the unit sphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ is called the unit ball.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = r$ is called the sphere of radius r . The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq r$ is called the ball of radius r .

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 \geq 0$ is called the positive unit sphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 \geq 0$ is called the positive unit ball.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 \leq 0$ is called the negative unit sphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 \leq 0$ is called the negative unit ball.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ is called the equator. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ is called the equatorial disk.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 > 0$ is called the positive hemisphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 > 0$ is called the positive hemisphere cap.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 < 0$ is called the negative hemisphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 < 0$ is called the negative hemisphere cap.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 \geq 0$ is called the positive equator. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 \geq 0$ is called the positive equatorial disk.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 \leq 0$ is called the negative equator. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 \leq 0$ is called the negative equatorial disk.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 > 0$ is called the positive equatorial hemisphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 > 0$ is called the positive equatorial hemisphere cap.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 < 0$ is called the negative equatorial hemisphere. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 < 0$ is called the negative equatorial hemisphere cap.

The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| = 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 = 0$ is called the equatorial point. The set of all vectors x in \mathbb{R}^n such that $\|x\| \leq 1$ and $x_1 = 0$ and $x_2 = 0$ is called the equatorial point disk.

WEEK 3

The Tree of Life

*“For you have been called to live in freedom,
my brothers and sisters.”
(Galatians 5:13)*

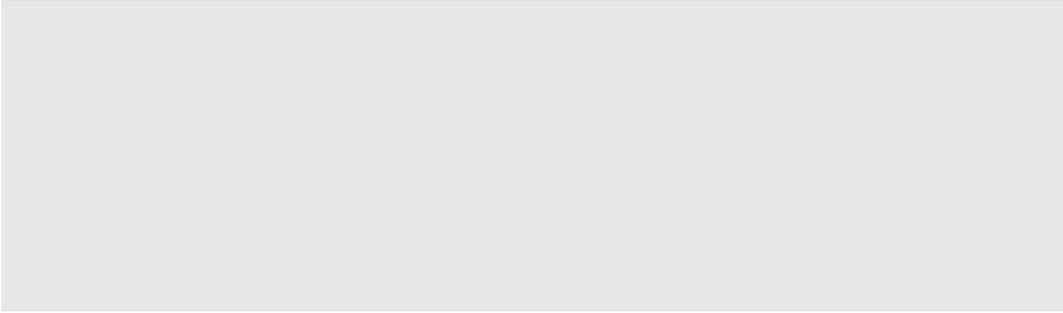
Last week, we studied the two trees in the Garden of Eden and how they each represented a way of living. We explored how the TKGE and its deadly fruit led to shame and victimization. This week, we will look at the Tree of Life and its ability to set us free from incorrect thoughts about God and ourselves.

Much like beginning a weight training program to build up muscles that are weak and retrain those that are being used incorrectly, we as followers of Jesus have to build up our faith by reading God's Word and retrain our thought processes to line up with Biblical truth. When you lift weights, you need a spotter to help encourage and challenge you, to assist you when the burden is heavy, and that's exactly what this small group is designed to give you—leaders and fellow group members to help you learn how to truly live in freedom.

**Your word is
a lamp to my
feet and a light
to my path.
Psalm 119:105**

As you progress through this course, you will be able to use Tree of Life thinking as a framework for the way you approach every situation you encounter. Remember that God's commands were never meant to be burdensome. In fact as you grow closer to Him and learn to hear His voice, you will find His heart for you. His divine plan was made for your sake—not for His. He simply wants to protect you from very real danger, and He desires your success.

Write out Matthew 11:28–30.



Fruits of Living in the Tree of Life

The Tree of Life results in fellowship with God.

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3, NIV).

According to Vine’s Bible Dictionary, “know” in this verse is the Greek word *ginosko*, which means to recognize, to understand, or to understand completely. It indicates a relationship. What is known of the other person is of value and importance and establishes the relationship. *The only way to experience the abundant life is by truly knowing the living God.* He asked us to love Him, but only after His lavish display of love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus. “God showed how much He loved us by sending His only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son as a sacrifice to take away our sins” (I John 4:9-10). The Bible says in I John 4:19 that the only reason we have any love at all is because He first loved us.

God so loved us that He made a blood covenant with His son, Jesus, at the cross to make a way for us to be in relationship with Him. The cross represents more than a sacrificial death. It is a blood covenant that God cannot break (Hebrews 6:17-18). In the Old Testament, God made covenants with man, and man always messed them up. This time, God sealed the covenant with the blood of His Son Jesus, so that nothing could separate us from His love.

Fellowship with God results in innocence – not the other way around!

“They realized they were naked.” (Genesis 3:7, NIV) As we spend time walking with God, listening for His voice, talking to Him, obeying Him, worshipping and enjoying Him, we will notice a transformation taking place, not only on the outside, but on the inside as well. We will become, in a sense, “naked” or transparent and unashamed before Him.

Nakedness, in Genesis 3:7, speaks of innocence. Adam and Eve were unaware of any reason to hide anything from God. They had no sin-consciousness. We might think of little kids running around with no clothes on after a bath. Childlike innocence is an amazing virtue. Adam and Eve’s nakedness was part of the innocence and simplicity of their lives. They were actually clothed in the glory of God. Before they sinned, they had nothing of which to be ashamed. This is the same concept that Jesus was talking about when He said we had to be like little children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:14). Children are not technically innocent; they just don’t have any hesitation about them. They are not weighted down with guilt, shame, and burdens.

I Corinthians 14:20 in the NIV says, “Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil, be infants, but in your thinking, be adults.” God wants us to be mature in our thinking, but for the kingdom of God to work in you in power, childlikeness must be an ingredient. To some, this may look like naivety or simple-mindedness, but it is actually a biblical way to live. Jesus says to be as shrewd as a snake and as innocent as a dove (Matthew 10:16). It is a mysterious and rare combination for the world we live in. Paul says in I Corinthians 1:27 that “God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise.” Dare to be misunderstood in your pursuit of friendship with God because only the pure in heart will see Him (Matthew 5:8).

Good works cannot produce innocence and fellowship with God. Innocence and fellowship with God produce good works.

Simple innocence is born out of a friendship with God. It means we rest in God. We abide in His favor and presence so that when someone offends us, we can respond with kindness instead of anger. As we are being transformed into the image of God, the negativity of the world does not have an effect on our emotions. Once we understand that truth, the enemy has no ammunition: If we sin, we know how to receive forgiveness, and if someone offends us, we know how to forgive.

Read Matthew 5:39-44 and Luke 6:27-36. In these passages, Jesus tells us how to live as a child of God, in innocence and freedom. Using these scriptures as a reference, describe what living in innocence looks like.

According to 2 Corinthians 11:3, what will satan try to do with our minds?

THINK ABOUT IT

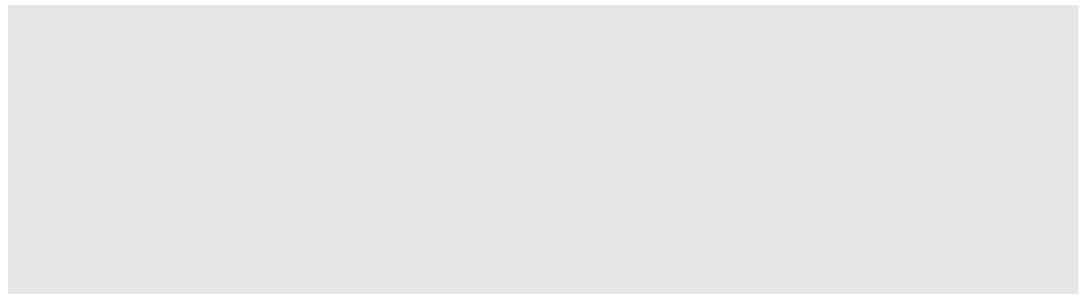
In the Tree of Life, your focus changes from your sin and shortcomings to God and His goodness. God restores your innocence.

Innocence is a conduit of God's power.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor” (Luke 4:18-19, NIV). This is what Jesus said after His great temptation by satan in the desert. He came out full of the Holy Spirit and power to begin His public ministry.

This scripture says God anointed Jesus to preach good news. What does it mean to have an anointing to do something? It is empowerment by the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and abide in Jesus, we become free from the works of darkness in our lives. We become vessels of honor useful to God. His life will flow through us, and there will be nothing that we can't do! Innocence keeps our minds and hearts pure so that we can see and understand God. As we see God and submit our lives to Him, we become equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

Rewrite Acts 10:38, replacing your name where Jesus' name is and your city where you read the word Nazareth. Read it out loud.



The power of God will equip you for every good work.

Jesus said in John 15:5: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing" (NIV). Innocence and power always produce the gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Innocence results in freedom.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1, NIV). This is the mystery of godliness: We will sin and fall, but if we sin with the Tree of Life as our perspective, forgiveness can be received easily and we get back up. The issue of how quickly we get back up depends on the degree of understanding that we have in our hearts of the completeness of God's forgiveness.

What does Psalm 37:23-24 say happens when the godly stumble?

Freedom changes the way we live and think about every part of our lives. If you attend church in the Tree of Life, you will love everything about it. You will love the pastor, the people, and the worship, because you're thinking of the appropriation of life Himself. On the other hand, thinking in terms of the knowledge of good and evil will result in ideas such as "These songs are too long and too loud," "The preaching is too simple," "The children are too noisy," or "No one talked to me."

If there is a gap between where you are and where you long to be, take heart. Innocence and freedom are fruits from the Tree of Life, and they have always been God's plan for you.

Relationships change in the Tree of Life. We no longer hold people to impossible standards; we are quick to extend forgiveness, slow to take offense. Instead of looking for people to meet our needs, we look for ways to serve others. Because we live for Jesus and His Kingdom, people are no longer able to "take advantage of us." This is true freedom.

Reading the Bible, praying, or serving others should be a source of life, security, strength, and delight to us. These things should never be religious duties that must be performed. Think about prayer. It is a miracle that the God of the universe wants to fill us with His nature and His life as we simply dialogue with Him. Prayer will be powerful in the Tree of Life. Reading the Bible will be a refreshing of your spirit in the Tree of Life. No more guilt-ridden sittings where you plow through twenty chapters a day because that's what Christians do. Religion says, "Do it or suffer!" Relationship says, "Do it and live!"

Ask Yourself:

Do I feel completely innocent before God? What would it be like to have true fellowship with God?

“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. For the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death.” Romans 8:1-2

They are the people of Israel, chosen to be God's adopted children. God revealed His glory to them. He made covenants with them and gave them His law. He gave them the privilege of worshiping Him and receiving His wonderful promises.
Romans 9:4 (NLT)

How to Live in the Tree of Life

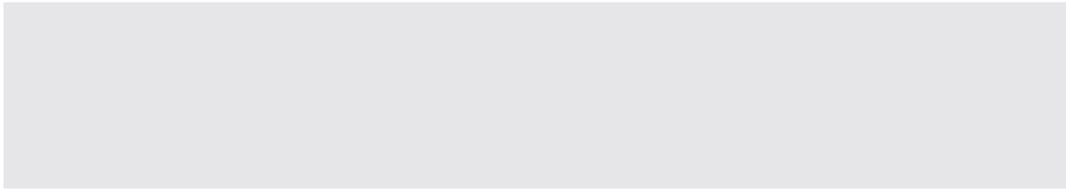
Now that we know it is possible to be free from bondage in our thinking, our actions, and our relationships with God and people, let's take a look at some powerful truths that can help us form a firm foundation on which to build a life that is both abundant and free. In order to move out of the shadow of the TKGE and into the light of Tree of Life living, we must know who Jesus is and who we are because of Him. To help us understand that, we need to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Romans 12:1-3). Let's take a look at a few things that will help you live in the tree of life.

Relationship with the Father is essential to living in the Tree of Life. Man lost right relationship with God when Adam sinned; Jesus restored this relationship through the cross. In order to enjoy this right relationship with God, we must receive His extravagant love for us. Romans 5:8 says that God expressed His great love for us in this way: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Before we looked for God, He made a way for us to be in relationship with Him. He made the first move.

Because of the finished work of the cross, we are declared righteous before God. Romans 5:1 (NIV) says: “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Many of us have been serving God out of duty or fear—much like a servant. A servant has an obligation to do what is expected.

He is required to be faithful or suffer consequences. A son serves because he is part of the family. A son is faithful because of the love that he has for his father. Through Jesus, God now sees us as sons and daughters.

Read Galatians 4:7 and 2 Corinthians 6:18. What does God say about your identity?



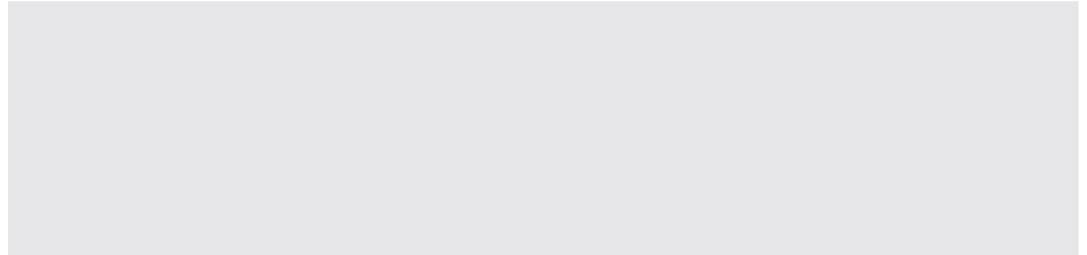
Ask Yourself: Do I live my life as a son or as a servant?

God has lavished His love on us by calling us His children (1 John 3:1). Just as our natural relationships are strengthened through time and fellowship, our relationship with God will become stronger and more meaningful as we spend time in prayer, reading the word of God, and communion with other believers. Only in the Tree of Life, we realize these tasks are because of relationship, not responsibility. Falling in love with Him turns the idea of duty into devotion, and it is a beautiful and wonderful thing.

Recognize the two environments where you can live: the Tree of Life or TKGE. Knowing that you can choose a Tree of Life response and attitude in every circumstance is crucial to walking in freedom. It is a daily choice to respond with life and godliness. Throughout the Bible, God compares the fruit of godly decisions with the fruit of ungodly decisions. It is clearly God's desire that we should live a life that produces godly fruit. This can be done only by choosing to live God's way – in the Tree of Life.

In Matthew 11, Jesus compares His way of living to that of the religious Pharisees. The Pharisees were legalistic and self-righteous. Their approach to God was in the strict keeping of all Jewish laws.

Read Matthew 11:28–30 and write out Jesus’ response to the heavy burden that comes from trying to keep the law.



Read Deuteronomy 30:19. Moses challenged the Israelites to determine what path they would follow. One path led to life, and the other led to death. He exhorted them, “Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.”

Ask Yourself: Do my daily responses and decisions bring life to others? In what tree do I live?

Ask the Lord to help you to make life-giving decisions every day. Start the day with such a prayer, and throughout the day, when faced with a difficult decision or situation, press pause, examine your motives, and ask Him for wisdom. Though retraining the way we think and respond takes time, we learn and grow in both our successes and our failures. Remember God loves you, and He is for you. Grace was His idea.

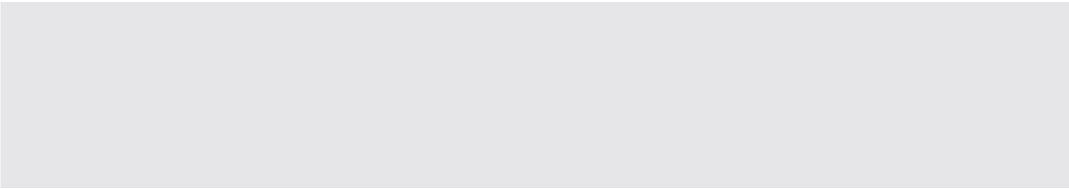
Renew your mind to what the Word of God says is true. Real change happens when we know what the Word of God says about our lives. Many times our worldview and past experiences shape our version of truth. We cannot make the Bible line up to what we think is true, but we can line up our truth with the Bible. In order to do this, we must consume the Word. Changing our internal truth will change our external responses.

Romans 12:2 (NIV) says “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will.” The pattern of this world will lead to death. God’s will leads to life.

2 Corinthians 10:5 tells us that every thought and action that we have needs to be examined for godly accuracy. If it does not line up with what the Bible says, we must take it captive and make it obedient to the Word of God. This will become a way of life as we practice putting God’s Word ahead of our feelings and beliefs. In other words, don’t just read the Bible, let it read you.

In Ephesians 4, Paul says that we should let the Holy Spirit renew our thoughts and our attitudes and to put on our new self that has been created after the very likeness of God in righteousness and holiness. There is a choice that we must make. We must choose to renew our thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs in God’s word and we must choose to put on holiness and righteousness.

Read Philippians 4:8 and write out a way to renew our minds.



Have you ever heard someone say they can’t help what they think? It’s not true. No longer will we allow the enemy free reign in our minds! Choose today to take hostage every thought that does not line up with Scripture, and meditate on the life-giving words of God.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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4

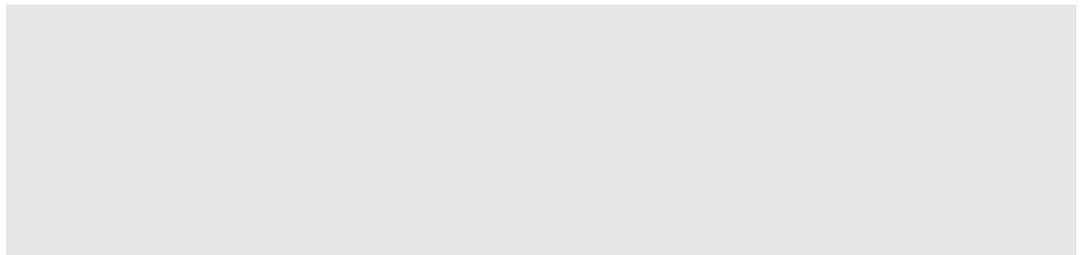
WEEK

Spiritual Order

*“Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until that day when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.”
(I Thessalonians 5:23)*

To live daily in the Tree of Life, you will need to know two things: God designed you with three distinct parts, and you need to embrace the principles of spiritual order. These truths will help you not only find *pathways of righteousness* but also learn how to walk in them. As believers, we long to live a life of fellowship with God. But even though this is what we desire, this type of life is not natural for us. Since the fall in the garden, we have battled a sin nature that wars against our desire to be holy. The apostle Paul said that there is an internal struggle that goes on between the desire to do right and the propensity to do wrong.

Write out Romans 7:21-23.



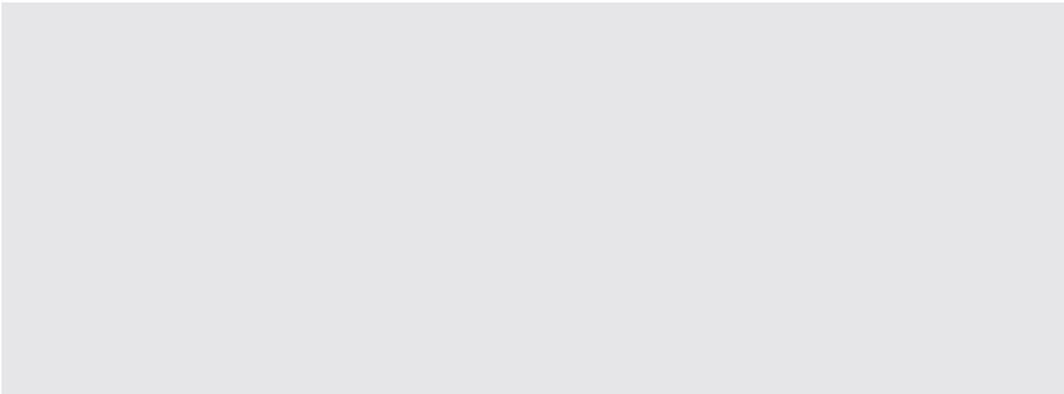
God has created us with three distinct parts:

1. A **spirit** that must be redeemed
2. A **soul** that must be restored
3. A **body** that must submit

At salvation, our spirit is made alive in Christ and immediately put into right standing with God (Romans 3:24, 5:1). The Bible calls this event *justification*: just-as-if-I-had-never-sinned. However, the soul and body will require time and effort to be conformed to the image of Christ (Ephesians 4:12-13). This gradual process is called *sanctification*.

It is God's desire that we are transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory. We must learn to hear His voice and be led by His Spirit.

Write out 2 Corinthians 3:16-18.



In Galatians 4:19, Paul mentions sanctification as a process. How long this process takes depends on us engaging with the Word of God, accepting it as absolute truth in our lives, and applying it to all of our circumstances.

The Spirit

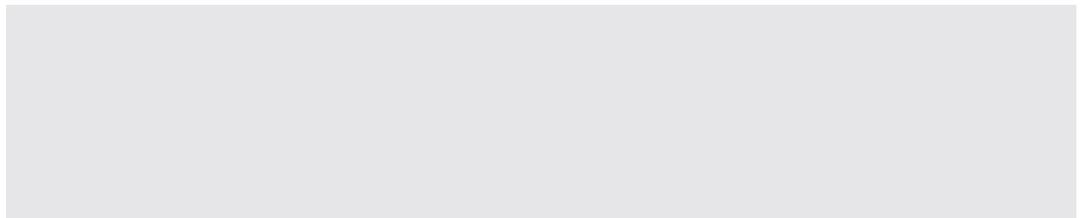
Did you know that you are a spiritual being having a temporary physical experience on earth and not a physical being having a temporary spiritual experience? God's plan is that our spirits become the strongest part of our three-part design and be the "command center" of who we are and what we do.

"When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." (Colossians 2:13-14 NIV)

The blood of Jesus has forever purchased our capacity for friendship with God. This was the price God paid so that we could be reconciled back to Him and to have the fellowship that Adam once enjoyed (2 Corinthians 5:18). Isn't it exciting? The moment we are saved, we are made alive in Christ, forever redeemed and made righteous before the Father. Along with the gift of eternal life, we receive the Holy Spirit and immediately have the ability to be in relationship with God. In short, the cross of Christ bridges the chasm of death and gives us *a way to have fellowship, communication, and access to the Tree of Life.*

Just as a bride and groom are united in matrimony and become one, at salvation, your spirit and the Spirit of Christ are united and become one.

Write out 1 Corinthians 6:17.



Ask Yourself: How does knowing that my spirit is redeemed and is in right standing with the Father change the way I see myself?

Now that we are one with Christ, we have the ability to understand spiritual truths and discern right from wrong. We can adjust our lives to hear the voice of God. It is much like tuning a dial to pick up a radio station. Sometimes there may be static in the airway (distraction, confusion, fear, etc.), but if we continue to seek the Lord and His way of doing things, our spirit will rise above the static and we will be able to tune in to the broadcast of truth.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14, and write why the world cannot accept the things that come from God.

The Soul

The soul is one of God's most beautiful creations. It enables us to experience relationships and appreciate the beauty of our surroundings. We have been made in the image of God with the capacity to think, reason, and express emotions. God could have programmed us to do and be whatever He wanted, but instead He gave us the ability to choose.

Our souls are made up of three parts:

- the **mind**, which thinks and reasons
- the **will**, which makes choices
- the **emotions**, which believe, feel, and remember

Let's take a look at some examples from the Bible of things related to the soul.

THINK ABOUT IT

We have been
created in the very
image of God.

Write out Proverbs 2:10.

Write out Psalm 119:167.

Write out Psalm 139:14.

Write out Joshua 24:15.

Ask Yourself: Are my thoughts driven by emotion?

The Body

In Genesis 2:7, we learn God formed our bodies from the earth. The body acts as a temporary house or shell that contains our soul and spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament, the presence of God was housed in the inner sanctuary of the Temple called the Holy of Holies. At the death of Jesus, the veil of the Temple was torn and the presence of God moved out of a structure and into the hearts of all believers. Just as we would not go to church and shatter the windows and destroy the furniture, we should not do anything to intentionally harm our bodies; they are special, designed by God, and given to you in order to carry out the plans He has for you on this earth.

Read Psalm 139:13–18. What does verse 14 say about you?

In a surrendered life, we're not looking for loopholes in the law but rather falling more in love with our Savior and His plan for our life.

Our bodies are made up of appetites, both good and bad. The Bible says to be careful of any sin that leads to our flesh getting anything it wants. Often people want to know: How far can I sin and still enjoy the benefits of God's blessing? The snare with sin is that it never satisfies. We are constantly looking to fulfill the next craving. Carnal desires will cause us to need satisfaction, and though we may satisfy them in the moment, the craving soon returns and brings with it increased intensity. The cycle will repeat itself time and again—until we break it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ask Yourself: Are my actions driven by my cravings?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NIV), and fill in the blanks.

“Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is _____. Everything is permissible for me—but _____.”

THINK ABOUT IT

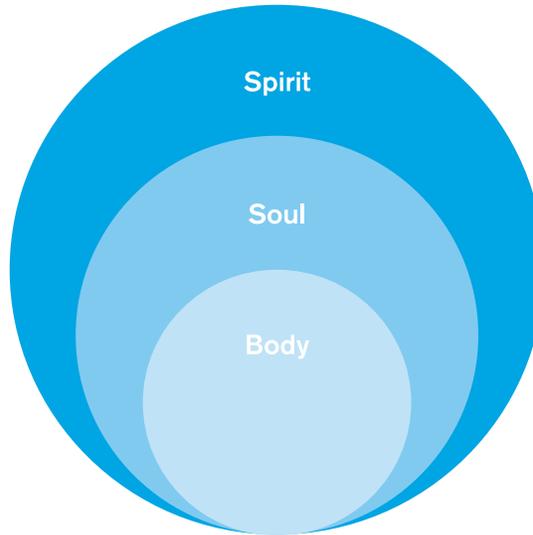
You were bought with a price, and your bodies no longer belong to you (1 Corinthians 6:20). You belong to Jesus who purchased not only your freedom but also your life with His blood.

Another real consequence of sin is the ripple effect. A filter for sinful actions should be: How will this action affect those around me? We should rehearse daily the consequences of sins and how they would affect your spouse, your family, and your friends. Would your actions cause another to stumble or be offended?

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9 from The Message Bible and hear the heart of our Father:

“But God does care when you use your freedom carelessly in a way that leads a Christian, still vulnerable to those old associations, to be thrown off track.”

Ordered Living



Spiritual order provides a framework for living in the Tree of Life. It means you live with *your spirit united with God*, and your soul and body submitted to your spirit. In other words, your spirit (which is now one with God) calls the shots, and the soul and body follow. So here's the real question: If I am saved, why do I still struggle with sin? The answer is found in the process of sanctification and the principle of spiritual order. When you are born again, you receive everything you need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3), but you may still struggle because your spirit is not in the lead. What we give the most attention to will become the most influential. Your spirit can take the lead only if you feed it more than your soul and body.

The world around constantly feeds our soul through the things we see and hear. And our bodies, if starved, make it known that it's hungry. If we withhold gratification from our souls and our bodies, they get loud. Our spirit, on the other hand, when not fed, gets quiet. We have to be intentional to feed our spirit.

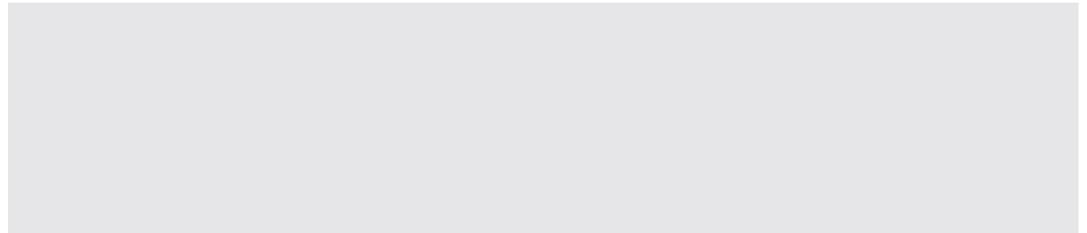
Ask Yourself: What am I doing to feed my spirit?

Who Is in Control?

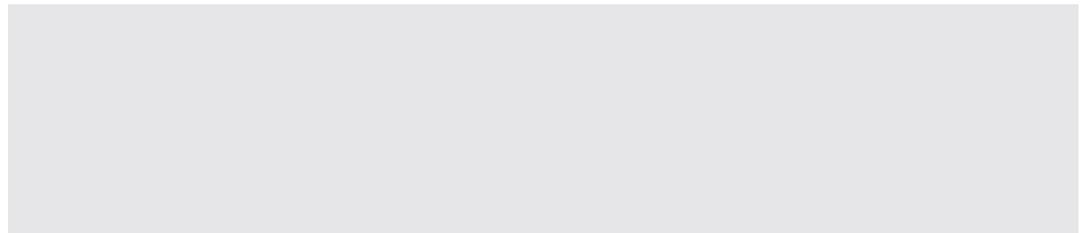
The soul and the body are complex and can often be confusing, especially since we are used to them taking the lead. Let's consider the following:

Very early in life we learn to take instruction from our souls. We have all seen the toddler throw himself on the floor and demand his own way. He is being led by his emotions when he holds his breath until a parent gives in to his demands. We might think that this only happens in the lives of children, but adults can possess these same tendencies. Have you ever heard someone say, "If it feels good, do it" or "I don't feel like doing that?" These examples are the epitome of a soul-led life.

Read Galatians 5:19-21, and list the works of the soul-led nature.



According to Galatians 6:8, what is the result of living a life that gratifies the body?



*When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
(Galatians 5:22-23)*

According to Galatians 6:8, what happens to a person who lives a spirit-led life?

Daily Living

Living in spiritual order brings with it incredible benefits, such as protection, spiritual growth, and power to overcome obstacles in our lives. Know also that it's dangerous to live out of spiritual order. When we choose to do things our own way, it opens a door for the enemy to operate in our lives. There is protection from the enemy when we choose to do things God's way and give control of our lives to Him.

Read Psalm 91. According to verses 9-10, who is afforded the benefits of protection and safety?

We want to do things God's way, but what about the times when we fall short or give in to temptation? The response is to distance ourselves from God. We feel shame and condemnation, but that's TKGE thinking. Remember God doesn't bring condemnation but rather conviction. Godly sorrow for sin will lead us to repentance, which means "to turn and go the other way."

Write out Psalm 66:18-20.

When you're out of spiritual order, stop and repent. Then, ask for AND receive His grace. It is the kindness of the Lord that leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). Remember: He is the God who came looking for Adam and Eve.

Staying in Order

Every single day we face decisions, and the choices we make dictate the lives we lead. So how do we make good decisions? We need to change the way we think. Knowing your identity is also a key to being led by the Spirit. Think about who you are in Him.

Write out Romans 12:2.

Write out 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Write out Ephesians 1:4.

To walk in spiritual order, we need the power of the Holy Spirit. He is our counselor, our friend, our guide, and the One who reveals truth. Start getting to know Him today. In this new relationship, Bible reading will become more enjoyable, worship more intimate, prayer more powerful, and living in the Tree of Life more tangible and exciting. When walking with Jesus, life is abundant indeed—and this is only the beginning!

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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Section

Overflow of the Heart

page 51-113

2



LIFE

5

WEEK

Section Two Video – Notes

“My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man’s whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”
(Proverbs 4:20-23, NIV)

“...The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV)

Four Blockages of the Heart

1. _____

But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:14-16, NIV)

2. _____

Then He said to the disciples, “It is impossible that no offenses should come...”
(Luke 17:1, NKJV)

An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel. (Proverbs 18:19, NIV)

3. _____

The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit. (Proverbs 18:21, NIV)

4. _____

“For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’” (Mark 7:21, NIV)

Three Steps to Transforming the Heart

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27, NIV)

1. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24, NIV)

2. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10-11, NIV)

3. Invite the Holy Spirit to _____

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18, NIV)

LIFE videos can be viewed at churchofthehighlands.com/life

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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6

WEEK

A Life of Surrender

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.”
(Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)

The word surrender brings to mind many pictures, perhaps a white flag waving above the sails of a ship or a troop of outnumbered soldiers with their hands raised. Often, we associate it with defeat, but when it comes to a life with Christ, the act of giving up control to Him is actually the beginning of our freedom.

A life of surrender requires trust, and that trust is developed in the context of relationship. Would you allow a stranger to care for your children or watch over your home while you were on a vacation? No, of course not. Trust is earned, so until you have an understanding of a person's character, it is impossible to trust him or her with something of value.

In order to surrender our lives to God, we must believe that He is good and is worthy of our trust. For many of us, that is easier said than done, and it is often due to doubt and disappointment from past experiences with people or churches. Our hearts can become weary and hardened by such things, but there is hope! We can begin to trust Jesus when we understand what He did for us. He left heaven and came to earth; He felt hunger, hurt, and rejection; He was beaten and crucified, and three days later arose from the grave—all so He could prove His love, earn our trust, and be in a relationship with us.

Write out Psalm 119:68.

If you want to get to know Him better, you need to do what you would do when getting to know a friend: Spend time with Him. This doesn't have to look a certain way. The key is to invite Him into your life. The Lord will reveal Himself to you as you do things that feed your spirit, things like studying the Word, seeking Him in prayer, and building relationships with like-minded friends.

Write out James 4:8.

“For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways and My thoughts higher than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:9)

THINK ABOUT IT

By getting to know God, you learn to trust Him. When you trust Him, it is easy to surrender your life to Him.

God's way of doing things may not always seem clear, but when we make the choice to trust and obey Him first, we set ourselves up for success. Think about this: You are taking a road trip to see the Grand Canyon and plan to drive your car. But, you do not have a map, compass, or GPS device for the trip. Your best friend not only has all these items, but also knows every pothole, gas station, and restaurant along the way. Wouldn't you want him to come along? What if he has a single condition for joining you, to be in the driver's seat? And there it is, the dilemma: It's hard to hand over the steering wheel because it involves giving up control. However, as a believer the only way you can get to your God-given destination is to fully surrender your life and adopt His way of doing things.

Write out Romans 10:17.

Ask Yourself:

Are there areas of my life that I have not surrendered to God? Is trust the reason why?

THINK ABOUT IT

A trial with God in charge is smoother than a victory when we are in charge.

An Epic Journey

God wants to make our lives smoother by being Lord of all. Only then can we walk in spiritual order. Everything in our lives that we decide to hold onto becomes our responsibility to maintain. However, if we will surrender all areas of our life to Him, He will partner with us on this journey and bring us safely and completely to our final destination. Three areas that we need to surrender to God: our things, our relationships, and ourselves.

Read the following verses, and write down what Jesus says we must be willing to let go of to be His disciples.

Luke 14:27

Luke 14:28

Luke 14:33

Man was created as a worshipper; we will worship what we value the most. In Exodus 20:3-4, God told the Israelites not to place any gods before Him or make any kind of idol. Sometimes we think of an idol as a carved statue or something of that sort, but it can also be anything we desire more than God. Idols can be hobbies, sports, jobs, or even people. It is not wrong to enjoy or even admire such things, but they are unworthy of taking top priority. If we want to walk in spiritual order, God must be first.

“Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33)

More or Less

Being consumed with things is called materialism. When material things become the priority of our lives, we become victims to the pressure and stress in the race to have more. The enemy then has an opening to attack our minds and emotions with incessant thoughts about what we have and what we want. The more we have, the more attention and care we give towards it.

Look up the following verses. What is the result of giving things and money the place of priority in our lives?

Matthew 13:22

Revelation 3:17

1 Timothy 6:9-10

Ask Yourself: Is there anything in my life that is more important than God?

Let's take a look at God's perspective on our wealth:

*“And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it. To enjoy your work and accept your lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God.”
(Ecclesiastes 5:19)*

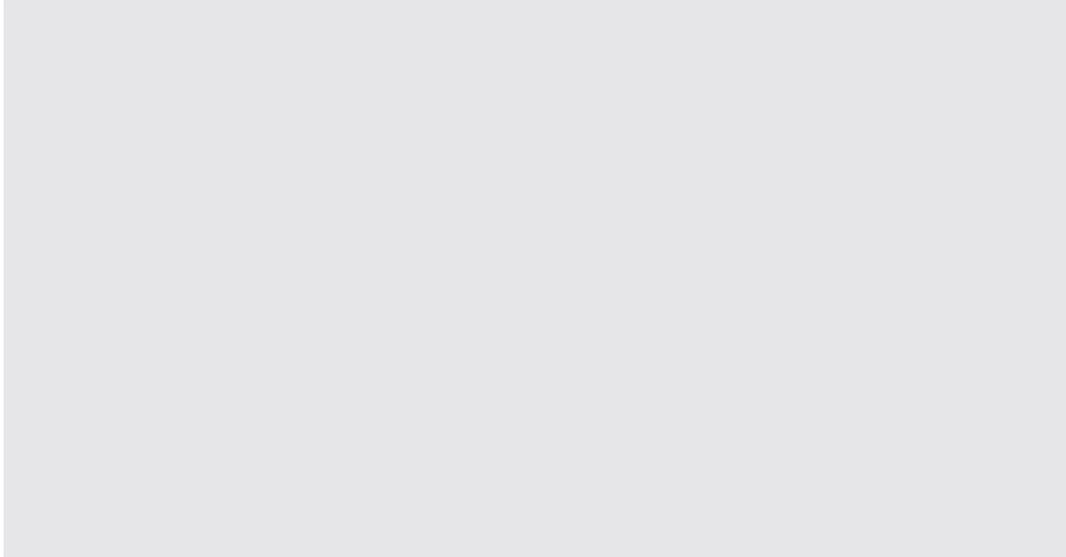
“Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.” (1 Timothy 6:17)

“Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce. Then He will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with good wine.” (Proverbs 3:9-10)

THINK ABOUT IT

We honor God with our wealth because it all comes from Him.

*Read the following verses: Psalm 62:10, Hebrews 13:5, and Luke 12:22-31.
Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how these passages apply to your life.
Record your insights here.*



Relationship Problems

Did you know that relationships can come between you and God? It can be relationships with family, friends, coworkers, pastors, church members, neighbors, and even enemies, but whether good or bad, they can become more important to us than our relationship with the Lord.

Read Genesis 22:1-18.

In this passage, Abraham faces an almost inconceivable situation. He has waited decades for a big promise to be fulfilled—a promise that he would be the father of nations. In Abraham's old age, God blesses him with a son, Isaac. The child grows and so does Abraham's joy, and then one day, God tells Abraham to sacrifice the boy on an altar. Surely Abraham had questions. He loved his son very much—but he also trusted God.

The Bible tells us Abraham rose early the next morning to obey God's command. In other words, he did not try to delay things or find a way out; there was no hesitation in his conduct. By a great act of faith, he placed Isaac on the altar and would have followed through on the command if an angel had not stopped him. God saw Abraham's obedience, provided an alternate sacrifice, and blessed him with a family heritage unlike any other: his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the shores.

Because Abraham walked in submission to God, he could clearly hear the voice of the Lord. Like Abraham, God's blessing can flow from us to every relationship we have if we readily surrender them to Him.

Ask Yourself: Do I have a relationship that has come between God and me?

Another principle that will allow us to have godly relationships is to stay free of offense. Our most difficult relationships to surrender may be the ones where there is offense and unforgiveness. We will study this more next week, but for now, consider this: What if you gave up your "right to be right" and instead chose to be unoffended no matter the situation?

Footsteps To Follow

Ways to prevent offense by studying the life of Jesus.

Take the lowest seat.

Consider everyone more important than yourself. Put the needs of others before your own. Strive to please God, not yourself or others. Be the servant, and don't expect anyone to pay attention to you.

Always remain grateful.

It changes our attitude, by keeping us aware of God's provision and blessing.

Give others their freedom.

Don't try to control others. People need freedom to make their own decisions. Sometimes they make good ones; sometimes they make bad ones. Either way, it is their decision.

Make decisions that promote life in others.

When someone offends you, it may seem natural to ignore that person or pay back wrong, but Jesus says there is a better way. Choose to speak and do things that reveal the Tree of Life. How they respond is up to them.

Trust God to bring justice when an offense comes.

Vengeance belongs to the Lord. None of us really wants true justice or what we really deserve—we'd rather have grace!

Dedicate Time to the Lord

Find refreshing in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship. God's presence brings change.

I Surrender All

There are many areas of our own lives to surrender to God. These include plans, goals, pleasures, ambitions, hurts, the future, the past, selfishness, ego, sin, pride, physical appearance, lust, anger, fear, and health. Even unforgiveness can fall under the category of “self,” because holding on to an offense is essentially saying that we have a right to withhold grace from someone. This type of pride is an idol that will cause a wedge between God and us.

Surrendering does not mean that we have no goals or ambitions. On the contrary, God is the One that puts desires in our hearts. It doesn't mean our personality has to drastically change or that we need to become someone else. However, it does mean we submit ourselves to His will and join with Him in His plans for us.

Ask Yourself: Have I surrendered my past, present, and future to God? Do I trust that His way is better than my own?

Trust & Obey

Many years ago John Henry Sammis wrote these lyrics to a now-famous hymn: “Trust and obey for there's no other way / To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.” Those two words, trust and obey, sum up what it means to surrender.

As we walk through this life, many things will try to take the lead and desire the number one spot on our list. Surrendering daily will keep us walking down the right path. We won't turn to the right or to the left because of distractions or temptations because we will hear the voice of the Lord saying “This is the pathway, walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21).

Spiritual Order in Action

Read Romans 12:9-19 below. Underline the actions. How would your life change if you lived life this way?

- Don't just pretend that you love others.
- Really love them.
- Hate what is wrong.
- Stand on the side of the good.
- Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.
- Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.
- Be glad for all God is planning for you.
- Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful.
- When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out.
- And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.
- If people persecute you because you are a Christian, don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.
- When others are happy, be happy with them.
- If they are sad, share their sorrow.
- Live in harmony with each other.
- Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people.
- And don't think you know it all!
- Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.
- Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.
- Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.
- Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God.
- For it is written, “I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it,” says the Lord.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling, occupying the central portion of the page below the question.

the \mathbb{R}^n -valued function \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (1) if and only if \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2).

Let us assume that \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2). Then, for any $t \in \mathbb{R}$, we have

$$\mathbf{f}(t) = \mathbf{f}(0) + \int_0^t \mathbf{f}'(s) ds = \mathbf{f}(0) + \int_0^t \mathbf{A}(s) \mathbf{f}(s) ds.$$

Since \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2), we have $\mathbf{f}(0) = \mathbf{0}$. Therefore, we have

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7

WEEK **Forgiveness**

*“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.”
(Ephesians 1:7, NLT)*

We live in a fallen world, and because of that, we face the realities of hurt and offense. The words and deeds of others can wound us to the core in indescribable ways. Things like neglect, abuse, violence, betrayal, and cruel remarks can cause bitterness and resentment to infiltrate our hearts, and although it may not be our intention, unforgiveness is a result.

An offense laced with unforgiveness is like an arrow dipped in poison. The offense slashes through our defenses and hurts us in the moment, but the aftermath of unforgiveness remains long after the event takes place. Its bitter poison seeps into our veins, tainting our thoughts and clouding our vision. If left unchecked, it will eventually penetrate our hearts and paralyze our ability to live, to love, and to be loved. When someone does wrong to us, unforgiveness feels like the right response—after all, shouldn't they have to pay for the offense? But harboring unforgiveness is actually like drinking poison and expecting another person to die; it just doesn't work.

Ask Yourself: Am I harboring unforgiveness?

Unforgiveness holds us in bondage and keeps us from living in the Tree of Life. So why is it so hard to forgive others? Let's look at three reasons why we have a hard time extending forgiveness to people in our lives.

1. We have a wrong idea of forgiveness.

We don't offer forgiveness easily to others because we have an incorrect definition of what forgiveness means. We have not defined forgiveness properly. To truly understand what it means to forgive someone, we need to start by learning what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness is not minimizing the offense. Offering forgiveness to someone who has wronged you is not saying, "It's no big deal" or "It didn't really hurt." It is a big deal and it did cause pain. What was done or said was not right, and harm never reflects the Father's heart for you; God's perfect will is to protect and nurture you. Rather, when you choose to forgive, you choose not to hang on to the offense because it robs you of freedom.

Forgiveness is not reconciliation. Letting go of offense does not mean that you must reconcile with the person. Romans 12:18 says, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." God understands that there are times when reconciliation may not be the best choice. If the offender is not ready to reconcile, it will only cause further pain and disappointment when you are exposed to the same circumstances. In such situations, rely on the Holy Spirit to lead you. Begin by allowing the miracle of forgiveness to happen in you.

In order for a relationship to be restored, these things must happen in the offender:

- Repentance: turning away from wrong actions and going in the opposite direction
- Restitution: making things right if possible
- Rebuilding of Trust: proving themselves consistent in words and actions

THINK ABOUT IT

We offer forgiveness to others so we can be free.

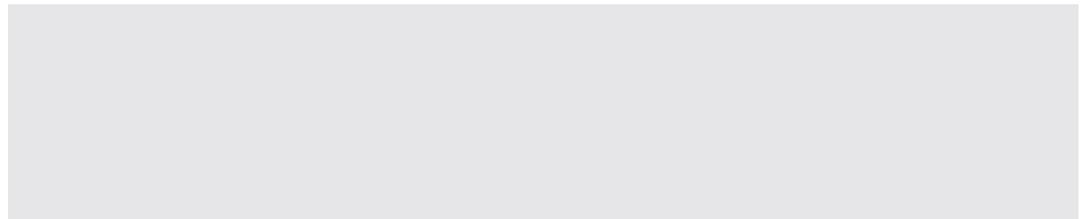
We tell ourselves, “When they apologize, then I will forgive them.” By choosing this path, we actually become a hostage to the very one who has wronged us because it leaves our freedom up to another person. **Reconciliation takes two, but forgiveness is a one-player game.**

Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened. Sometimes we think in order to forgive someone, we must forget what has happened. “Forgive and forget” is a cliché that holds no truth. The reality is we may never forget what has happened to us. But, God wants to do something extraordinary in our lives. He wants to bring healing to our hearts so that we can remember these past experiences without reliving the pain associated with them. God wants to show you how He can make all things new.

2. We don't think it's fair.

We don't offer forgiveness to those who have hurt us because it is not fair to let them off the hook. We reason in our minds that they don't deserve forgiveness. Thankfully, God isn't fair, because none of us deserves forgiveness. Jesus uses the following parable to explain the profound and undeserved forgiveness that is extended to us as believers.

Read Matthew 18:21-35. What are the Kingdom Principles that Jesus is trying to convey?



Jesus told Peter that he would need to forgive his brother 490 times a day, or once every three minutes. At the rate our thoughts sometimes race, that number doesn't seem too farfetched, does it? In the parable you just read, the first man owed a debt of 10,000 talents, which is equal to about 5 billion dollars in today's currency. The master cancelled this debt. Like this man, we, as sinners, owed a great debt that we could not pay, but God loves us anyway. Through the cross, Jesus paid our debt in full. *We are forgiven much.*

The second man owed a debt of 100 Denarii, equal to about 10 thousand dollars in today's economy. Is this an insignificant amount of money? No, it is quite a lot. In the same way, when someone hurts or offends us, it is significant. But because we have been forgiven much, we can extend what we have received to others. None of us deserve the forgiveness that God has given to us. We should rejoice in the fact that God isn't fair. If He were fair, we would have to pay for our own sins. Thankfully, we don't get what we deserve; instead we have abundant life now and eternal life to come.

Ask Yourself: In light of all that I have been forgiven, can I release those who have wronged me? Would I trade my forgiveness from God for the right to hold someone accountable for their offense towards me?

3. We don't think we can do it.

The third reason we don't forgive is that we don't think that we have the power and the strength to do it. This is the voice of the enemy. He is called the Father of Lies (John 8:44). We must recognize and silence the voice of our adversary. If we measure our circumstances by our own abilities it will always seem like it can never happen. But we don't measure circumstances by our own strength, but by the power and strength of the Lord.

Write out Philippians 4:13. Commit this verse to memory.

Write out 2 Corinthians 12:9.

In the passage above, Paul is saying that something incredible happens in the midst of his struggles—the power of Christ is at work! Forgiveness does not turn us into doormats. In fact, the opposite occurs; we become victorious.

THINK ABOUT IT

When we forgive an offense, we set a prisoner free, only to discover that we were that prisoner.

God is inviting you into a new reality. *Forgiveness is a choice, not a feeling, and it will be a daily choice.* We would like to wait until we felt like forgiving and then let our choices follow. But if we do it this way, we will always live according to the reality of this world.

However, if we will dare to believe God, and choose first, our feelings will follow our decision. We will then shift from merely “responding” to what happens to us to choosing to live in the Tree of Life. Remember: Choices lead, feelings follow.

The Forgiven

Why is it so vital that we forgive? Because *the forgiven forgive.* Isaiah 1:18-19 says that your sins were scarlet, and Jesus has made them white as snow; they were crimson, and He has made them as wool. Notice the end of the scripture, “if you obey me.” Forgiveness is not a suggestion, but a requirement from our loving Father for our benefit.

“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

The first step that God takes in our relationship with Him is He forgives us. Romans 5:8 says that while we were still sinners, God sent Jesus to die for us. He made the first move by choosing to forgive us before we asked. We must make the same decision—in every relationship. This is critical to understand: *It is impossible to forgive others of their offenses until we receive forgiveness for ourselves.* If we struggle with forgiveness, chances are we have not fully grasped what has been done for us.

We have received total forgiveness for past, present, and future sin. It is not that God forgets our sins, but rather He chooses to remember our sin no more. He chooses to never bring up our sin again—ever. Why does He do this? Because God desperately wants to be in relationship with you.

THINK ABOUT IT

When we have difficulty forgiving others, we have not fully understood how large a debt God has forgiven us.

Write out Isaiah 43:25.

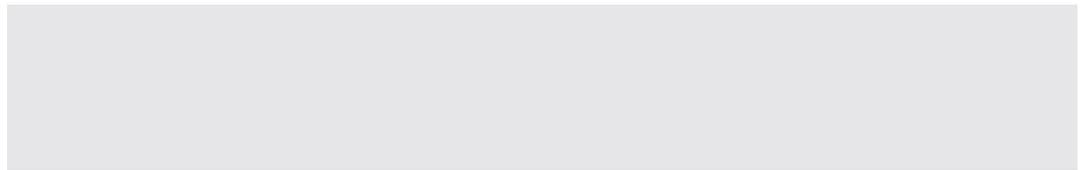
Write out Hebrews 8:12.

Offense

An offense is a violation of what we consider to be right and natural. Jesus said that a sign of the last days would be that many would be offended, betray, and hate one another (Matthew 24:10, KJV). The word offense comes from the Greek word scandalon, which means “the bait.” It was used in Old Testament times when people wanted to trap an animal. A pit would be covered with branches and a piece of flesh (scandalon) would be placed on the pit to lure the animal into the trap.

Offense lures us into a trap of unforgiveness and bondage. We think we are trapping the person who hurt us; in reality, we are the ones that are ensnared.

Look at Proverbs 18:19 and notice the progression of offense.



Offense is the bait that the enemy uses to lure us into bondage. When we become offended, we become unyielding. Think about a city surrounded by gates; their purpose is to protect the city. We use this same thinking to protect ourselves, and place walls around our hearts. People may have hurt us once, but we will not allow them to do it again. But what works for a city of stone does not necessarily work in the same way for flesh and blood. The problem is that walls may keep out the bad stuff, but they will also keep out the good. With walls, we not only protect ourselves from pain and rejection, but from experiencing love and life-giving relationships. *We think it is up to us to protect our hearts, but the truth is God never meant for this to be our responsibility; it is His.*

How and why we become offended may vary, but one thing will not change: We will all face offense in this world. When offense comes, we must decide if we will take “the bait” from our adversary.

The Unforgiveness Trap

Below is a chart of 5 common snares that the enemy uses to lure us into unforgiveness. Notice that for each of the wrongdoings, Jesus also suffered the same offense. Jesus was fully God and fully man. He allowed Himself to be tempted in every way that we are today because He wanted you to know that no matter what you face, He has been there—and overcome.

When we are . . .

Betrayed- a best friend who lied, a spouse who didn't stay forever, a sibling who chose a different path

Falsely Accused- misunderstood, the subject of gossip and slander

Rejected - by a spouse, friend, trusted authority, or even the church

Abused- emotional, physical, verbal, and sexual

Humiliated-an embarrassing moment that just won't go away; shame, disgrace

Remember Jesus was . . .

Betrayed-was betrayed by Judas, a trusted friend and one of His disciples

Falsely Accused-was falsely accused in several courts

Rejected-suffered rejection by Peter, one of His apostles and closest companions.

Abused-was beaten, cursed, and crucified on a cross, an instrument of torture

Humiliated-was crucified and humiliated in a public setting

To get a better understanding of why Jesus had to suffer in the way He did, read the following passage:

“That's why he had to enter into every detail of human life. Then, when he came before God as high priest to get rid of the people's sins, he would have already experienced it all himself—all the pain, all the testing—and would be able to help where help was needed.” (Hebrews 2:17-18, The Message)

It was important for Jesus to experience all of these offenses in a human body so that He could understand every struggle that we would encounter. Now when we come to Him with our hurts, He can honestly reply, “I understand. I went through that, too.” Jesus did this for us. Now He wants to share a secret that only He is qualified to teach.

Write out 1 Peter 4:1

THINK ABOUT IT

Godly responses to offense will keep our hearts pure.

The secret is not that Jesus was offended, it is how he responded to offense. At His death, Jesus asked the Father to forgive the very ones who cursed Him, who nailed His hands and feet to the cross for “they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34) In reality, they knew exactly what they were doing, killing a man that they hated and making sure He felt every ounce of their malice. Jesus knew they were blinded by hate, but He chose to see things differently and we can, too. Offenses will come, so we must arm ourselves with the same thinking of Jesus.

Our primary prayer for people should be that the Lord would allow us to see them through the eyes of Jesus. If we will change our viewpoint from the reality of this world to the reality of God, we will find ourselves loving people the way Jesus did, regardless of what they do or don't do to us.

How do we keep our hearts pure and unoffended? Consider these three simple statements:

- 1** **We need forgiveness, too.** We will never have to forgive others more than what God has forgiven us.

Write out Romans 3:23.

Write out Matthew 10:8.

- 2** **Focus on the real enemy.** People are not our enemy, the devil is. Jesus made a choice to see the people with the hammer and nails as victims, too. If it is true that hurting people hurt people, then the guilty have their own story as well. Our goal should be to love people and hate the devil.

Write out 1 Peter 5:8.

- 3** **Receive the love of God.** This will give you the capacity to love people. If you continually struggle to love people, it may be because you have not fully received the love of God.

Write out 1 John 4:10.

Forgiveness in Action

The Bible's steps for walking out forgiveness are **countercultural** (the opposite of mainstream society) and **counterintuitive** (not normally expected). But, if you will follow them, they will change your life. Our way of thinking and God's way of thinking are not the same. Read 1 Corinthians 1:25-28 to gain the proper perspective of obedience to God's way of doing things.

THINK ABOUT IT

Receiving the love of God first is the only way to give it to others.

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are.”

Pray for people who have offended you.

Society tells us to return evil for evil, or at the very least, isolate the people who hurt us so that they cannot do so again. But Jesus said in order to have different results, we would have to respond differently.

Write out Matthew 5:43-44.

Bless people who have offended you.

THINK ABOUT IT

How would your life change if you chose to believe the best of everyone?

For some of us, it is all we can do to not talk negatively about the people who have wronged us. But Jesus is asking us to go a step further; He is asking us to bless them. The word *bless* means to “speak well of.” Again, this is not something that is demonstrated by today’s culture. Listen to what the Bible says:

“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” (Luke 6:27-28)

Write out Romans 12:14.

Do good to people who have offended you.

This requires a change in our way of thinking. It is not that we are repaying good for evil; it is that we have made the decision to do *only good* to others. So whether someone is serving or attacking us, our response should be to do what the Word says to do. God sees every detail of your life and will take care of every detail that you will trust Him to handle.

Ask Yourself: Are there people in my life that I have not released to the Lord? Am I trying to get justice from them?

Forgiving Ourselves

Getting past your past may be the biggest obstacle you face. Every time you seem to be making progress, that old movie reel of the sinful things you have done begins to play in your mind. Peace and freedom slip quietly away as your past rises up to become your reality. You think forgiveness is for others and not for you because you have done too many horrible things, and it's just too late . . .

Let Freedom Ring

Below is a declaration from Romans 12:17-21. Read it out loud.

I do not repay evil for evil. I am careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on me, I will live at peace with everyone. I will not take revenge, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: If my enemy is hungry, I will feed him; if he is thirsty, I will give him something to drink. I will not be overcome by evil, but I overcome evil with good.

A Prayer of Forgiveness

This is a simple prayer of forgiveness you can use to release anyone who has offended you. Insert the name or names of those you feel you need to forgive, and say the words out loud.

“Lord, I have not loved, but have resented certain people and I have unforgiveness in my heart. Forgive me for my sin of offense. I ask you Lord, to give me the power to release and forgive those who have hurt me. I do now forgive them and ask You to forgive me also. Give me the strength to pray for them, bless them, and want the best for them. Thank you for breaking these chains off my life. In the name of Jesus I pray, Amen.

You may be surprised to know these feelings are actually common to many believers. It feels godly to pay for our past, over and over again. The enemy is quick to remind us of painful memories that we are powerless to change. Why does he do this? Because it keeps us stuck in the past, unable to move forward in the future that the Lord has planned. These thoughts come solely from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Ask Yourself: Am I constantly reminding myself of past failures? Does the sin of my past continue to bother me even though I have asked God to forgive me?

The Past and the Present

When our past comes rising up, there are three ways that we usually respond.

1 We try to bury it.

Have you heard the phrase, “you’ve got to bury the past?” Well, the fact is you can’t. It will find its way to the surface at some point. We hear that time heals all wounds, but time cannot—only the Holy Spirit can heal. Concealing the past never works. Proverbs 28:13 (NIV) says: “Whoever conceals his sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” According to James 5 *confessing our sins and praying for one another actually helps to bring healing and wholeness.*

2 We beat ourselves up.

Some of us live in the land of regret. We dwell on the “if only” scenarios from our past. But, “if only” is a trap. We cannot change the past and the enemy uses it to torment us. King David knew this type of grief. He committed adultery with his own soldier’s wife, and then had him killed when she became pregnant with his child. When Nathan confronted David, he repented and cried out to God. Psalm 38:4-8 says, “My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly. I am bowed down and

If you don't let
your past die, it
won't let you live.

brought very low; all day long I go about mourning. My back is filled with searing pain; there is no health in my body. I am feeble and utterly crushed. I groan in anguish of heart." We see that unforgiveness can cause physical as well as emotional pain.

3 We blame others.

This tactic has been used since the times of Adam and Eve. When God asked Adam why he disobeyed, Adam blamed Eve. Eve's response was to blame the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13). We must take responsibility for our actions, repent, and move forward.

Since these are incorrect responses to dealing with our past, how are we supposed to face it? We look to the Word of God. He has the right view about our past, and we must believe it. God says when we ask Jesus into our hearts, our old life vanishes and we become a new person. You may know this in your head, but is it your reality?

“For if a man belongs to Christ, he is a new person. The old life is gone. New life has begun.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Even though the apostle Paul had a past of persecuting and killing Christians, he understood this truth, and it reshaped his thinking.

“Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:13-15)

Getting Past the Past

To let our past die, we must change our way of thinking. The old way of thinking doesn't line up to God's Word, so it doesn't produce life. We can adjust our way of thinking by studying what God says is true.

Stop trying to earn forgiveness. Most people don't understand the gospel. They think if they can be good more days than they are bad, they get to go to heaven. It's not true. The price has been paid. Forgiveness is received, not earned. *If we think we have to earn forgiveness from God, we will make others earn forgiveness from us.* Well-meaning friends may say that you need "to just forgive yourself" and "give yourself a break." We cannot forgive ourselves. Forgiveness is not ours to give; it is God's to give. Here is the gospel:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9, NIV)

Receive God's forgiveness by faith. It will free your heart and allow you to forgive others.

Defeat every lie with the truth. It would be great if once we had received forgiveness, we never thought about our past again. The truth is, the enemy will continue to bring up your past every day. He will wait for weak moments in your life and whisper your failures to you. We have to resist him every day. The devil is the “father of lies.” That is his job description. (John 8:44) When he lies, he speaks his native language. He is the accuser of the brethren. (Revelation 12:10) We defeat him by knowing and speaking the truth.

Write out 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Allow God to turn it around for good. We can continue to focus on the past, or we can focus on the future. Whatever has happened, however tragic, God can turn it around for good.

Write out Romans 8:28.

You can use your past to minister hope to others. Take the comfort that you received from God and comfort others. Consider the story of Joseph. He was betrayed, falsely accused, rejected, and abused. But God made him prosper and used him to save his family and the nation of Egypt. Look at his bold statement:

“You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.” (Genesis 50:20)

God never said that forgiveness would be easy. In fact, following the instructions in His Word takes courage and strength. But His instructions work. They will lead us into pathways of righteousness where we can live again, free from the ghosts of our past. No more guilt, no more hiding, no more shame. Free.

It takes faith to believe that these words are true, but if you do, they will change your life. Trust that God’s Word is true. Believe that you have been made new and clean and that He can and will make you whole again. But be warned: Life as you know it will never be the same. As you begin to see yourself the way God sees you, you will begin to see others differently. You’ll find yourself with open hands, releasing offenses, and receiving life abundant. You will be living in the Tree of Life.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling or writing, occupying the central portion of the page below the question.

WEEK 8

The Power of Words

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue.
(Proverbs 18:21, NKJV)*

The words we speak are a spiritual gauge, showing how much of our soul we have surrendered to God. If we have allowed our minds to be renewed by the Word, our conversation can't help but reflect what we have learned. If, on the other hand, we are hesitant to release our old habits and beliefs, our words will betray us and reveal our true spiritual condition. If our souls are not in submission to God and if we haven't surrendered everything to Him, our tongues will be the first to sell us out.

Write out Luke 6:45.

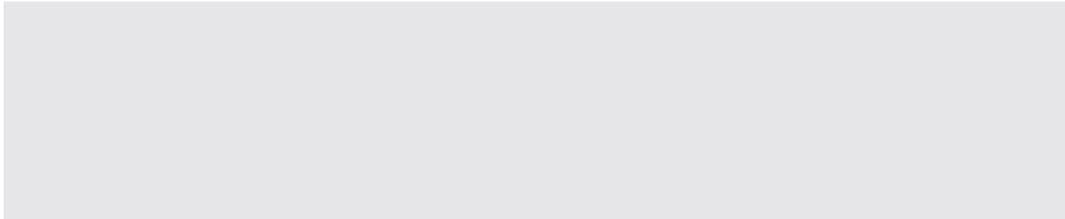
Ask Yourself:

What does my day-to-day conversation say about my spiritual condition? Do my words reflect that God lives inside of me?

Read the verses below. What did Jesus say about the relationship between our hearts and what we say?

*“Whatever is in your heart determines what you say. A good person produces good words from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart.”
(Matthew 12:34-35)*

Write out Matthew 12:36-37.



Through these passages, Jesus communicates to us that a life consumed with the cares and treasures of the world will lead to fruitless talk that will bring judgment on us. A life surrendered to God and filled with the Holy Spirit will produce speech full of grace, mercy, love, and power.

“By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen.” (Hebrews 11:3)

With words, God spoke the entire universe into being. With words, He communicates to us. The Bible, with its thousands of words, is His way to reveal Himself. And it gets even better—Jesus is actually the living, breathing, Word of God (John 1:1). Words and language were His idea, and His words are literally life to us. Because God created man in His image, we have the ability to speak words of life or words of death. Since Jesus is our example in everything, and we are to follow in His steps, let’s look at a few verses that demonstrate the power of His words.

In the following verses, underline what happened when Jesus spoke.

Matthew 8:8 – Then the officer said, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come into my home. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed!”

Matthew 8:26 – And Jesus answered, “Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!” Then He stood up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly there was a great calm.

Matthew 8:32 – “All right, go!” Jesus commanded them. So the demons came out of the men and entered the pigs, and the whole herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned in the water.

John 11:43–44 (ESV)– When he had said these things, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out.” The man who had died came out.”

THINK ABOUT IT

Your words
have the power
to change your
environment.

The spoken Word of God can bring healing, peace, deliverance, and life! Every time we open our mouths to talk, we either advance the kingdom of life or we advance the kingdom of death.

Write out Proverbs 18:4.

Write out Proverbs 18:7.

Isaiah 14 recounts the fall of satan. Verses 12 through 14 say, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning . . . For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High.’” (NKJV) Through the power of satan’s spoken words of rebellion, the kingdom of darkness was established. He actually spoke the first words of rebellion in his heart. Satan and his demons continue to speak words of rebellion to our minds. If we aren’t enlightened to this truth, we will be his advocate in hurting others and even ourselves with the words that we speak.

When we were saved, we weren't taken directly to heaven because we are Jesus' body—His hands, feet, heart, and mouth designed to reach the lost and make a difference in this world. Jesus understood very well the pressures that we would be under. God knew we would not be able to survive the pressures and temptations of the world, and He knew we would be completely powerless without help.

Ironically, Jesus actually told His disciples it would be to their advantage if He left and went back to heaven (John 16:7). Why? Because of God's incredible plan to leave us the Holy Spirit, who would live inside us and help us to do the impossible—represent Jesus to the world. You see, Jesus, although fully God, was fully human—He could be in only one place at a time while He walked around in a human body. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit and have Him as our personal guide through life no matter where we are on the earth. Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears." (John 16:13, NASB) In other words, God will disclose to us by the Spirit all the guidance we will need, including what to say.

Ask Yourself: Am I intentional to use my words to promote the Kingdom of God? To minister to others?

Control Issues

In the Garden of Eden, satan spoke to Eve to entice her. Eve didn't know it, but when she and Adam had a conversation about satan's idea, she advanced the kingdom of death through her spoken words. God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17, NASB). Satan didn't bring death to Eve by biting her and releasing poisonous venom or by wrapping his coils around her and squeezing the life out of her; no, he talked her to death. Then she proceeded to talk Adam to death. Can you see the importance of controlling our words? Controlling what we say will require that we tame a part of ourselves that contains the power of life and death: our tongues.

When our soul is surrendered to God, even our words produce life.

*“We all make many mistakes, but those who control their tongues can also control themselves in every other way.”
(James 3:2)*

We average about 30 conversations a day, so what do all those words we use to communicate say about us? James makes the argument that if you say you are a Christian and that you love God, but your attitude and actions reflect something different, you may fall into the category of the deceived. In James 3:2, we are told that we can control ourselves in every way if we can control our tongues.

Sometimes the greatest hurts and heartaches come from what people have said to us. Conversely, some of our greatest memories center on positive things that people have said to us, like the phrase “I love you.” Those are wonderful words to hear, but for some of us, they are hard to say, even to those we love. Our words can either tear others down or build them up with encouragement.

Here are some common statements people make. As you read them, imagine the effect the words might have.

Words of life

I love you.
 You're such a blessing!
 You look great.
 You're hired.
 You're my best friend.
 I'm giving you a raise.
 I see potential in you.
 You're so smart.
 You make me happy.
 You'll do great.
 You did your best.
 I forgive you.
 I do!

Words of death

I hate you.
 I wish you had never been born.
 You've gained weight.
 You're fired.
 You were a mistake.
 You'll never amount to anything.
 You're so lazy.
 You're stupid.
 You're selfish.
 You're a waste.
 It's all your fault.
 I never should have married you.
 I want a divorce.

Tongue-Tied

The book of James elaborates on the power of the tongue, our spoken words. In chapter three, the author tells us that the tongue can defile the whole body, and he uses three vivid images to help us see his point.

THINK ABOUT IT

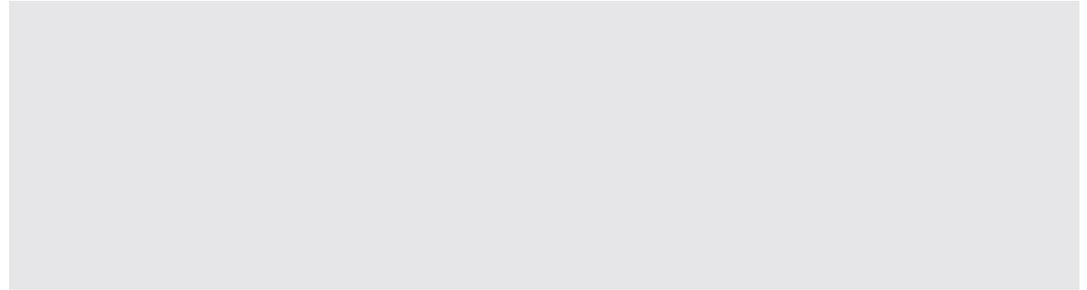
Words of life are like salt, bringing out good flavor in conversations and situations.

1. **A Bit:** The tongue is petite, weighing only about two ounces, but it is powerful, containing the power of life or death. Like the small piece of metal used to steer horses, the tongue can control the direction of our lives.
2. **A Rudder:** Although ships are traditionally large and driven by strong winds, they are steered by this very small piece of metal. Too often we focus on the big things and forget that this one little issue of the tongue could determine the direction of our lives. The tongue can control us, or we can use it to control our destiny (James 3:4).
3. **A Spark:** A spark is a small, quick strike, and it can set off a wild fire. In the same way, what we say can be curt, but consuming. Some of the most hurtful things that we have said or have been said to us are sharp one-liners or even one word. These can be abrupt, rude statements that may have been forgotten about by the one who said them, but the impact stays with us (James 3:5).

Thousands of acres of forest can be destroyed by a fire that hundreds of firefighters cannot put out. Similarly, the tongue can devour a life and cause destruction beyond belief. If you have been on the receiving end of these kinds of words, there is good news: You don't just need to learn to cope; you can be truly healed and set free from the effects of those words. Words can be petty and seemingly insignificant, yet at the same time they can be poisonous. And sometimes conversation and arguments can make a turn that is unintentional. Although the one who said them can forget about these dialogues, they're remembered for long periods of time by the person on the receiving end. The truth is, careless words can be harmful. Imagine a child struggling to read and a frustrated and worried parent listening to the child day after day twist the words. Finally, after losing all patience, the parent screams, "What's wrong with

you? You can't read!" Those words have the potential to make the child feel stupid and give up even trying. The parent may feel terrible about saying it, but go to bed and completely forget about the statement. These kinds of words can have a lasting effect that could change the course of a person's life and cause widespread destruction.

Write out James 3:7–8.



“Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water? Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty pool.” (James 3:9–12)

Ask Yourself:

Do I say things about myself, or others, that I quickly regret?

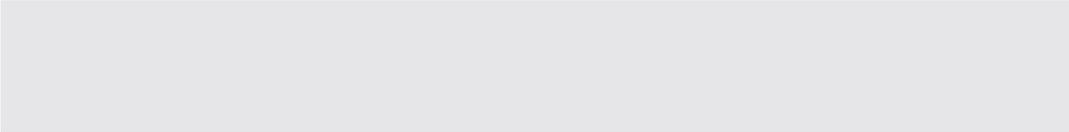
We need God's help to change the way we speak, but know this: Change is possible. Because we were made in God's image, *we were meant to speak words of life* that build up, bring healing, and offer encouragement.

How to Tame the Tongue

1 Guard your heart.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:34, “Whatever is in your heart determines what you say.” The mouth is automatically going to say what is inside of us. If we desire to control our tongue, we need to control the junk that bombards our ears and saturates our souls. Then we can become a person who speaks differently. According to God’s Word, “A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart” (Matthew 12:35). It’s the old “garbage in, garbage out” principle.

Write out Psalm 51:10.



Some of us grew up in homes where everyone was critical, where belittling remarks were part of the daily routine and yelling was the main form of communication. If you were raised in this kind of environment, you may have already made a decision to do things differently. But maybe you still experience great discouragement when you lash out at someone, wishing you had not reacted that way. Because you saw those verbal attacks modeled, your reactions imitate what you saw; it is a vicious cycle that may lead to generational sin. Generational sin can be passed down from person to person until it is recognized and broken. To break the cycle, we need to put a filter on our minds and protect ourselves from the venomous effects of careless and evil speech.

2 Gauge your tongue.

A gauge is an indicator of how far you've gone or where the limits are. If we had a gauge on our tongues, there would be a certain place where we would simply stop. Colossians 3:8 says, "But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips" (NIV). Decide that you aren't going to say the things you used to say. Make the decision today, and then *manage your decision daily*.

Write out Psalm 141:3.

We may need to devise a system or a plan to get ourselves under control when we face pressures. For example, you might need a policy to calm yourself down when you face a discipline situation with a child. To avoid saying careless or harmful things in a way you don't want your children to imitate, decide not to confront the child in the heat of the moment when anger or frustration is fresh. Decide in advance not to cross certain lines with your tongue. This is intentional Tree of Life living!

*Read Proverbs 10:19. What happens when words are many?
Who is considered wise?*

3 Garnish your speech.

A garnish is something you put on a plate to make it look good. Chefs know that great food is about more than just flavor, it must also be appealing to the eye. What would it be like if we decide that before we let anything out of our mouths, we are going to garnish it to make it sound pleasing to others?

Write out Ephesians 4:29.

At times, we need to say things that are difficult or even negative, but even so, we can speak in a way that can bless and encourage the other person. Bad news can even be delivered in a positive way. Discipline can be done in a way that truly benefits the one being corrected.

The Bible says that our speech can literally cause the Holy Spirit to grieve. Ephesians 4:30 says, “And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.”

Write out Ephesians 4:31.

Sometimes the best thing to say is nothing at all. There are plenty of times that Jesus held His tongue, even when He endured absolute brutality. In fact, although He never committed a sin, the Bible says that He learned obedience by the things He suffered. “When He was reviled and insulted, He did not revile or offer insult in return” (1 Peter 2:23, AMP). Sometimes, the life-giving and life-preserving response to others is simply to keep

quiet. Our soul will certainly protest, often vehemently, but our spirit will gain strength as we take another step toward living in spiritual order.

Look up the following verses. When is it a good idea to just say nothing?

Proverbs 11:13

Proverbs 13:3

Proverbs 17:1

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 17:14

Proverbs 17:27–28

Philippians 2:14–15

1 Peter 3:1–2

The Lord passionately wants to be near us, but we resist Him by some of the things we say. Instead, speak those words that are good and will build up others and yourself, and in return, you will invite the presence of God into your life and encounter Him in new ways.

The Proverbs are full of teaching on how we should use our tongues. Read the following Scriptures and write the instruction given.

Proverbs 4:20–22

Proverbs 4:24

Proverbs 15:1

Proverbs 16:13

Proverbs 16:24

Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 18:8

Often whole families are characterized by certain words. “They’re just a bunch of losers. None of them even finished school.” “They’ve always been that way—they say even her grandmother had a bad temper.” Sin can be passed down from generation to generation and so can the consequences (Exodus 20:5). If your family has generational sin in any form, the good news is that you can be freed from it! You can be the first generation of the righteous and begin the flow of God’s loving kindness and blessing to a thousand generations after you (Exodus 20:6). Ask God to shine the light on words in your life that should never have been spoken. Destructive words are words that agree with satan, the accuser. Did you know that he accuses Christians before God day and night (Revelation 12:10)? He is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44), and we choose to not agree with his lies.

Write any words of death and cursing that have been spoken to you by others.

Write any words of death and cursing that you have spoken to yourself.

Write any words of death and cursing that you have spoken to others.

The Voice of Freedom

Following are steps you can take for the release from destructive words that have been spoken. Pray through these steps for the issues you wrote down. (The specific examples are a prayer outline for breaking the curse of harmful words.)

- 1 Repent:** What has been said and believed doesn't line up with the Word of God, and I must turn away from those words and that belief.

Father, I confess that I have chosen to believe the lie that I am worthless. I repent, Father, and turn away from that belief.
- 2 Cast Off:** I must refuse to recognize or follow the curse that has been spoken—and the demonic spirits behind it. In the name of Jesus, break or bind the power, schemes, and attack of the enemy in this situation.

I cast off the lie that I am worthless and I renounce the spirit of unworthiness. In the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I break the curse of unworthiness and all its effects in my life, and I declare that the spirit of unworthiness has no right or place in my life.
- 3 Bless:** I bless the situation by speaking specific verses, truth, or promises found in Scripture. I also speak life by declaring a personal blessing over the situation.

I declare and believe what the Word of God says in Zechariah 2:8 that I “am the apple of God’s eye.” I loose the blessing of significance and value in my life, and I declare that I am of great worth to God.

The Dream Killer

Billy Hornsby

As a boy, I had many dreams. I was Elvis, Rocky Marciano; I was rich and famous, a great football player. Like many of the kids that I grew up with, I had aspirations for greatness. I didn't have a clue what it all meant, what it would cost me, or what the interpretation would be, but I dreamed and dreamed. From Superman capes to slicked-back, greasy hair and guitars, there wasn't anything that I didn't dream of becoming. Then came the dream killer.

In my school days of the late '50s and early '60s we had elementary school from first to sixth grade. After that came junior high. Wow, junior high, where you no longer had just one teacher, but changed rooms every hour to a new subject and teacher. You left on a bus early in the morning, went across town and didn't come back till the end of the day. This is where it all started to count. It was a bit scary, but it was reality. I was going to junior high.

My grades were decent in elementary school. I was in advanced math class and on occasion nearly made "straight A's." Notice I said "nearly." School was not my thing. Homework was out of the question, and with six rambunctious kids, Mama couldn't keep up with all of us. So, I just got by, with little effort. I knew that seventh grade was coming and that I would really start trying once I got

to Westdale Junior High. In the meantime, girls and football seemed to be enough to keep me busy.

It was the end of sixth grade and my teacher/coach was handing out report cards. It was my turn to get my final report card, get my final word of encouragement from my teacher, Coach Milligan, and wait for the summer to end so I could begin a new stage in my life.

I approached the teacher's desk, he looked at me with a stern face and said these unfortunate words, "Hornsby, you will never make it!" I thought, "What did he mean by that?" It was like someone had tried to punch me in the nose, and I was trying to dodge the blow. "Never make it?" Oh well.

I went home, gave the report card to Mama and told her. "You know what Mr. Milligan said when he gave me my report card? He said, 'Hornsby, you will never make it.'" Mama just brushed it off. "Really? Oh, Billy, just forget it," she said. And that was it. Just forget it. The problem was, I never forgot it.

When I finally got to seventh grade and for the next twelve years, I stopped dreaming. With every dream and with every failure came the words, "You will never make it." If I failed a test or missed a pass from the

quarterback, I heard those words over and over again. These words would follow me into my marriage, in every job failure, every day, every year. “You will never make it” became a state of being. Subconsciously, it began to dictate my actions and my thoughts. I was on the road to a dreamless life of failure, to nowhere. But dreams do come true, even with dream killers around.

At age 24 I became a Christian. For the first time, I understood that failure did not have to be the foundation on which I built my life. With forgiveness, not only of moral failure, but every other miscue, God was giving me a new start, a chance to overcome my past. This all came to a head at an interview pertaining to a battery of tests that I took for my employer at that time. It was a great turn of events.

Manager Trainee was the title of the position that I held with a large drug store chain. They had sent trainees from all over the state to take some tests being administered by an industrial psychologist. It was two days of intensive test taking, roundtable negotiations of mock business transactions and tons of personal-evaluation-type interviews and questions. When it was all over we took turns going into the room where we got our final “report card.” It was my turn. This upbeat man in his early forties looked at me and said, “Mr. Hornsby, you are not going to be with this company very long.” I thought, What else is new? “You’ll never make it” came back to me. I answered him and said, “That doesn’t surprise me, but why do you say that?” His answer changed my life and broke the chains the words of my sixth grade teacher had spoken over me.

For the first time, I understood that failure did not have to be the foundation on which I built my life.

He said these words: “I have given this test to thousands of people around the country and you have made the highest score of anyone that I have ever tested. The reason I said you won’t last long with this company is that this company does not have enough to offer you.” Then he said the words that changed my life for good: “I don’t know what you will end up doing, but whatever it is, you will be successful!”

When this psychologist said those words, I knew the origin. It wasn’t just him talking, but somehow God was saying to me, “The words of your sixth grade teacher will no longer have an effect on you. From now on, you will not fail, but rather succeed.” What an impact this interview had on my life. I remember getting up from the table, and before I left the building, calling my brother Frank. “Frank, I want to tell you what just happened.” I relayed the story of the years of being under the power of the negative, dream-killing words of my teacher and then what had just happened in this industrial psychologist’s office. “Frank, God has just reversed the curse!”

With that, my whole life changed. I started dreaming again.

Life Declarations

Read these words aloud, and receive the truth from God's Word.

**–I am blessed with God's supernatural wisdom, and I have clear direction for my life.–I am blessed with creativity, with courage, with ability, and with abundance.–I am blessed with strong will, self-control, and self-discipline.–I am blessed with a great family, good friends, good health, and with faith, favor, and fulfillment.–I am blessed with success, supernatural strength, promotion, and divine protection.–I am blessed with an obedient heart and with a positive outlook on life.–I declare that any curse that has ever been spoken over me, any negative evil word that has ever come against me, is broken right now.–I am blessed in the city. I am blessed in the country. I am blessed when I go in. I am blessed when I come out.–Everything I put my hands to is going to prosper and succeed.
–I am blessed!**

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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9

WEEK

The Living Word

Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do.
(Joshua 1:6-8)

Imagine a friend offering you a special gift that would guarantee direction, prosperity, and success. He says it will give you the ability to rise above any circumstance and stand against any enemy and that it will keep you from sin, destruction, and despair. Wouldn't you want this? These guarantees are actually promises, and they are a gift to those who read the Bible and apply its principles to their daily lives.

Ask Yourself: Am I regularly consuming the Word of God and letting its truth replace my old way of thinking?

Write out John 1:1-3.

There is power in the Word of God to change your life.

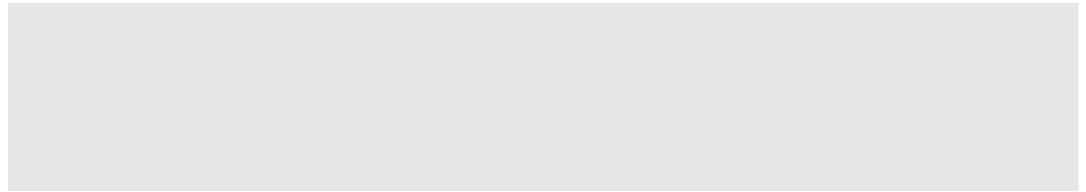
Jesus was present at the world's beginning, and He is the Word. Jesus and the Word of God are the same thing, which has profound implications! Jesus was manifested in the flesh as the Word, and we have the same thing manifested on written pages. If Jesus were to show up in the flesh right now where you are sitting, and if there was anyone around you who was sick or depressed, you probably wouldn't have any trouble believing that Jesus could and would heal them and set them free.

The same power that is in Jesus is in the Word. *The Word of God is powerful.* We have to receive that truth so that the Word can work. The reason we feel the Word has lost its power is that we've stopped mixing it with faith. It's not because the Word has changed; it's because we have stopped mixing our faith with the Word. If you want to fall in love with Jesus, find Him in the Word, and make the Word a priority in your life. If you want more power, consume more of His Word. Then the Word will come alive.

Fill in the blank from John 6:63: It is the Spirit who gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very _____ I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

The word “Spirit” is *pneuma* in the Greek, and it means “the Presence or breath of God.” The Bible is not just a bunch of words in a book that you can learn to make things better; but instead, they are words that have the power to bring about their own fulfillment.

Write out Isaiah 55:11.



The Word is literally Spirit and life. If you try to understand the Bible purely with your mind, it will be dry and without power. Of course, studying the Word is a good thing, but when we don't include the Spirit of God, the words we read appear to be exactly that, just words on a page. Perhaps your experience with the Bible has been less than exciting up to this point—be assured you are not alone. Like trying to read a novel without the correct prescription glasses, many of us are trying to read the Bible without the one thing that will help us see, the Spirit of God.

“But I have a greater witness than John—my teachings and my miracles. The Father gave me these works to accomplish, and they prove that he sent me. And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you. You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” (John 5:36-39)

In the passage above, Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, who knew the Scriptures better than anyone at that time—they could even recite the first five books of the Old Testament. But Jesus pointed out that there was more to knowing God than intellectually knowing the Scriptures. If you think that you can just wake up every morning and read the Bible to get your thought for the day, you have missed the big picture that *the Bible can come alive and bring real change in your life.*

Ask Yourself: Am I reading the Bible out of duty or out of desire to know God?

The Word Revealed

One of the most incredible stories of the Bible is the account of young Mary and her visit with the angel Gabriel who tells her she is about to become mother to the Savior of the world. Take a look at the details in Luke 1:26-37.

THINK ABOUT IT

Readjust your beliefs, views, and opinions to line up with the Word of God, and not the other way around.

In this narrative, God's Word becomes life. Mary's initial response to the angel was to inquire how could she bear a child as a virgin. In verse 37 the angel Gabriel says, "Nothing is impossible with God." The word "nothing" in Greek is two words: *no rhema*. Rhema is the Greek word for "word," and it means revealed word. You may have experienced the rhema Word of God listening to a sermon—it seemed like the words leaped from the microphone or speakers and landed right in your heart. Or maybe it happened while you were reading your Bible—the words jumped off the page and seemed to speak to the battle you were facing. That's the Word at work! When it becomes revelation to you, no word God speaks will be void of the power for it to happen.

Write out Luke 1:38, and discover Mary's response to the angel's news.

After the Word became revelation to her, she believed. She had settled in her heart that whatever God spoke to her would be true. When the rhema Word came, she was able to obey. Have you settled it in your heart that once you hear God speak, you will obey? If the Word of God doesn't seem to work for you or you see things in the Word that just don't seem to happen, remember that God is not looking for your understanding or even your cooperation; He's looking for your obedience. We should say, "God, I may not understand it, but I choose to trust You anyway."

Can you remember a time when you experienced the rhema Word of God?

Revelation Catalyst

Ways to Activate the Word of God in Your Life

Make God's Word a priority – We will always make time for things that are important to us. Just as our bodies need food for fuel, our spirits need the Word. As you spend time reading your Bible each day, it will come alive to you.

Meditate on Scriptures – Read the Word, and think about it. Study it, say it to yourself, talk about it with your friends, write it down in a journal, and post it on your refrigerator or wall. This paves the way for rhema or revelation to take place, and puts faith into motion.

Believe what you read – Choose to believe the Word is true. God says that it is impossible to please Him without faith. The reason people don't like to pray is because their prayers don't seem to work. Faith makes prayer work.

Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word about Christ. (Romans 10:17, NIV)

Psalm 1:2 says the righteous man delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. God gives us revelation through His Word. The revelation gives us faith. Then faith makes things happen!

Food for Thought

“Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.” (Joshua 1:6-7)

Write out Joshua 1:8.

Joshua was Moses' successor, and his task was to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land. For this mission to be successful, he had to teach the Israelites some principles about the Word of God. In the verse you just wrote, the word “meditate” means chew the cud. In other words, you should get all the nutrients out of it, and swallow it. Then, recall it again, and chew on it some more, and swallow it again. Chew on it all day long, and you'll be mindful of it, able to do what it says. This is the secret to having the Word come alive in your life.

Living Words

Ways to Meditate on the Word of God

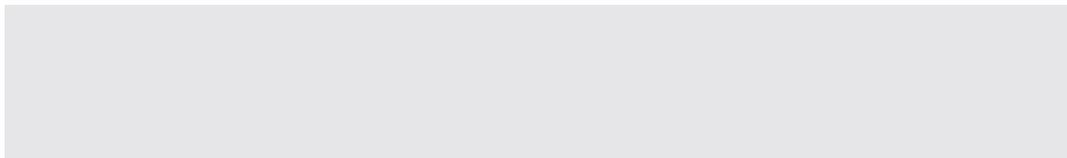
Speak God's Word out loud.

It's not enough just to read it every day with daily Bible reading. You need to find Scripture that you can speak. The purpose is not to convince God that it's true but rather to remind yourself that it is. When the Word comes out of your mouth, it can build your faith. Speak the Word over situations. For example, when you face trouble or battles, use verses you have memorized,

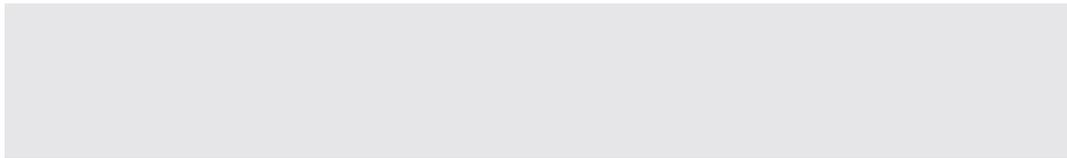
such as 1 John 4:4: "Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world." (NASB)
If the passage is not in first person, change it to first person by putting your name in it.
When nothing seems to make sense, remind yourself, out loud, of the truth. Read Luke
10:19 like this: God has given me (put your name here) *"power to tread on serpents
and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means
hurt me."* (KJV)

*Write out the following verses, and put your name into them.
Then say them out loud.*

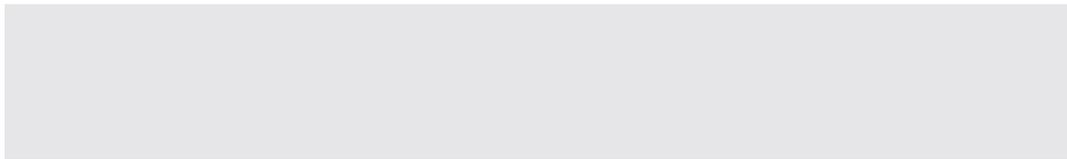
Romans 8:37



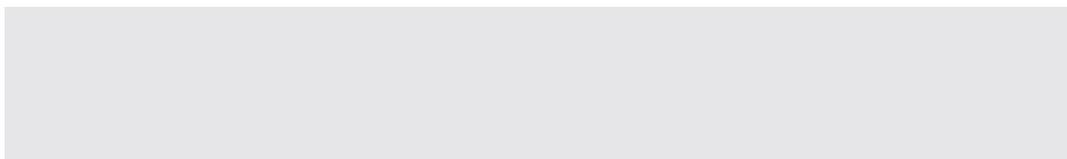
Psalms 27:1



Psalms 103:2-3



Philippians 4:19



Think about the Word day and night.

If you are tuned in to God for only one of your sixteen waking hours, then the rest of the fifteen hours you may be tuned into your job, the TV, or your problems. Have you ever wondered why that world is more real to us than God and His truth? It's because you spend more time in that world. Bring your world and God's world together, and make them one.

Your secular world shouldn't be any different than your sacred world. In meditation, frequency is the key; it's not how much, it's how often. Reading through the Bible three times a year may be a great goal, but it will be meaningless if you aren't meditating on the Word. Learn how to find nuggets and chew on them; do this day and night. Read a verse ten times in a day instead of reading for 30 minutes.

Read Deuteronomy 6:6-9, and make a list of the actions we are to take in regards to God's commandments.

In Proverbs 3:1-4, underline what you are to do with God's Words. My child, never forget the things I have taught you. Store my commands in your heart. If you do this, you will live many years, and your life will be satisfying. Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will earn a good reputation.

Read Psalm 119:97-100, and list the benefits of meditating on God's Word.

Do what is written.

Sometimes you are great at studying the Word, learning it, getting excited about it, but do we consistently do what it says? What would it be like if you started practicing the Bible? If you want to be prosperous and successful, then here's the secret: "Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed." (Joshua 1:8) The promises of God are fulfilled when we walk in obedience to His Word.

Read James 1:22. According to this verse how can we deceive ourselves?

In James 1:23–25 we find a spiritual law of God. "For if you listen to the Word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it." The promise has a premise.

Make your Bible time sacred—don't let anybody interrupt. Get one verse that comes alive, say it out loud, think about it all day long, do it, and see what happens.

Meditation will turn to revelation.

Revelation will activate faith.

When faith is activated, things change!

As you have studied the Word of God in these last few lessons, hopefully your faith has been activated. Meditating on God's Word always has that result.

With God's Word in your heart, your words will bring forth life, and you will be an agent of change in your own life and the lives of others.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling, occupying the central portion of the page below the question.

Section

Vessels of Honor

page 115-157

3



LIFE

God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (Acts 10:38, NIV)

Three Things to Know

1. Demons are _____

And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. (Revelation 12:7-9, NIV)

2. Demons want to _____

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith... (1 Peter 5:8-9, NIV)

Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:11, NIV)

3. Demons respond to a _____

... the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (1 John 4:4, NIV)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:10-12, NIV)

Authority

1. The highest authority _____

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. (Luke 10:17-19, NIV)

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth. (Philippians 2:10, NIV)

2. The authority of _____

Matthew 4 and Luke 4 ... "It is written..."

3. The authority of the _____

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony... (Revelations 12:11, NIV)

Three Daily Steps

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. (Matthew 10:1, NIV)

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39, NIV)

1. Submit yourself _____

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:7-8, NIV)

2. Close any _____

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, NIV)

In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. (Ephesians 4:26-27, NIV)

3. Confront your _____

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5, NIV)

LIFE videos can be viewed at churchofthehighlands.com/life

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

WEEK

11

Vessels of Honor

“In a wealthy home some utensils are made of gold and silver, and some are made of wood and clay. The expensive utensils are used for special occasions, and the cheap ones are for everyday use. If you keep yourself pure, you will be a utensil God can use for His purpose. Your life will be clean, and you will be ready for the Master to use you for every good work.”

(2 Timothy 2:20-21 MSG)

Hopefully by now, you are starting to see a new way of living, a new way of viewing yourself, and a new way of viewing God. When you were still far away, He came looking for you and His love for you is overwhelming. He forgave your sins, gave you abundant life, and is preparing a place for you in heaven. He also made you with specific skills and talents and a unique personality, and all of those things can be used to reach others, to help them understand that God loves them, too, and that His plan has always been for them to have an abundant life.

Silver & Gold

In the passage that begins this chapter, Paul uses an analogy of items in a house to describe believers and how we can be useful to God by serving Him and fulfilling our respective destinies. We see that some items are inexpensive and ordinary, but others are honorable, used for special occasions—in the Master’s hand, these are the utensils that accomplish great things. Every person is at a different place in his or her walk with Christ. No two stories are the same, and no one starts out as silver or gold; it is a process. It is God who prepares us, refines us, and makes us honorable. Fine china is used for noble purposes, not paper plates. If you decide you aren’t satisfied with being a paper plate and want the next level of Christianity, you can have it! You may not feel very special or honorable at this moment, but God sees you this way. You are not defined or limited by your past. *He makes all things new, brand new* (2 Corinthians 5:17), and He wants you to be a vessel of honor.

Ask Yourself: Am I satisfied where I am with God? How do I want my life to be different?

We may look at another person’s life and think he or she is a stellar Christian. He may look holy and righteous, but sometimes it can be deceiving. We can’t tell from the outside what is going on inside a person’s heart. When you look at dishes in a dishwasher, sometimes you can’t tell if they have been washed. Even if you inspect them closely and they look clean, they may be covered in tiny germs. You wouldn’t want to eat on a plate that is dirty no matter how clean it looks on the surface! The Lord knows when there is something in our lives that keeps us from being fit for His use and every good work. Will you let the Lord put the spotlight on your life? John 16:8 says that He convicts the world of sin, and He will judge us according to His righteousness. The Lord wants to bring you to another level of personal integrity and move you from the paper plate domain to the fine china realm. The Lord will do a miracle in your life if you will allow Him.

Can you think of any areas of your life that you are willing to let the Lord shine His light on and clean up? Write them out below as a way of offering them to the Lord.

Justification and Sanctification

In Week Four, Spiritual Order, we discussed justification and sanctification. Remember, justification is an event that takes place when you are saved. When Jesus becomes your Savior, at that very moment every sin of your past is wiped clean. God removes the junk of yesterday, just as if you had never sinned. When He looks at you, you are perfect in His sight.

“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.” (Romans 8:33 NIV)

THINK ABOUT IT

You begin to live only when you give your life away.

Sanctification is when we let God make us more like Him. This is not an event; it's the process of becoming fit for the Master. It's a journey to allow God to mold and transform our character. Let's look again at 2 Timothy 2:21. It says, “If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.” Here, the word “master” is the Greek word *despotes*, which means a person who is a ruler with absolute power and authority over others. We often think of God as Friend, Savior, Protector, and He is all of those things—but He is also Lord. This means that He calls the shots! We must become servants of the Lord before He can fulfill His purpose in us. The servant level of our journey is actually the highest level.

Write out Matthew 20:26.

Read the four Stages listed below, and identify where you are right now.

Four Stages of Christianity

- Unbelievers become believers.
- Believers become disciples who begin to grow.
- Disciples become leaders who find their purpose in life.
- Leaders become servants.

Honor In Action

Offer my body.

“Dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will accept. When you think of what He has done for you, is this too much to ask?” (Romans 12:1)

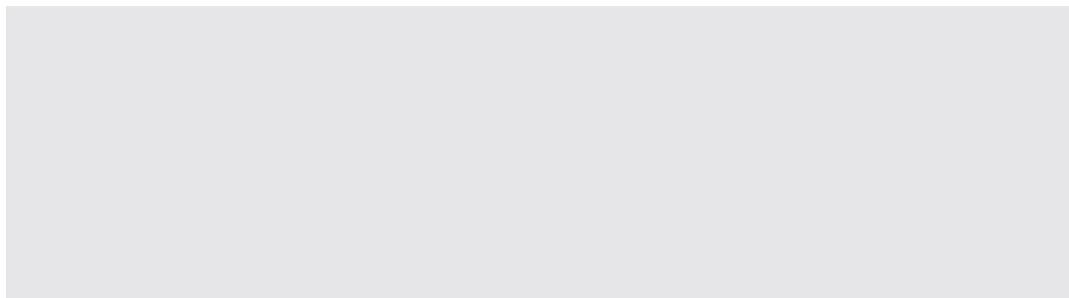
Why the body? Because it is the place where sin functions. It could be something we say with our mouths, something we look at with our eyes, or something we touch. In Job 31:1, a righteous man says, “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust upon a young woman.” When we are intentional, our decisions will be different. You will be well on your way to becoming a vessel of honor if you are willing to say each day, “Here I am Lord, clean me up. Take each member of my body and the things that I have done and wash me. Take my appetites, my addictions, my habits, my tongue, my attitudes, and consecrate them.”

Underline the first word of each command in the following verse:

Run from anything that stimulates youthful lust. Follow anything that makes you want to do right. Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts. (2 Timothy 2:22)

Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to its lustful desires. Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God. Sin is no longer your master, for you are no longer subject to the law, which enslaves you to sin. Instead, you are free by God's grace. (Romans 6:12-14)

Here is a way you can offer your body to God. Use Romans 6:12-14 (above) as a prayer guide. Write it down in the box below, and say it out loud. You could start your prayer like this: "Lord, I don't want sin to control the way I live. Show me the areas where I have allowed sin into my life and used my body dishonorably."



Renew my mind.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.” (Romans 12:2)

Why renew my mind? We are living sacrifices that keep crawling off the altar. Sin functions in the body, but the mind controls the body. Sin begins in the mind.

“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5, NIV)

The Bible tells us spiritual warfare is a part of following Christ. Many Christians love God, but have no clue how to fight. It is a necessity because your enemy, the devil, is scheming to destroy you (1 Peter 5:8).

One of the ways we fight is by demolishing arguments. An argument is an idea. The devil’s job is to give you thoughts that are contrary to God’s thoughts. There are a lot of ideas, even about God, that are simply wrong because they are contrary to Scripture. Don’t listen to these voices; listen to the Word of God. For example, if the Bible says, “By His stripes you are healed” (Isaiah 53:5), believe it! Warfare is exchanging the report of the world for the report of the Lord. Peace can reign and rule in your heart simply because the Word says it can.

Here is the main question in spiritual warfare: Can the devil get you to believe him? We must take thoughts captive and compare them to what the Bible says is true. Minimize your exposure to worldly thinking, such as music, TV, movies, books, and entertainment, and saturate yourself with His Word. When you turn off the programming of the world, the voice of God will become clearer to you.

Renewing our mind by the Word of God means we use Scripture to combat the lies of the enemy. In the following chart, write the truth from Scripture that would take captive the lie of the enemy.

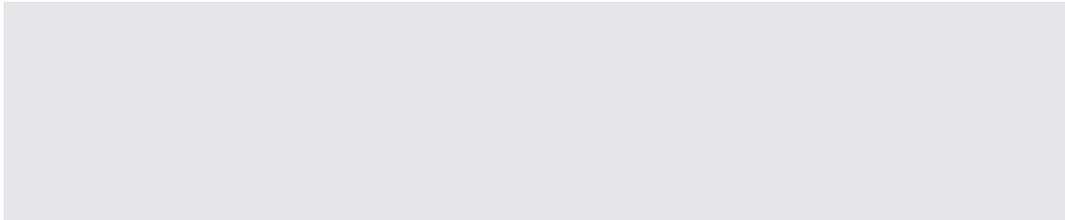
Lie of the Enemy	Truth from Scripture
You are confused.	1 Corinthians 2:16
You are fearful.	2 Timothy 1:7
There is no hope.	Jeremiah 29:11
You're going to die.	Psalm 118:17
Something bad is going to happen.	Psalm 91:10
God can't hear you.	Psalm 34:17
Nothing will ever change.	Isaiah 43:18–19

Surrender my will.

“Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is.” (Romans 12:2)

Why surrender my will? Because the body acts out sin; the mind controls the body; but the will controls my mind. As we surrender our will, His perfect will becomes the goal of our lives. Jesus told us to pray this way: “Your kingdom come, Your will be done.” That means don’t come to prayer with your agenda. We cannot manipulate God. Instead approach Him with this mentality: “Lord, you are my Shepherd, I shall not want. What I want is what You want.” *Come to Him with a neutral heart.* If you are leaning strongly one way or the other, God’s voice will be difficult to discern.

Write out Luke 22:42.



When we pray this way and surrender our will, we are able to honor God with every part of our lives. When we do that, we become honorable and useful to the Lord. He will stir up purpose, and we will begin to realize our dreams and reach others with the Good News about Jesus.

Royal Rumble

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

Being useful in the Kingdom has its price. You will get the attention of the enemy, and his attacks are to be anticipated and taken as a sign of encouragement; you are a threat to his plans to keep the world in darkness. Here’s some good news: You belong to God, and the enemy cannot change that. You can also prepare for battle by studying your opponents tactics. The enemy knows the best way to delay your progress is to trap you in sin. This trap often comes in the form of enticements—things that seem better or appeal more to you than what you have. When we are tempted, our character is tested through desires in our soul and body.

“But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” (James 1:14–15, NKJV)

Using this passage, fill in the blanks

_____ leads to _____ which leads to _____.

“Remember, when you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong, and He never tempts anyone else.” (James 1:13)

God never tempts us! Satan and his hosts of demons are the tempters. Satan is a created being and cannot be everywhere at the same time. The Bible says that when he fell from heaven, he took one third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:4). Demons are Satan's servants sent out to destroy our lives. Satan has had the role of tempting mankind since he tempted Eve in the garden. Even Jesus was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1). Jesus, our High Priest, "understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same temptations we do, yet He did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15). Because He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, we can stand against temptation (1 John 4:4).

Write out Ephesians 6:12.

Ask Yourself: Am I wasting time trying to fight people when I should take the fight to the real enemy?

Often the ideas the enemy attacks us with are so subtle and tailor-made for us that we will believe that the thoughts are our own. But the Bible says we as believers have the power in us to withstand every temptation of the enemy. Read James 4:7. What happens when we choose to resist the devil's temptations?

Write out I Corinthians 10:13. What will God do for you when the temptations seem unbearable?

Jesus gives us insight into how to withstand temptation. In the garden of Gethsemane, before He was arrested and crucified, He told His disciples, “Keep alert and pray. Otherwise temptation will overpower you. For though the spirit is willing enough, the body is weak” (Matthew 26:41). In other words, just keep the dialogue going with God. Open communication keeps us safe and aware. Wise parents of teenagers know the value in simply talking to their sons or daughters. A strong relationship between parents and children provides protection.

Can you see the active role that you play in your own deliverance from evil? You have the choice and power to withstand the enemy. You can choose to succumb to satan’s pressure and give him a foothold in your life (Ephesians 4:27), or you can submit to God.

The Breakdown

THINK ABOUT IT

Our enemy has been defeated, but we have to enforce his defeat in our lives.

For rock climbers, a foothold is the place they step so they can advance up the side of a mountain. For the enemy, it is a base for advancing his destruction of God’s plans in our lives. A foothold gives him control over an area of the soul, and it can occur when we give in to temptation. Over time, as we give in over and over to a particular temptation, the control in that area will grow. Proverbs 5:22 says, “An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him.” A foothold can become a stronghold, or a fortress, in the soul. Strongholds must be torn down.

Areas of bondage can include anger and rage, abuse, lust, alcoholism, drugs, profanity, or lying. The list is unlimited. Footholds can be lodged in our souls early in life, particularly if the environment was conducive to a certain sin. For example, if there was often rage in your home, rage might be a natural way to respond for you. Areas of bondage can also be developed because of the generational sin of our parents or grandparents. Jesus says in John 8:34, “I assure you that everyone who sins is a slave of sin.” Underline what we become if we continue to sin.

Golden Rules

“Perhaps God will change those people’s hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil’s trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.” (2 Timothy 2:25–26)

To combat enemy attacks (oppression), we need to do two things: repent of sin and cast off the powers of darkness. Often people believe that simply admission of sin clears their conscience and frees them from any consequence or responsibility. Admitting a sin is a part of repentance, but it is not repentance. Repentance means to turn away from the sin and choose to no longer continue in it. Titus 2:12 shows us that we can say “no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and live self-controlled, upright and godly lives.”

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What might be missing in a person who struggles with turning from sin?

Read Romans 2:4. Name something else that leads us to repentance.

If you find yourself in a cycle of sin, don't give up hope! God desires to help you break the cycle. Ask Him to give you godly sorrow that leads to repentance. Meditate on His goodness and His kindness. And remember, “The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.” (Psalm 37:23–24)

“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NKJV)

When we repent, 1 John 1:7 says that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. But often people feel that they aren't forgiven even after confessing and repenting of a sin many times. Have you ever had that experience? It may be because you need to cast off any demon spirit associated with the sin. Don't be afraid to do so—the Holy Spirit is with you; God promises to never leave or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8). Remember, “We use God's mighty weapons, not mere worldly weapons, to knock down the devil's strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Unrepented sin over time will allow the enemy to gain a foothold, which feels like a “hook” lodged in your soul. When you are least prepared, there will be a tug on that hook that will make you feel unworthy and defeated. Even though the blood of Jesus has covered that sin through your repentance, you need to tell the enemy to get out by casting him off in the name of Jesus and removing the hook. This will destroy the demonic hold in that area and release you to experience the peace of God's forgiveness. After the hook is removed, ask the Lord to heal the wound and fill the space with His peace and power.

Write out Romans 13:12.

As an example, consider the following prayers for the release of the bondage of, or continual struggle with, the sin of lying.

Repent: “Dear God, in the Name of Jesus, I repent of the sin of lying. I repent of the destruction and lack of trust caused by this sin. I choose to be an honest person and truthful with all of my words.”

Cast Off: “I now cast off every lying spirit. Satan, you have been a liar from the beginning, and you are the father of lies. You have no more legal right in my life. In the Name of Jesus, I break all ties with every lying spirit that has dominated my life. I break every hold that these spirits have had on my life. I cancel every agreement

I have made with you. I command you to remove your foothold from my life and leave me now. I release peace and power of the Holy Spirit in my life, and Lord, I ask You to give me wisdom and strength to overcome darkness and stand on Your truth every day. In the Name of Jesus and by His blood, I pray. Amen.”

Contemplate the following areas and pray through prayers of repentance and renouncing in any areas that you believe satan may have gained a foothold. Pray for the Holy Spirit's discernment and guidance. He desires for you to be free!

rejection

greed

abuse

guilt/shame

self-hatred/
unworthinesslust/
sexual impurity

depression

control

pride

anger

unforgiveness

fear

Honor Roll

You were made to be a Vessel of Honor. This status will include fighting the enemy and reordering your life. Though it can be challenging and messy at times—battles typically are—the rewards are immeasurable. Obedience brings blessing to your life (Deuteronomy 11:27). And in addition to that, God will use you as a catalyst for peace in your family, joy in your neighborhoods, and change in your schools and places of business.

Though the big vision may seem a bit overwhelming, success will come by simply doing the little things: Spend time with the Lord, and apply Tree of Life living to the decisions you make each day. In this way, you will automatically begin to shine a light before men that drives away darkness and fills a lost, broken, and lonely world with great hope.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Write down any areas that the Lord has shown you where you need deliverance from a foothold or stronghold. Use a concordance to look up this topic, and write out Scriptures that apply. These verses are weapons that will stop the advancement of the enemy and his condemnation and keep you in line with the Tree of Life.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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the \mathbb{R}^n -valued function \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (1) if and only if \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2).

Let us assume that \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2). Then, for any $t \in \mathbb{R}$, we have

$$\mathbf{f}(t) = \mathbf{f}(0) + \int_0^t \mathbf{f}'(s) ds = \mathbf{f}(0) + \int_0^t \mathbf{A}(s) \mathbf{f}(s) ds.$$

Since \mathbf{f} is a solution of the system (2), we have $\mathbf{f}(0) = \mathbf{0}$. Therefore, we have

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WEEK 12

Worship

“For the dead cannot praise You; they cannot raise their voices in praise. Those who go down to destruction can no longer hope in your faithfulness. Only the living can praise you as I do today. Each generation can make known your faithfulness to the next.”

– Isaiah 38:18–19

Hopefully, during the past couple of months, something wonderful has happened; you realized that God is completely in love with you. In response to this love, you have come to trust Him, and because of that relationship, you have fallen in love with Him. Being in love with God allows you to move from duty to devotion. You don't have to follow His commands, you want to because you know they are good.

An overflow of your relationship with God is Worship. Worship is more than a song; it is a lifestyle. It can be expressed through acts of service, words of affirmation, and gift giving, as well as singing, dancing, and even shouting. Living this way produces purity, confidence, and strength in us, and then something amazing happens: We become warriors in God's kingdom.

Love & War

Worship is actually an act of warfare against satan and demonic forces! Our worship puts the devil on the run and increases our ability to fight against powers of darkness in the heavenly realm. Psalm 149:6 says, “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand.”

When you give God your high praises, it is warfare against satan. When we give God all our attention, we strip the enemy of any power over our souls or our bodies. In His Presence, we are protected from all the schemes of the enemy. We become like Jesus who said that the ruler of this world “has nothing in Me” (John 14:30, NASB).

How are we able to come boldly into the presence of God? The blood of Jesus. Hebrews 9:22 says, “Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.” And without the forgiveness of sins there is no presence of God. The blood of Jesus has removed every spot and stain from your life and invites you into the presence of God.

Ask Yourself: Have I considered the power and the privilege of my role as a worshipper?

Nothing but the Blood

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God said “You will surely die.” Obviously, He was referring to spiritual death because they went on to live very long lives after they were banished from the garden. Remember, sin has consequences. But even though God departed man's spirit when man sinned, He did not abandon His creation. For Adam and Eve, He covered them with garments of animal skins. This was the first blood sacrifice.

Throughout the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins could happen only through sacrifices of certain animals. God considered these blood sacrifices to be acts of worship. The blood of the animals would be poured on the horns of the brazen altar that sat at the entrance to the tabernacle. Then it was taken into the Holy of Holies, a sacred place containing the Ark of the Covenant, which housed the tablets with God's Law written on them (the Ten Commandments). The blood would be put on the mercy seat of the ark, and when the sacrifice was appropriate and right, the presence of God would fall.

THINK ABOUT IT

The very Presence of God now lives in your heart because of Jesus.

In the Holy of Holies, there was a thick veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (also called the Most Holy Place) where the presence of God dwelled. This veil represented the inapproachability of God to anyone but the high priest. When Jesus gave up His Spirit on the cross, the veil was torn from top to bottom. Notice that it was not torn from bottom to top. God tore this veil from above because He was moving out of that place. A few weeks later at the feast of Pentecost, God moved into the hearts of believers.

Truth Unveiled

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.” (Acts 2:2-3)

Write out Acts 2:4.

This incredible experience with the Presence of God described in Acts 2 was made possible by the acceptable sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. Thank God for this new and better way for us! Once and for all time, Jesus, our High Priest, “took blood into that Most Holy Place, but not the blood of goats and calves. He took his own blood, and with it He secured our salvation forever” (Hebrews 9:12). *This salvation includes eternal life with God, healing for our souls and our bodies, and deliverance from all the powers of the enemy.*

Read Revelation 12:10-12. God says that satan, the accuser of the believers who accuses them before God day and night, is overcome. Write out verse 11.

The blood of Jesus has overcome satan. As believers, *we are fighting from victory and not to victory!* The veil has already been torn; the victory has already been won; satan is a defeated foe. There is nothing separating us from God's Presence! Now, we can be in an intimate relationship with Him. Like a groom, He has already declared and expressed His love for us; we need only to receive that love and learn how to love Him in return.

First Love

The one thing that God wants more than anything else is our hearts. In Matthew 15:7-9, Jesus says there are people who honor Him with their words, "but their hearts are far away. Their worship is a farce." Genuine worship comes from a heart consistently connected with God, and those connections happen in two ways: corporately (at church or other gatherings with fellow believers) and personally (anytime, anywhere).

THINK ABOUT IT

Worship is the highest priority of the believer.

Corporate worship is important because our faith increases when we join together with other like-minded believers. Even if you come to church or small group distracted and burdened by cares, your attitude can quickly change in a worshipful environment. Personal worship can only be accomplished if we take initiative, adjust our attitudes, and cultivate an atmosphere of praise. Wherever we are, any time of day, we can have the attitude of a worshipper and enjoy the presence of God.

Ask Yourself: Am I still fighting for control of my life? What is keeping me from letting go?

Lessons from a River

Though we desire to have a real relationship with God—one that we have seen and heard is possible—sometimes it just doesn't seem possible. Have you ever tried to read the Bible but find yourself reading the same verses over and over without any progress? Or have you tried to pray, but it feels like your prayers are hitting the ceiling? If you can relate, you may need to evaluate your level of surrender. *God wants your trust as much as He wants your heart because without your trust, your heart will never be completely His.*

We often say, "You are my Lord," but then when there's a bump in the road, we grab at the steering wheel. Most Christians get distracted by trying to find the happiest, most pleasurable, most successful way to live, but the best way to discover God's will is to surrender control. It starts when we say, "My life is not my own. I know I've been bought with a high price, and I am Your slave by choice. What would you like me to do, King Jesus?" With that kind of attitude, He will lead you and bless you abundantly. In the middle of His will, He will give you success, happiness, and pleasure.

Four Levels of Control in Worship

—**Ankle-deep:** We can enjoy refreshing in God's presence, but we are in full command. We can splash and play, then choose to walk out of the river with no lasting effects on our lives.

—**Knee-deep:** The current of God (His Presence) can be felt, but we maintain control. In knee-deep water, we have a good view of those who've ventured out to deeper waters, and we see that "in His presence is fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11), but we still find security on the riverbank.

Read Ezekiel 47:1-12.

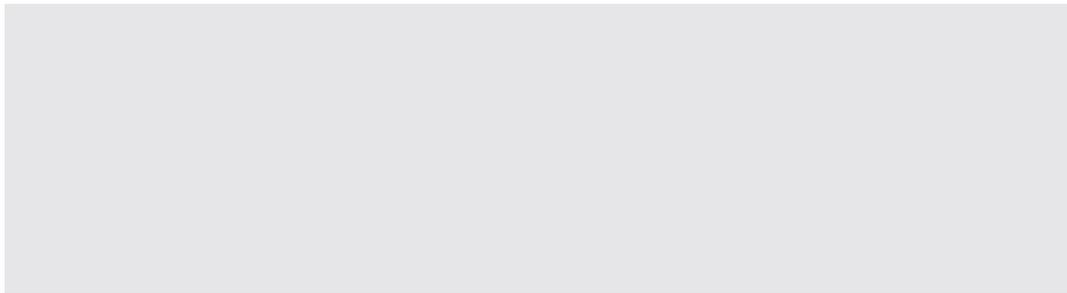
The interesting thing about this vision is that the river symbolizes the presence of God. The bottom, or the ground, which includes the bank of the river, represents the world. As we give up control to God, we will begin to experience His Presence, which will in turn help us live in spiritual order.

—**Waist-deep:** Here, the stream of His presence is strong. We've walked into deeper water, fighting the current and struggling to keep contact with the bottom, or the world. Often the fear of what others will think or the fear of losing control will tempt us to go back to the riverbank. It is at this place that we make a crucial decision: Who will be in control: God or me?

—**The Middle of the River:** This is where we can experience all of the river. We stop fighting for control, and, instead, we pick our feet up and float, allowing His current to carry us. We go where He goes, and it is good.

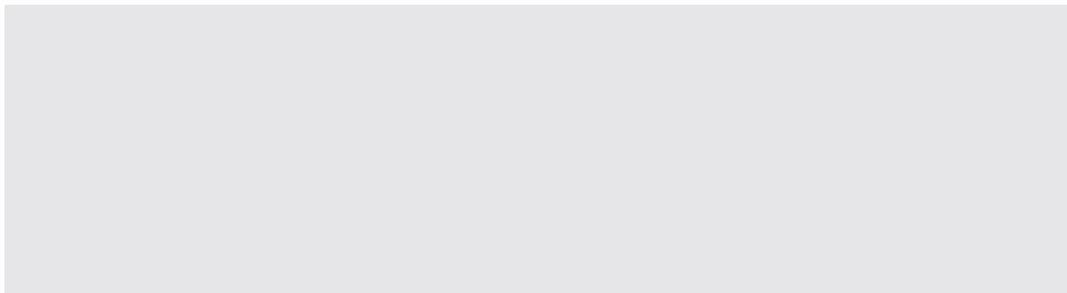
Most people want to be wet and be in ankle-deep, knee-deep, or even waist-deep water, but they want to stay in control. In other words, many want to do the “God thing,” but want to reserve just enough control that God doesn’t take them too far. Those who live this way have believed a lie that if they abandoned themselves to His control, He would make them do things they don’t want to do. They think He would embarrass them or send them to some faraway place they don’t want to be. But, the truth is God has only good things for His kids. You will never come to the place of true worship until you are honestly able to say, “God, have Your way.”

Write out Psalm 36:7-9.



God led Ezekiel back to the riverbank, and suddenly, to his surprise, there were many trees growing on both sides of the river, and the river was now teeming with life! Ezekiel 47:9 says, “Everything will live where the river goes” (NASB). The leaves of the trees will not wither, their fruit will not fail, and they will bear fruit every month because of the living waters. The trees represent healing and the fish represent harvest. Two wonderful things will happen when we abandon ourselves to God’s will and His presence: Souls will be saved and people will be healed!

Write out Proverbs 3:5-6.



In John 4, Jesus said that the time was coming when true worshippers would worship God in spirit and in truth. But what does that look like? Let's take a look at five actions below and study how they can help us become genuine worshippers.

- Give Him your affection.
- Remain committed.
- Include Him in your life.
- Be obedient.
- Show reverence.

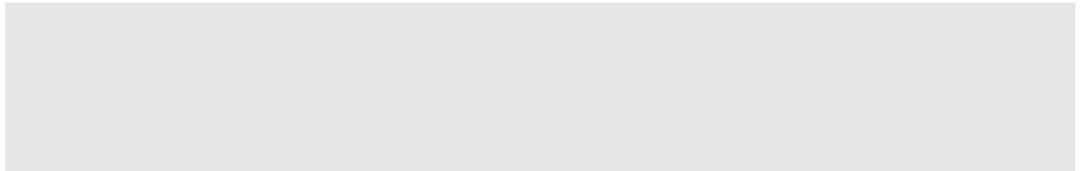
Ways to Be a True Worshipper

1. Give Him your affection.

*“For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His.”
(2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT)*

God wants to be in a covenant (devoted, unbreakable) relationship with you that involves much more than singing songs. He wants us to desire and enjoy His presence. We worship Him out of the overflow of our hearts, and because He is worthy of our best we can offer Him.

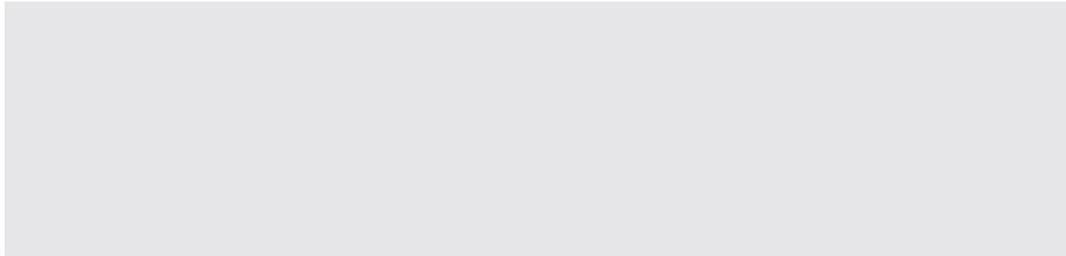
Psalm 84:1-2 is a song of craving for worship. “How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty. I long, yes, I faint with longing to enter the courts of the LORD.” Finish this passage by writing out the second half of Psalm 84:2.



2. Remain committed.

True worship means we praise God even when we don't feel like it; we are committed to worshipping Him. Typically, people are conditional with God, just as they are with sports teams. Everyone is excited about the team as long as things are going well and they are winning but are ready to abandon when things do not go the way we want them to go. In the same way, we praise Him when all is well, but become apathetic when the feeling is gone. The truth is: God is worthy of our worship in good times and bad, when we see His answers and when we don't.

The book of Daniel tells of Shadrach, Mesbach, and Abednego and how they were to be thrown in a fiery furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar. They said, “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty.” (Daniel 3:17) Write out verse 18.



Decide that your commitment to God is not conditional. You are not on this journey just because God is blessing you; you are in it because you are in a covenant relationship with Him. God responds to that level of worship.

3. Include Him in your life.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

We often struggle because our Sundays do not look like our Mondays. From the clothes we wear to the words we speak, we need to be consistent. When “church world” becomes different than the rest of our world, it forces us to compartmentalize our lives. Our secular and sacred world should look the same.

Often we don’t know how to make God fit into the marriage, parenting, jobs, vacations, or hobbies. What would happen if we made God a part of all our lives? This is the ultimate sacrifice of worship. Give Him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! When you have a headache, call upon Him. When someone wrongs you at work, call upon Him. Don’t compartmentalize; He wants all of you—because He cares about you and what happens to you. (1 Peter 5:7).

THINK ABOUT IT

This is the only relationship you will ever have where you alone determine the level of intimacy.

Write out Psalm 74:16.

God wants to be a part of every part of your life.

4. Be obedient.

The first place in the Bible that worship is mentioned is a story that reveals a heart of unconditional love for God: the story of Abraham laying Isaac on the altar in Genesis 22. Abraham trusted God with the most important thing to him—his son—and this was called worship.

Living according to what the Bible says is worship. Every day God attempts to involve us in His plans by prompting us to meet the needs of others, to stop and pray, or to enjoy recreation with our families, but we often ignore Him. When Sunday rolls around, we “worship” Him and ask Him for things. Decide to be a worshipper who will focus your heart on worship every day.

“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name.” (Hebrews 13:15)
Write out verse 16.

The greatest sacrifice we can give to God is a heart of humility that is willing to serve Him with unconditional obedience. Read this incredible promise out loud:

“The person who has My commands and keeps them is the one who [really] loves Me. I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.” (John 14:21, AMP)

5. Show reverence.

Worship and the fear of the Lord go hand in hand. In fact, Jesus said that they are actually the same thing! In Matthew 4, we find the account of Jesus overcoming the temptation of Satan in the desert. The Bible says He was tempted in every way that we are tempted (Hebrews 4:15). In response to each temptation, Jesus gained victory with a powerful weapon of warfare, the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), which is the Word of God.

After the first two temptations, Jesus accurately quoted the Scriptures; but after the third temptation, He did something very interesting. He said, “Get out of here, Satan, for the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.’” This quote was taken from Deuteronomy 6:13. The curious thing about this response is that He alters the Scripture. Deuteronomy 6:13 actually says, “Fear the Lord your God”—this is Jesus’ commentary on worship. Jesus was the Word, so he didn’t misquote Himself, He was giving us insight. The kind of fear that He was talking about and the word worship are interchangeable, and Jesus, who is the Word, had the liberty to give us this commentary.

“But the time is coming and is already here when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for anyone who will worship Him that way.” (John 4:23)

The Greek word for “worship” in this verse is *proskuneo*, which literally means “to kiss the master’s hand in reverence.” It indicates love and respect. Instead of fright, this kind of fear induces esteem and reverence. When we fear the Lord, we actually feel safe. The word worship means you enjoy resting in His presence, but if He tells you to jump, you say, “How high, Lord?”

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding. To Him belongs eternal praise.” (Psalm 111:10, NIV)

Look up the following verses. What does each say about the fear of the Lord?

Proverbs 1:7

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 14:26

Proverbs 14:27

Proverbs 19:23

In Spirit & Truth

“Here is my final conclusion: Fear God and obey his commands, for this is the duty of every person. God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)

Each day we have an opportunity to live and love well, in ways that line up with the Word of God. We can't separate our love for Him from our submission to Him. God says He wants us to not only worship Him in spirit with expression, gratitude, and intimacy, but also in truth.

So, how do we worship in spirit and in truth? We need to ask Him to purify us. Real worship is pure worship. We can't come into church, jump up and down and clap our hands with outward expressions of praise, while not allowing God to deal with our secret sin and the areas where we have fallen short. Hear the heart of humbleness in this prayer:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.” (Psalm 139:23)

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area of your life that has grieved or quenched Him and be willing to come to a place of truth. Know this: The Holy Spirit convicts, but the devil condemns. Condemnation says, “Here's the problem. There's no way out.” That is not the voice of God. Our Heavenly Father tells us there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). He sent His Son to save you, not condemn you (John 3:17). Conviction through the Holy Spirit says, “There's the problem, but there is hope.”

Pure Prayer

God's desire is to purify you. If there is an area that you know you need to deal with, ask Him to forgive you. Here is an example of this kind of prayer. Father, forgive me for offending you and for going my own way. I make no excuses for it; I confess my sin right now. (Say out loud anything that you need to let go.) I want this sin out of my life, and I choose to turn away from it. I receive Your cleansing right now. I know you delight to show me mercy. Thank You, Lord, for letting me off the hook. Father, I make my decision to worship You in spirit and in truth. I worship You with all my heart and love You! In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Remember the blood of Jesus. In Isaiah 1:18 God says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow." There is nothing like the clean, pure feeling of being forgiven!

The Midnight Hour

When we are totally focused on God—His goodness, provision, healing, deliverance, holiness—we are actually in a posture of warfare against the enemy. Worship will bring down strongholds and change our environments.

Worship not only brings freedom in our lives, but it also has the power to set others free. In Acts 16:23-34, we find an account of Paul and Silas in jail. They had been arrested, flogged, and were now in the depths of a prison. Here they are, weary, surrounded by darkness, stench, and criminals, and what did they do? They worshipped.

“Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!” (Acts 16:25-26)

Salvation came to many that night, including the jailer and his entire family. That is the power of true worship. Chains falling off and people set free. When God is our first love and our focus, He will do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). Choose to love Him with your whole life, and nothing will be impossible for you.

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

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WEEK

13

Life after LIFE – How to Maintain Freedom

*“But I focus on this one thing Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.”
(Philippians 3:13-14)*

Stop for a moment, and take a look around. You have come a long way. You're the same you, yet somehow, you're not the same at all—you have experienced a taste of true freedom, and it is a beautiful thing. You think, see, and even do things differently than you did several weeks ago. No longer are you so concerned with what's behind you, but rather you can finally look ahead and see that the road is stretching out before you in a new kind of life, one marked by hope.

This freedom is indeed an incredible thing, but it is only the beginning. Staying free requires a commitment. And it is a daily one. You may find the enemy poking at old wounds or perhaps there are just some issues and experiences that seem to be lingering; we have three words for you: Do not despair. You are equipped to face any foe and your freedom is more important to God than it is to you. Community and counseling, both rooted in the Word, are incredible tools to help you along this new road. Decide today that you will continue the journey, and as you press on, you will surely find God has many incredible things in store for you.

Focus on the Prize

1. Live by the word of God.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

Choose to rearrange your thinking to line up with the Word of God and don't try to make Scripture line up with your thinking.

2. Put on the Whole Armor of God.

“Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.” (Ephesians 6:11)

Memorize Ephesians 6:10-18 and daily put on each piece of its protective armor.

3. Become a worshipper.

“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 150:6)

Allow the power of worship to keep you pure and be an offensive weapon to wield against the enemy.

4. Walk by faith.

“For we walk by faith, not by sight.” (2 Corinthians 5:7)

Decide that you will trust God and His word even if, in the natural, it seems unlikely to happen.

5. Maintain a daily prayer life.

“Never stop praying.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

Continual prayer is simply talking to God and listening for His answers.

6. Change old habits.

“Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness—righteous, holy, and true.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Make the decision that when God shows you something in your life that holds you back from His best, you will give it to Him.

7. Submit to the Lord and to those in authority.

“Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished.” (Romans 13:1-2)

Obedience is what we do with our bodies, but submission is how we feel with our hearts. God wants submission, not just obedience.

8. Get an accountability partner.

*“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.”
(James 5:16)*

We all need at least one person who knows all of our secrets and still loves us, is committed to praying for us regularly, and will constantly reflect Jesus to us.

9. Develop right Relationships.

“Don’t team up with those who are unbelievers. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14)

One of our main missions on this earth is to reach the lost, however, our spouse, our closest friends, and our mentors, must be like-minded believers.

10. Clean your house.

“So get started. Purify the people. Tell them: Get ready for tomorrow by purifying yourselves. For this is what GOD, the God of Israel, says: There are cursed things in the camp. You won’t be able to face your enemies until you have gotten rid of these cursed things.” (Joshua 7:13)

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you anything in your home or workplace that does not reflect your new life in Christ Jesus.

11. Resist the enemy.

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

We must be alert to the schemes of the enemy and resist his attacks to invade our lives. Close all open doors.

12. Always remain kingdom-focused.

“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom.” (2 Timothy 4:18)

Always remember that we are ambassadors of heaven sent to reproduce heaven here on earth. This world is not our home.

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

(Galatians 5:1, NIV)

Journal

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

A large, empty gray rectangular area intended for journaling, occupying the central portion of the page below the question.

4



Set Apart – preparing for the retreat

This semester, you have spent many hours studying scriptures and applying them to your life. No doubt there has been at least one time when the Word of God said something different than what you had previously believed; this challenged you to let go of old thinking patterns and embrace a new truth. Spiritual growth may not always be easy, but the results of this growth are always good!

The LIFE Retreat is the culmination of all that you have studied, and you do not want to miss it. The weekly teachings have been strategic to prepare you to have a powerful encounter with God.

Here are three ways to prepare your heart to receive everything that the Holy Spirit has for you:

Be expectant.

In your prayer time, confess to the Lord that you believe He can do anything. Allow the Lord to fill you with hope that this is the season for miracles in your life.

I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Maintain an attitude of worship and praise.

Set aside time each day leading up to the retreat to worship the Lord. Whatever your comfort level may be, allow yourself to go one step deeper in the waters of worship.

Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker. (Psalm 95:6)

Shut out the world.

In the days leading up to the retreat, limit your exposure to secular activities such as television, newspapers, social media, etc. Use this time to spend in prayer and reading the Bible. This media/social fast will allow your spirit to become sensitive to the voice of God.

Come close to God, and God will come close to you. (James 4:8)

Be strong, and do not fear, for your God is coming to destroy your enemies. He is coming to save you. And when he comes, he will open the eyes of the blind and unplug the ears of the deaf. The lame will leap like a deer, and those who cannot speak will sing for joy! Springs will gush forth in the wilderness, and streams will water the wasteland. (Isaiah 35:4-6)

Freedom Song – Scriptures for Living in Freedom

The secret to staying free lies within the Word. The scriptures are living and active, and they will show you how to live in the Tree of Life every single day as they strengthen your spirit. In dark times, the Word will illuminate your path; in trials, It will bring you peace. It will help you separate soul from spirit and reveal to you the purpose behind your unique passions and talents.

Ask the Lord to inscribe these truths on your heart, and they will become a part of you and all you do. No longer will old ways govern your decisions; instead, you will be transformed into a new creation that radiates the hope of heaven in joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. *Your life will be a love song in a lost and lonely world, echoing an anthem of great hope, redemption, and freedom.*

How to Fight for Freedom

It is God who arms me with strength and makes my way perfect. (2 Samuel 22:33)

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)

For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. (Romans 6:6)

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:17-18)

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24)

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Ephesians 6:13)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

When You Struggle with Authority

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. (Romans 13:1)

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Hebrews 13:17)

Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority. (1 Peter 2:13)

God is with You

The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you when you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west." (Isaiah 43:1-2, 5)

Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you. (Hebrews 13:5)

When You Struggle with Pride or Surrender

Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. (Matthew 10:38)

Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:39)

Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:4)

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. (Matthew 23:12)

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:5-6)

Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)
For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:16)

When Anger Arises

Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. (Psalm 4:4)

A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless. (Proverbs 14:16)

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. (Proverbs 14:29)

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. (Proverbs 29:11)
Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil. (Psalm 37:8)

The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. (Psalm 145: 8-9)

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more. (Hebrews 8:12)

When You Feel Rejected

Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. (Psalm 27:10)

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (Psalm 139:14)

"I took you from the ends of the earth, from its farthest corners I called you. I said, 'You are my servant. I have chosen you and have not rejected you.' " (Isaiah 41:9)

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord. (Isaiah 54:17)

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)

For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. (Ephesians 1:4)

When You Struggle with Purity

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. (Psalm 119:9)

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the well-spring of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (Matthew 5:8)

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8)

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:14)

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Hebrews 10:22)

When You Feel Ashamed

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be—you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. (Psalm 32:1)

He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. (Psalms 103:10)

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. (John 15:3)

For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as his sons

through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In Him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace. (Ephesians 1:4-7)

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. (Hebrews 8:12)

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. (1 John 2:1)

When You Face Temptation

I will set before my eyes no vile thing.
(Psalm 101:3)

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.
(Matthew 26:41)

Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. (Romans 13:14)

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were

by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:2-6)

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22)

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11-14)

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)

When You Feel Condemned

They looked to Him and were radiant; their faces were not ashamed. (Psalm 34:5)

Do not be afraid, you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated; you will forget the shame of your youth. (Isaiah 54:4)

Instead of your shame you shall have double honor. (Isaiah 61:7)

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. (John 3:17)

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, He straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first

to throw a stone at her . . .” Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:7, 10-11)

When he [satan] lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)

For the accuser of our brothers (satan), who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. (Revelation 12:10)

When You Have Been Wronged

Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.
(Proverbs 17:9)

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
(Matthew 6:14)

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.
(Mark 11:24-26)

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:17-18)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:32)

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. (Hebrews 12:15)

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:9)

When Your Heart Is Broken

I am the Lord, who heals you. (Exodus 15:26)

He is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who are crushed in spirit.
(Psalm 34:18-19)

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. (Psalm 147:3)

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.
(Isaiah 61:1-3)

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)

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:35, 38-39)

Moving Past the Past

Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. "Behold, I will do something new, now it will spring forth; will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13-14)

When You Need Peace

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. (John 14:27)

...and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)

When You Have Money Issues

The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. (Deuteronomy 28:12)

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is Yours. Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom; You are exalted as head over all. (1 Chronicles 29:11)

If your wealth increases, don't make it the center of your life. (Psalm 62:10)

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end. (Psalm 102:25-27)

Such is the fate of all who are greedy for money; it robs them of life. (Proverbs 1:19)
He who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. (Proverbs 11:18)

Greed brings grief to the whole family. (Proverbs 15:27)

Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure. (Isaiah 33:6)

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty. (Malachi 3:10-12)

When You Have Money Issues (continued)

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24)

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him. (Matthew 7:11)

The devil led Him up to a high place and showed Him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to Him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be Yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.'" (Luke 4:5-8)

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:36-38)

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. (Luke 12:33)

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? (Luke 16:11)

Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15)

Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all

things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8)

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7)

I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:11-13)

My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. (1 Timothy 6:6)

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10)

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (1 Timothy 6:17)

For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:18-22)

When You Feel Afraid

Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. (Exodus 14:13)

The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

Though an army besieges me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. (Psalm 27:3)

For in the day of trouble He will keep me safe in his dwelling; He will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. (Psalm 27:5)

You are my hiding place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with songs of deliverance. (Psalm 32:7)

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; He delivered me from all my fears. (Psalm 34:4)

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? (Psalm 56:3-5)

Cast your cares on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall. (Psalm 55:22)

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalm 91:1-2)

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name." (Psalm 91:14)

No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (Psalm 91:10-12)

The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? (Psalm 118:6)

The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid. (Proverbs 18:10)

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. (Isaiah 43:2)

Do not fear, nor be afraid; have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one. (Isaiah 44:8)

The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. (Matthew 7:25)

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." (Romans 8:15)

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. (1 John 4:18)

When Your Heart is Heavy

He is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18-19)

Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Psalm 37:4)

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. (Psalm 118:17)

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. (Psalm 139:17-18)

See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands. (Isaiah 49:16)

“Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)

For this is what the Lord says: “I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you; and you will be comforted over Jerusalem.” (Isaiah 66:12-13)

Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.” (Lamentations 3:21-24)

And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

Then Jesus said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.” When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.” (John 11:40-44)

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. (Ephesians 3:17-18)

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7)

When You Face Trials

Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Nehemiah 8:10)

For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. (Psalm 30:5)

My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God. (Psalm 42:3, 5)

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Psalm 51:12)

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. (Psalm 126:5)

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-3)

Reasons to Rejoice

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Psalm 16:11)

This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Psalm 118:24)

For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)

Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:10)

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

The Armor of God

“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:11-19)

Use this prayer as an outline to help you prepare for each day. First, put on the Armor of God, and then ask the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom, guide your steps, and help you stand and fight against the enemy.

Put on the Armor of God

The Helmet of Salvation

Thank you, Lord, for my salvation. I receive it in a new and fresh way from you and I declare that nothing can separate me now from the love of Christ and the place I shall ever have in your kingdom.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

And yes, Lord, I wear your righteousness today against all condemnation and corruption. Fit me with you holiness and purity—defend me from all assaults against my heart.

The Belt of Truth

Lord, I put on the belt of truth. I choose a lifestyle of honesty and integrity. Show me the truths I so desperately need today. Expose the lies that I am not even aware that I believe

The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace

I do choose to live for the gospel at any moment. Show me where you are working

and lead me to it. Do not let me become slack in my walk.

The Shield of Faith

Jesus, I lift the confidence that you are good against every lie and every assault of the enemy. You have good in store for me. Nothing is coming today that can overcome me because you are with me.

The Sword of the Spirit

Holy Spirit, show me specifically today the truths of the Word of God that I will need to counter the snares of the enemy. Bring them to mind throughout the day.

Connect with God

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Holy Spirit, I agree to walk in step with You in everything—in all prayer as my spirit communes with you throughout the day.

Who I Am in Christ

I Am Accepted

John 1:12	I am God's child.
John 15:15	I am Christ's friend.
Romans 5:1	I have been justified.
1 Corinthians 6:19-20	I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.
1 Corinthians 12:27	I am a member of Christ's body.
Ephesians 1:5	I have been adopted as God's child.
Ephesians 2:18	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
Colossians 1:14	I have been forgiven of all my sins.
Colossians 2:10	I am complete in Christ.

I Am Safe

Romans 8:1-2	I am free forever from condemnation.
Romans 8:28	I am assured that all things work together for good.
Romans 8:31-34	I am free from any condemning charges against me.
Romans 8:35-39	I cannot be separated from the love of God.
Philippians 1:6	I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be completed.
Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of Heaven.
2 Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and of self-control.
Hebrews 4:16	I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need.
1 John 5:18	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

I Am Important

Matthew 5:13-14	I am the salt and light of the earth.
John 15:1, 5	I am a branch of the true Vine, a channel of His life.
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
Acts 1:8	I am a personal witness of Christ.
1 Corinthians 3:16	I am God's temple.
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship.
Ephesians 3:12	I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Answer Key

WEEK 2

Separation and the First Sin

Read Genesis 3:1-8 and notice who is doing what. In verses 7 & 8, what did Adam & Eve do?

The Bible says Adam and Eve sinned. Their eyes were opened, they covered up, and they hid.

Read Genesis 3:9. What did God do?

God called to the man, "Where are you?" God came looking for them.

Read James 4:8 and 2 Chronicles 15:2. What do these passages teach us about our relationship with God?

As far as God is concerned, nothing can separate us from His love. If we seek Him, we will find Him. If we walk with Him and draw near to Him, He will draw near to us.

Four truths about the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

According to Colossians 2:3, what do we find hidden in Jesus?

In Him lie all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Read Genesis 3:22-24. Why were Adam and Eve driven from the Garden of Eden?

So that they would not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever.

From Romans 8:38-39, name all the things that cannot separate us from the love of God.

Death, life angels, demons, fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, the power of hell, height, depth, and created thing.

How did God respond to Solomon's request?

The Lord was pleased with Solomon's reply and was glad that he had asked for wisdom. So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people and have not asked for a long life or riches for yourself or the death of your enemies—I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have! And I will also give you what you did not ask for – riches and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life!"

Read James 1:13-15. What is the progression of sin?

Temptation leads to sin which leads to death.

Read Psalm 103:11-13 and 1 John 1:9. When are we to have shame and why?

Never. Because if we fear Him and confess our sin, He removes our sin completely from us!

Answer Key

WEEK 3

According to 2 Corinthians 11:3, what will satan try to do with our minds?

Lead us astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

What does Psalm 37:23-24 say happens when the godly stumble?

The steps of the godly are directed by the Lord. He delights in every detail of their lives. Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the Lord holds them by the hand.

WEEK 4

Read 1 Corinthians 2:14, and write why the world cannot accept the things that come from God.

Because the things that come from God, come from the Spirit of God, and the world cannot understand because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

Read Psalm 139:13-18. What does verse 14 say about you?

I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12, and fill in the blanks.

Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me—but I will not be master by anything.

Read Galatians 5:19-21, and list the works of the soul-led nature.

When you follow the desires of you sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

According to Galatians 6:8, what is the result of living a life that gratifies the body?

Those who live only to satisfy their own desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death.

Answer Key

WEEK 6

Read the following verses, and write down what Jesus says we must be willing to let go of to be His disciples.

- Luke 14:33 – Our things
- Luke 14:26 – Our family
- Luke 14:27 – Ourselves

Look up the following verses. What is the result of giving things and money the place of priority in our lives?

- Matthew 13:22 – The Word becomes unfruitful.
- Revelation 3:17 – We become wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, and don't know it.
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10 – Fall into temptation, become overtaken with desires that lead to ruin and destruction, and even walk away from the faith

WEEK 8

Look up the following verses. When is it a good idea to just say nothing?

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|---------------------|--|
| Proverbs 11:13 | -When keeping a secret. |
| Proverbs 13:3 | -To preserve our life. |
| Proverbs 17:1 | -To avoid strife. |
| Proverbs 17:9 | -To cover someone else's sin. |
| Proverbs 17:14 | -To avoid a quarrel. |
| Proverbs 17:27-28 | -To be considered wise and prudent. |
| Philippians 2:14-15 | -To avoid complaining. |
| 1 Peter 3:1-2 | -When your pure and godly life can speak for itself. |
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WEEK 7

Read Matthew 18:21-35. What are the Kingdom Principles that Jesus is trying to convey?

To have mercy on our fellow man, just as the Lord has had for us.

 WEEK 8, continued

The Proverbs are full of teaching on how we should use our tongues.

Read the following Scriptures and write the instruction given.

- Proverbs 4:20-22 -Use words of life and health.
 Proverbs 4:24 -Don't use perverse or corrupt words.
 Proverbs 15:1 -Use gentle words.
 Proverbs 16:13 -Use honest and righteous words.
 Proverbs 16:24 -Use kind and pleasant words.
 Proverbs 16:28 -Avoid gossip and slanderous words.
 Proverbs 18:8 -Don't listen to rumors.

 WEEK 9

Read Deuteronomy 6:6-9, and make a list of the actions we are to take in regards to God's commandments:

Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Read Psalm 119:97-100, and list the benefits of meditating on God's Word.

They will make me wiser than my enemies. I will have more insight than my teachers. I will be wiser than my elders.

Read James 1:22. According to this verse how can we deceive ourselves?

If we are hearers of the Word and not doers of the Word.

 WEEK 11

Often the ideas the enemy attacks us with are so subtle and tailor-made for us that we will believe that the thoughts are our own. But the Bible says we as believers have the power in us to withstand every temptation of the enemy. Read James 4:7. What happens when we choose to resist the devil's temptations?

He will flee from you.

Write out 1 Corinthians 10:13. What will God do for you when the temptations seem unbearable?

Provide a way out

WEEK 11, continued

Read 2 Corinthians 7:10. What might be missing in a person who struggles with turning from sin?

Godly sorrow

Read Romans 2:4. Name something else that leads us to repentance.

The kindness of God

WEEK 12

Look up the following verses. What does each say about the fear of the Lord?

Proverbs 1:7 -It's the beginning of wisdom.

Proverbs 8:13 -It's the hatred of evil.

Proverbs 14:26 -Those who fear the Lord are secure; he will be a place of refuge for their children.

Proverbs 14:27 -Fear of the Lord is a life-giving fountain; it offers escape from the snares of death.

Proverbs 19:23 -Fear of the Lord gives life, security, and protection from harm.
