

Reaching Toward Spiritual Maturity

**2008 Home Bible Studies
for**

EASTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Philippians 3:12-14

This material has been assembled for use in the monthly Home Bible Studies for the purpose of growth and edification. May God bless each of us as we spend time in this study of His word.

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Attitudes Toward Studying God's Word

Lesson 1

Individual direct contact with God's word is the principal method of Christian growth. The Bible is the book by which we *live*. Bible reading is the means by which we LEARN and keep fresh in our minds, the ideas that mold our minds. Our lives are the products of our thoughts. When we read the Bible regularly, God's thoughts become our thoughts and our ideas conform to God's ideas. So that we may be transformed into God's image and be made fit for companionship with God for eternity. Bible reading should be a basic Christian habit, done with an open mind, thoughtfully, consistently, habitually and systematically. Everybody should read the Bible. It is God's message to mankind. Many people just want to listen to someone preach or teach without any effort on their part, but then the message is filtered through that speaker, leaving us at the mercy of that person's interpretation of the facts. The greatest story ever told should be read and studied in order to understand the true meaning of the greatest love man was ever shown. Joy, victory and the destiny of mankind is written on the pages of God's word.

So many people of the world don't spend much time considering eternity, or where they will spend those endless years. Too many people just toss aside the serious nature of this discussion, giving no thought to the revealed fact that the JUDGEMENT DAY will come no matter what man does. There is a God. There is a Heaven. There is a Hell. What will people do before their final blast-off?

Let us consider the attitude about studying God's word by asking the question, "Why do some believing Christians enjoy reading and studying and others do not?" Some *negative* reasons are, "I don't have time," "I never learned how," "Too much is expected of me," and "The Lord doesn't expect us to know it all."

The person with a *positive* attitude looks at Bible study as an opportunity and a challenge to learn, to grasp a better understanding of God (1 Pet. 2:1-3), to gain confidence and assurance in understanding God's will (1 Pet. 2:20-21), and to influence the mind and thus our conduct as a result of knowing God's will.

There is a great need to study the Scriptures (Ps. 119:103-104, 130). How can we have any eternal hope unless we study to gain knowledge of His will, our Savior,

redemption and eternal life (Col. 1:9-12)? How can we develop a deeper honesty within ourselves about our attitude toward God and man and gain a greater respect for divine authority and truth (1 Cor. 4:6, 17)?

Now consider the responsibility we have to be accountable before God (Jn. 12:48). The mental picture Paul paints in 2 Cor. 5:10 should motivate us to study regularly and with greater intensity. Satan wants us to be indifferent and lack concern about spiritual things. ***IF*** we don't study often and deep we will satisfy SATAN'S desire.

To be a good student of God's word and annoy Satan we will:

- ◆ GROW in knowledge and understanding—Eph. 4:11-16
- ◆ DEVELOP a spiritual-mindness—1 Cor. 3:1-3
- ◆ GAIN a full comprehension of “love not the world”—1 Jn. 2:15
- ◆ Be a LEADER, not a follower, TRANSFORMED—Rom. 12:2
- ◆ ENJOY the freedom that the gospel gives—Jn. 8:30-32

As we study we will develop a spirit of giving one's self as a spiritual sacrifice to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2), which continues to renew our minds through God's will. We will develop a keen desire to know more of His will, to know the truth and to continue in His word.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever used any of the excuses about not studying properly? _____

2. How can we be completely equipped for every good work? 2 Tim. 3:14-17 ____

3. What does Ps. 119:148, 172 tell us about study? _____

4. What was the problem Paul addressed in 1 Cor. 4:6,17? Is this still a problem today? _____

5. How are we benefited by Bible study? Prov. 2:2-4; 3:1-8 _____

6. Will Bible study alter our life-style? 2 Cor. 7:1; Rom 6:12; Ps. 51:10 _____

7. Can we see God? How? _____

8. How much do I want to grow spiritually? 2 Pet. 3:18 _____

Other verses to consider: 2 Tim. 2:15 & Eccl. 12:8-12

Our Relationship With God

Hebrews 12:1-2

Lesson 2

We can only have a relationship with God the Father through Christ the Son, the author and finisher of our faith. The very object of our faith **MUST** be Jesus the Son. As we discover the numerous passages that describe and discuss Jesus to all who believe, it is apparent that God the Father is the power that moves man to follow His will.

First let us look at John 15:1-11, notice the relationship of the vine and the branches. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and the Father is the vinedresser. These passages show a very clear picture of our relationship with God the Father through Jesus the Son. Our abiding in Him is the clear path to our relationship with God the Father.

John 20:30-31 reveals a similar view of the same thing. If we believe the record of Jesus the Son of God, we can have life in His name.

Acts 2:38 is the implementation of God's plan to establish a relationship with mankind through Christ the Son. The offer of receiving the promises is only **IF** we obey His will. Many accepted the offer on that day, beginning the greatest evangelistic effort ever seen.

The letter to the Romans is filled with examples of our relationship with God. Let's begin with Romans 3:22 where Paul is contrasting justification under the Law of Moses versus the Law of Christ. The righteousness of God was shown under the Law of Moses, but it was much greater through Jesus the Son. His blood is a propitiation for our sins and doers of the word become just before God the Father through Christ the Son.

Romans 5 continues to discuss justification and in verse 8 it states that "God demonstrates His love for mankind by delivering His Son to die for us." Verse 10 states that "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." Then in verse 11 the doers receive reconciliation.

Romans 6:4 uses a different approach as to how the doers have a relationship with God. When we are baptized into Christ we are baptized into His death. God the Father raised Him from the dead and thus we are connected to God through Christ the Son.

A study of Romans 6:15-23 reveals a new element in our discussion, that having been “freed from sin we become enslaved to God” to receive the benefits or sanctification which results in eternal life through Jesus the Son.

In Romans 8:39 Paul continues the discussion by describing God's love for us which cements the doers relationship with God. No created thing can separate us from God's love except man himself.

Romans 14:18-19 states the doer who serves Christ the Son is acceptable to God the Father. The doer should pursue peace, building up one another to the glory of the Father.

1 Corinthians 1:2 and 4 speak of doers being *in Christ*, and then verse 9 expounds on the relationship saying, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” What a powerful passage!

Galatians 3:24-29 again features the connection we have with God *in Christ*. We are sons of God through Christ the Son, because our faith works to obedience to baptism. In chapter 4 we can see how we become adopted children of God through Jesus the Son by the power of God the Father.

Philippians 3:3 mentions our worshipping in the Spirit of God and glory *in Christ* and in verse 8 Paul speaks of the value of KNOWING Christ Jesus my Lord. He stated that all things in his life were garbage when compared to serving Christ. In verses 12-14 he gives us a view of the very object of his life—pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God *in Christ Jesus*. He completes the thought with an announcement that “citizenship is in heaven and eagerly awaiting the return of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Discussion Questions

1. Describe how Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. _____

2. How was the righteousness of God shown under the Old Law? _____

3. Define the following terms:

Justification _____

Reconciliation _____

Sanctification _____

4. How does John 20:30-31 relate to this discussion? _____

5. How does Romans 6:4 teach about our relationship with God? _____

Prayer

Lesson 3

PRAYER- is the sincere desire of the heart expressed in words unto GOD (Rom. 10:1; Mt. 14:30; Lk. 18:13).

PRAYER- is not just meditation or an attitude, but rather the need to express ourselves to God (1 Jn. 3:22; Jn. 14:13; 1 Sam. 1:13).

We consider the elements of PRAYER as consisting of:

- ◆ Praise—Mt. 6:9
- ◆ Thanksgiving—Eph. 5:20; Phil. 4:6-7
- ◆ Confession—Js. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9
- ◆ Petition, Supplication, Intercessions—Mt. 7:7-11; 1 Tim. 2:1-3

PRAYER- is not a means of informing God or scolding man (Acts 15:18; Lk. 18:9-14).

It is not a life preserver in time of disaster (Prov. 1:24-33; Ezek. 8:18).

It is not a memorized speech, but an acknowledgement of an all-sufficient God and our total dependence upon Him.

Sometimes someone will ask, “How often should I PRAY?” A number of passages tell us to “pray without ceasing.” The idea is to never get through praying, to always be in a prayerful attitude. We should pray to God regularly (Ps. 55:17).

Jesus was a great man of PRAYER (Lk. 3:21-23; Mt. 11:25-26; Jn. 12:27-28; and many more).

His prayers were known for: simplicity, directness, profound reverence for God's will, fervency, and spontaneity. We can also study all of God's great servants such as Abraham, David, Moses, Hannah, Nehemiah, and especially Paul.

Who should we PRAY for?

- ◆ All people—1 Tim. 2:1-2
- ◆ Our brethren—Phil. 1:9-11; Js. 5:16
- ◆ The sick—Js. 5:13-15
- ◆ The lost—Rom. 1:10
- ◆ Our enemies—Mt. 5:44; Acts 7:60; Lk. 23:34
- ◆ Civil Rulers—1 Tim. 2: 1-2
- ◆ Preachers—2 Thess. 3:1-2; Eph. 6:18-19

What should we PRAY for?

- ◆ Strength in times of temptation—Mt. 26:41; 6:13
- ◆ Wisdom and understanding—Js. 1:5-7; 1 Kin. 3:9
- ◆ Unity—Jn. 17:20-21
- ◆ Forgiveness—Mt. 6:12; 1 Jn. 1:9
- ◆ Peace—1 Tim. 2:1-2

Things that make an acceptable PRAYER:

Addressed properly (Mt. 6:9, Eph 5:20) to God through Christ, in His name (Col. 3:17; Eph 5:20). We must recognize HIM as the sole mediator between God and man.

Our PRAYER must be in faith (Js. 1:5-7) and according to God's will. Our sincere, fervent, and earnest PRAYER must be uttered with the proper motives (Js. 4:3).

Consider: 1 Thess. 3:10; Js. 5:16; Mt. 7:7; Lk. 22:44; and Rom. 15:30. Our PRAYERS must come from the heart with the spirit and with understanding (1 Cor. 14:15), otherwise our PRAYERS will be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7 describes one way that can happen. We can create other roadblocks to acceptable PRAYERS by letting sin remain in our hearts (Ps. 66:18), and then refusing to obey God's will.

If we PRAY from a selfish motive, by harboring a grudge (Mt. 6:14,15), God will not hear our prayers.

The effectiveness of PRAYER in the life of a Christian:

PRAYER and sin do not exist in the same heart (Mt. 6:13). If we are busy PRAYING for the sick and then visiting and caring for them we have obeyed God and He receives the glory. The same is true when we pray for the lost and then work to bring them to Christ. These are the PRAYERS we see God has answered (Js. 5:17; Acts 12:5-19).

God often gives more than we PRAY for (Eph. 3:20-21) and it is knowing this that brings peace in our hearts (Phil. 4:6-7).

Discussion Questions

1. Describe what prayer is to you. _____

2. List practical times to pray. _____

3. Why should we pray for our enemies? _____

4. What was the point of the prayer in Mt. 9:38? _____

5. In these passages, what is the attitude that makes an acceptable prayer?

1 Peter 3:12 & James 5:16 _____

Matthew 26:39 & Matthew 6:10 _____

1 John 3:22 & John 9:31 _____

James 4:6 & Luke 18:9-14 _____

Matthew 6:12-15 & Matthew 18:21-35 _____

John 15:7 _____

James 4:8 & Hebrews 7:19 _____

6. What can hinder our prayers? Ezek. 14:1-5 _____

The Christian Graces

2 Peter 1:5-7

Lesson 4

Peter begins by identifying the sources of all these in vs. 3, “*Seeing that His divine power has granted to US everything that pertains to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.*” Peter continues in vs. 4 to say that we can only be (partakers of the divine nature) to the extent that we, as children of God, have been diligent to build on our faith, adding virtue (purity), knowledge and self-control.

If these building blocks have been assembled and are in use and growing, the results will be a builder that is “*fertile and full of fruit in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (BBE) If we are not growing vs. 9 tells us we are childlike, immature, unskilled in the use of God's word, can not see afar (no vision), and we cannot see the true nature and design of the gospel.

Peter continues by saying that person, “*hath forgotten that he was purified from his former sins.*” He does not remember his profession of faith in God and has not built on that faith.

In vs. 5, the “for this very reason” refers to the magnificent promises described in vs. 3-4. It requires us to apply *all diligence* (which Webster defines as a painstaking effort, or zealous) to make a distinct and definite goal in our personal lives (1 Tim. 4:15-16; 2 Tim. 2:15).

There is no emphasis on the order of these building blocks, once a person becomes a Christian, the emphasis is to add them all to our lives. The person has some faith or they would not have become a Christian, then add to that faith knowledge, self-control, perseverance, etc.

FAITH

FAITH- A life saving FAITH believes the truths of God's word and embraces it with the heart and affection into sincere obedience demonstrated by a changed life.

- ◆ Lk.17:5—Jesus disciples ask Jesus to “increase our faith.” We find in Rom. 10:17 that the source of faith is the word of God. If we are to learn about God it will be through His word.
- ◆ 2 Cor. 5:7—walk by FAITH, not by sight. This means we are to trust in God and be committed to God.
- ◆ 1 Tim. 1:19—sincere FAITH, which is not vain, empty, or worthless.
- ◆ Heb. 11:1—FAITH is the assurance of hope but not yet seen.
- ◆ Heb. 11:6—without FAITH it is impossible to please God. Faith causes us to be seekers of God.
- ◆ Js. 2:17—FAITH without works is dead. No one has ever been saved by a dead FAITH.
- ◆ 1 Jn. 5:4—FAITH is the method of overcoming the world.

VIRTUE

VIRTUE- A moral excellence, purity, or noble character. We are to be pure in heart (thought, motive, and attitude) (Mt. 5:8). We are to be pure in word (Eph. 5:9). We are to be pure in deed (1 Pet. 2:1-2).

In 2 Peter 1:5 virtue means moral courage, **TO SPEAK FOR CHRIST**. It endures persecution, bears burdens, stands for convictions (Joshua), and dies for Christ (Josh. 1:9; Eph. 6:10; and Josh. 24:15).

KNOWLEDGE

KNOWLEDGE

- ◆ Jn. 6:44-45—KNOWLEDGE is how men can come to the Father.
- ◆ Jn. 8:32; 17:17—KNOWLEDGE will make us free.
- ◆ Heb. 5:12-14; Col. 1:10-11—KNOWLEDGE will increase our strength.
- ◆ 2 Pet. 1:2—grace and peace will be multiplied in KNOWLEDGE.
- ◆ 2 Pet. 2:20—by KNOWLEDGE we can escape the world.

IGNORANCE

- ◆ Acts 3:17—IGNORANCE is what crucified Christ.
- ◆ Eph. 4:18—IGNORANCE will alienate us from God.
- ◆ 2 Thess. 1:7-10—IGNORANCE will cause us to be lost.

SELF-CONTROL

SELF-CONTROL- Is temperance and holding ones desires in check. The importance of self-control can be seen as we study passages such as Acts 24:25 and James 3:2. We have some examples of self-control being used in Jeremiah 35:6; Daniel 1:8; and 2 Timothy 2:5. We can see the value of self-control by a study of 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. It is also listed as one of the fruits of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

One of man's greatest challenges is the control of the tongue (Js. 3:1-12; 1:19-20). Controlling one's temper is also a great challenge (Eph. 4:26, Ps. 37:8). Certainly not least is the control of one's desires (1 Cor. 6:12).

When self-control is ABSENT we see drunkenness (Noah), immorality (David), gluttony, retaliation, angry words (Col. 3:8), and hasty deeds (Eccl. 5:2) which are all displeasing to God.

How can we increase our self-control?

- ◆ Work at it—1 Cor. 9:24-27
- ◆ Dethrone self—Mt. 16:24
- ◆ Enthroned Christ—Gal. 3:20
- ◆ Think of others first—1 Cor. 10:23-33

Discussion Questions

1. For what reason should we add to our faith? _____

2. What lessons should we learn from 1 Tim. 4:15-16? _____

3. How can we show our faith? _____

4. What is the meaning of 2 Cor. 5:17? _____

5. What is virtue? How can we see it? _____

6. How can we “dare to stand like Joshua?” _____

7. Why is ignorance so dangerous? _____

8. Give your best example of self-control. _____

More Christian Graces

2 Peter 1:5-7 & 2 Peter 1:16

Lesson 5

PATIENCE

PATIENCE- The capacity of calm endurance, bearing pain without complaining, not hasty, steadfast despite opposition, able and willing to bear. PATIENCE is required of us as is seen in the following passages:

- ◆ 1 Tim. 6:11—the man of God is to persevere
- ◆ Titus 2:2 —the aged men are to have PATIENCE
- ◆ Heb. 12:1-2—the example of calm endurance by Christ
- ◆ Heb. 10:36—God's promise is tied to PATIENCE
- ◆ Rev. 13:10—faith and PATIENCE are included in overcoming
- ◆ Rev. 14:12—the perseverance of the saints
- ◆ 1 Thess. 5:14; Eccl. 7:8

Even God was PATIENT with man (Rom. 3:25; 2 Pet. 3:9). Christ demonstrated PATIENCE by enduring persecution and His death on the cross without complaint, leaving us the perfect example.

The conclusion is we must exercise PATIENCE!!!

- ◆ First in ourselves—Lk. 21:19
- ◆ In persecution—1 Pet 5:7-9
- ◆ In daily life—2 Tim. 2:4, 1 Thess. 5:14
- ◆ In waiting for the Lord—Js. 5:7-8; Heb. 6:12; 10:35-36

The Hebrew writer could have said in Hebrews 11:6 that without PATIENCE it is impossible to please God and he would have been perfectly correct.

GODLINESS

GODLINESS- is God-like-ness. Christ is God with us (Immanuel) Matthew 1:22-23. He personifies God. John 14:9-11 describes how Jesus is God, their relationship, and how we can know God through Christ. If we are to be God-like (posses

godliness) we must follow the examples left by Christ for that purpose. As we follow His steps our lives will be transformed into His image which will allow others to see Christ living in us.

Consider these passages as they relate to following in His steps to godliness: 1 Pet. 2:21-22; 2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 2:5; Gal. 2:20.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS

BROTHERLY KINDNESS- Since the church is the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15), we as members have a responsibility to demonstrate BROTHERLY KINDNESS even when we are not very loveable.

KINDNESS is defined as being gentle, obliging, gracious, mild, and pleasant. The opposite is sharp, harsh bitter, and ill-tempered. These are things that should never be present in a Christian.

The Scriptures reveal a picture of KINDNESS. 1 Corinthians 13:4 says, “love is kind.” Ephesians 4:32 tells us to, “be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.” Colossians 3:12 states that the “chosen of God—put on a heart of compassion, KINDNESS, humility, gentleness, and patience.” Galatians 5:22 also includes gentleness.

How should we exercise KINDNESS?

- ◆ In our words—Prov. 31:26
- ◆ In our deeds—Lk. 10:30-37, Gal. 6:1-2
- ◆ In our judgments and our thoughts—Mt. 7:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:10

BROTHERLY KINDNESS is a way of life!!!

LOVE

LOVE- is often described as better felt than said. That's a person who does not know God, or at least does not understand His word.

LOVE is the greatest of God's gifts to mankind. It is the *crowning virtue* (1 Cor. 13:13). LOVE is greater than the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor. 13:1-13. LOVE is patient and LOVE is kind. It is not jealous, arrogant or

bragging. It does not act improperly. LOVE rejoices in truth not unrighteousness. LOVE bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

We are to LOVE:

- ◆ God—Mt. 22:37. With all the power of our affection, above all other beings and things, and more strongly than anything else. With all your soul means with all your life devoted to Him and His service, and willing to die for Him. With all your mind is to submit to the intellect of His will. With all your strength means to labor and toil with Him being the object of our efforts.
- ◆ Church—Eph. 5:22-33. In these verses Christ demonstrated the greatest example of love that can be found. We must be ready to follow His example by being ready to give our life for His Church and cause.
- ◆ God's word—2 Thess. 2:10, 14; 3:5
- ◆ The lost—Mt. 28:19-20; Jn. 3:16
- ◆ Our brethren—Heb. 13:1; 1 Thess. 4:9

Discussion Questions

1. Is patience required of us? Scripture. _____

2. List 5 ways we should show patience daily. _____

3. What are some other words that carry a similar meaning as patience? _____

4. Give 3 examples of Old Testament prophets who showed patience? _____

5. Find 3 New Testament characters who demonstrated patience. _____

6. Think of someone you know who shows patience that is an example for you? _____

7. What are we to be doing while we patiently wait for the coming of the Lord? _____

Thought: Time passes quickly when we are busy, if we are really busy in soul-winning heaven will come much quicker!

Reading, Exhortation, Study

1 Timothy 4:13

Lesson 6

READING

Reading God's word is the essence of learning His will and maintaining proper Spiritual health. Without reading it we will be no better than the animals following their base instincts.

1 Timothy 4:13—“Till I come give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

1 Timothy 4:15—“Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.”

2 Timothy 2:15—“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Because God wanted man to read the Bible it was put in written form. Isaiah 34:16 says to “*Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read.*” Moses read to the nation of Israel (Ex. 24:3-8). During the reign of Josiah (2 Kin. 22, 23) the Law was found and read which resulted in great reforms bringing the Israelites back to God. In Nehemiah 8:1-9:3 the Law was read as the people stood and listened attentively, worshipping God and weeping. Jesus recognized the need for reading God's word (Mt. 12:3; 19:4; 21:16; and 22:31). Paul charged the Thessalonians to read his epistle.

The Ethiopian was reading God's word which lead to his believing and obedience through baptism. A blessing is placed upon those who read and obey (Rev. 1:3).

What is our motivation for reading? Because it is what is expected, to prove a point, or because *we love the Lord*? We can find many opportunities to read. When we are happy, sad, when we take a trip, or one of the best times is when we are tempted!

Someone wrote “a chapter a day keeps Satan away.” The body needs food daily, our soul also needs food daily (1 Pet. 2:1-2; Mt. 5:6).

We can gain so much from reading and studying the word of God:

- ◆ It saves—Rom. 1:16
- ◆ Cleanses—Jn. 15:3
- ◆ Reconciles—2 Cor. 5:19
- ◆ Quickens—Ps. 119:50
- ◆ Guides—Ps. 119:105
- ◆ Sanctifies—Jn. 17:17
- ◆ Converts—Ps. 19:7
- ◆ Gives understanding—Ps. 119:130

EXHORTATION

Hebrews 3:13—“*Exhort* one another day by day while it is called today, lest anyone of you become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” (ASV)

It is our duty to exhort one another daily, all the time. This is the duty of individual members toward one another: to exhort and counsel each other, to admonish and aid one another toward a divine life. Parents to their children and Bible study teachers to their students. This is a constant need, a daily need, to prevent “hardening of the heart” which is caused by sin through the deceitfulness of Satan. Sin and Satan are always deceitful, promising more than they can perform and promising pleasures that they cannot deliver. Mankind cannot or will not see the fearful results of being enticed and deluded by the promise of gain, promotions, allurements of pleasure until the heart is hardened, the conscience seared, and then later comes remorse. It is from this condition that the writer would have Christians guarded by kind and affectionate care that comes only from a dependence on God.

Jude 3—“Exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith...” Here Jude is encouraging them to make a full stand for the truth and give it their all. That is how important it is for us to be diligent in loving and supporting the gospel even when we are not persecuted for serving God. Satan is using our peace time to lull us into a false sense of security.

Let us *seek* every opportunity to exhort, encourage, and strengthen each other as we go about our daily lives.

STUDY

If you expect to go to heaven you must study the map to find the route to get there. There are many resources that aid in Bible study: different translations, concordances, and books on geography, commentaries, books on church history, Bible surveys, and others.

Some practical suggestions to remember when you study:

- ◆ Who is the speaker?
- ◆ Who is the writer speaking about?
- ◆ What is the purpose of the writing?
- ◆ Who is being addressed?
- ◆ What is the time period?
- ◆ What is the context of the writing?

There are a number of ways to study the Bible that can increase our knowledge on any subject.

A *topical* study of a subject such as baptism or repentance allows you to focus on that subject of interest. A *biographical* study of a Bible character is a great way to see the example of people of old and their successes and failures. The divisions of the scriptures into the three periods can be a very beneficial study. A *historical* study helps to put events into their proper place and makes some events more understandable. Whatever method that you may use to study God's word, remember to study with understanding. Remember the theme of the Bible is salvation of man through Christ to the glory of God. Whether you are studying the Old or New Testament, keep the theme in mind. Always let your study be reverent (Neh. 8:5). Have a purpose to your study (remember the roadmap). Study to know God's will! Study with an object in mind (eternity), thoroughly searching the Scriptures daily (Acts 17:11). Study with the intent of being a doer of the word (Js. 1:22-25). All the study that you will ever do will be useless if we do not put it into practice by teaching others (2 Tim. 2:2).

Discussion Questions

1. List 3 examples that show us that God wants us to read the Bible. _____

2. What motivates you to read your Bible? _____

3. Define exhort. _____

4. Who should be exhorting others? How do we do that? _____

5. How important is Bible study? _____

6. List 5 methods for studying the Bible? _____

7. What are the important characteristics of Bible study? _____

Giving Attention To Yourself

Lesson 7

To think about taking care of ourselves we must begin with the thought process. Proverbs 4:23 states, “watch (keep) over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the issues of life.”

Proverbs 23:7 says that “as he thinks within himself, so is he.” Our thoughts are silent builders of character, which give form and substance to the life we are building.

The very thoughts we have will be made known to all by the way we speak and act (Mt. 15:18-20). In Matthew 5:21-28 Jesus speaks about personal relations which describe the attitudes of the heart.

We must give attention to the inward man (1 Pet. 3:4-6). The hidden man of the heart is who we are. Consider 2 Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:22; Col. 3:10; and Eph. 3:16. All of these passages help us to understand how important our thoughts really are.

ATTITUDES

Our attitudes toward God, the church, and our family are shaped by our thoughts so it is very important to develop a good attitude. Notice Romans 1:29-31, there are 23 sins listed, 13 are sins of attitude. In Galatians 5:19-21 many of the sins listed there are sins of attitude. The record of the prodigal son(s) in Luke 15:11-32 are about sins of attitude, because neither took time and effort to guard their thoughts. The same applies to those of Matthew 23:27-28, do not let it happen to us. Sometimes there is too little thought given to how the sins of attitude are displayed, as in anger, jealousy, pride, or harsh judgments of others. We often dismiss these characteristics as “that's just how they are,” but Jesus did not. Think about it!

COLOR OF OUR THOUGHTS

It has been suggested by some that we need to pay close attention to the colors of our thoughts. That it is very important we are not tinted or stained by these colors.

- ◆ Black—is often used to describe thoughts of despair and defeat, to reason that things are all wrong, and to say that no one can be trusted. In Philippians 4:11-14, Paul gives us the secret of overcoming these kinds of dark thoughts. Even when he was in very difficult situations his assessment was always made based on his relationship with God (1 Tim. 6:6-8).
- ◆ Red—is used to describe thoughts of envy, hate, anger, and malice. Consider 1 Pet. 2:1-3; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 3:1-3; Col. 3:8; and Eph. 4:8. All these passages will help keep our thoughts pure and white rather than being tinted by the influence of these problems.
- ◆ Yellow—is entertaining cowardly thoughts! Yellow is the color of a spiritual weakling. We should be strong and courageous, yet dependent upon the Lord for strength (1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Tim. 4:6-8). Especially consider Ephesians 6:10-17 to understand how to have courage.
- ◆ White—Philippians 4:8 gives us a clear picture of proper thinking. 2 Corinthians 11:2 also adds to proper thinking.

CONTROLLING OUR THOUGHTS

Evil thoughts come into the hearts of the best people. The sin is not having the thought, but entertaining it in your head. Someone said “we can't keep birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from nesting in our hair.”

We must drive those thought out of our minds. 2 Corinthians 10:5 discusses the idea of bringing every thought in captivity. 1 Peter 1:13 instructs us to “prepare our minds, keep sober,” fix your hope, be obedient, not conforming, BE HOLY. This process affects every part of our life, which is stimulated by what we: hear, see, and what we read. We control our thoughts by regulating what goes into our minds (garbage in, garbage out). If our lives are ruled by God's word hidden (implanted) in our hearts it guides us in what we do (Ps. 119:11; 1 Jn. 3:9; Lk. 8:11).

Our prayers should fill our hearts, Psalms 139:23-24 “Search me o God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of the everlasting.”

LET US NOT GROW WEARY IN WELL DOING

Discussion Questions

1. Where do the issues of life come from? _____

2. What about our attitude effects where we will spend eternity? _____

3. What attitudes are displayed in Luke 15:11-32? _____

4. What do the different colors of your thoughts represent? _____

5. How do we control our thoughts?

2 Corinthians 10:5 _____

1 Peter 1:13 _____

Psalms 119:11 _____

1 John 3:9 _____

Luke 8:11 _____

6. How does prayer fit into this discussion? _____

Seeking The Lost

Lesson 8

There is no greater need in the world today than for Christians who can and *will* talk to people about the Christ of the gospel. It is hard to find those who have a burning passion for this work. Proverbs 11:30 says, “The fruit of the righteous is the tree of life and he who is wise wins souls.”

Consider the passage, are we demonstrating wisdom or are we just passing thru this life?

Jesus recognized His work as a soul-winner, a soul savior, and a restorer of the lost to God (Lk. 19:10; Mt. 20:28; Jn. 12:47). Jesus is pictured by the inspired evangelists as a great preacher and teacher, preaching to thousands at times. However in the description of His work they never lost sight of the very personal interest shown in the individual. His work was personal and individual even among the multitudes. He took time to talk to the woman at the well (Jn. 4) and to Zacchaeus (Lk.19).

The invitation of Jesus was “come—learn of me” followed by the charge “Go, teach.”

Matthew 28:18-20—“Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” We often use this passage as authority to send preachers to foreign fields (rightly so), but let us not forget our own responsibility to follow this passage here and now.

A vast majority of Christians have never dreamed that this command is personal, and individual to every child of God. It is our responsibility to go into our own personal world and declare the soul-saving gospel of Christ to every creature.

The urgency of this work is clearly revealed by Jesus when in the parable of Luke 14 it says to, “*go out into the highways and hedges and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled.*”

The word constrain means to compel, but not physically. The compelling force of the teachers work must be the impelling force of the teacher himself. The

Bible recognizes that each of us will be held accountable to use the talents we have, but also to continue to grow (2 Pet. 3:18).

The responsibility placed upon each of us by the great commission is the reason for me being a personal worker of Christ. He placed upon every baptized individual the obligation of teaching others. We cannot carry out the LORD'S command unless we do personal work!

He further states, “make disciples” of all nations, this cannot be done by pulpit preaching alone, or by preachers alone. It was never God's intention to work that way. Consider Philippians 2:15-16 where Paul instructs, “among whom ye shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life.”

Incentives for being a personal worker for the Lord:

- ◆ To be like Christ—Mt. 10:25
- ◆ To follow in His steps—1 Pet. 2:24
- ◆ Regain the impulse to save others (think back to your baptism)
- ◆ To be like the early church (members went everywhere preaching the Gospel)—Acts 8
- ◆ Self-preservation—cannot go to heaven without it—Jn. 15
- ◆ Greatest gift you can give
- ◆ Joy of soul winning—3 Jn. 3
- ◆ God desires all men be saved—1 Tim. 2:3-5

Discussion Questions

1. What is the greatest need in the Church today? Why? _____

2. Does Mark 1:17 apply to us today? _____

3. What is one of the most unused talents we have? _____

4. Why was the one talent man condemned in Matthew 25:24-27? _____

5. What was the mission of the Christians in 1 Peter 2:9? _____

Learning To Teach Others

Lesson 9

The need for those who are willing to commit their time and talents to personally teaching others about the Gospel of Christ is a regular and growing need that only increases as the population grows. In Matthew 9:37-38 Jesus spoke about this very need.

The work of teaching others is not physical, but is a mental and moral process using our own mental and moral powers to:

- ◆ Arouse within another the realization of their lost condition
- ◆ Guide them into an understanding of God's plan of salvation
- ◆ Coach them to desire that salvation
- ◆ Stimulate them to obedience to God's plan

Converting a person to Christ involves three changes in that person: a change of view, a change of affections, and a change of will. These changes will *only* come about when we present the gospel of Christ individually and personally to those in need. As we look back at the great commission some instructions were very plain, “Go—make disciples—baptizing them—teaching them—to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you.” This places the responsibility on *every* Christian. Jude 3 says to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” This was not written to preachers, but Christians.

Let us look at some of the reasons for failing to teach others:

- ◆ Not realizing the need to express our love for the souls of the lost.
- ◆ Lack of knowledge of the Scriptures which is essential to teach others (this is an excuse, not a reason)
- ◆ Study Matthew 16, deny self—take up the cross and follow Me.
- ◆ Paul urged the Roman Christian in 12:1-2 “prove what is good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”
- ◆ Transforming our lives by demonstrating our dependence on God. This should be evident for all to see as we practice what we preach.

Let us look at making some ways to begin the process of applying what has been discussed. Teaching others about the gospel should be done in a business-like way, not just haphazardly shooting from the hip. Analyze your circle of acquaintances, list five names of those who you consider the best prospects, and then create opportunities to approach them about discussing the Bible. If you have a strong desire, call and ask for a time to study. If you do not feel that you are strong, invite them to your house for dinner and use that opportunity to open the subject with the whole family. Try lunch with the individual, and open a discussion of some of the problems of the day which can always be directed to spiritual things.

Our own desire to see the person we approach become a Christian should motivate us to overcome our own weaknesses, and hang-ups so we can be direct and straight-forward yet kind and compassionate in our work in teaching others. Jesus used the opportunity of needing a drink of water (Jn. 4:7-30) to speak to a most unlikely prospect about His kingdom. Study that example from the master teacher for ways to reach others in our day.

We can “lay aside every encumbrance” Heb. 12:1-2 and run the race with endurance if we fix our eyes on Jesus the author of our faith.

Discussion Questions

1. What responsibility do we get from Matthew 9:37-38? _____

2. Mark 16:15-16 gives us what instruction? _____

3. How do we arouse within another the realization that they are lost? _____

4. What are the three areas of life that must be changed to be a Christian? _____

5. List some reasons that you are not busier teaching others? _____

6. What are you willing to do to be more effective in teaching others? _____

Proving Our Faith

Lesson 10

We prove our *faith* each day as we walk through life, working, going to school, and any other activities that engage our time. The term *walk* is often used in the Scriptures to describe the daily activities. As in Ephesians 5:15-16, “Therefore be careful how you *walk*, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil.” We began this walk with a new life (Rom. 6:4) to leave the old life of sin and to follow after the will of God (2 Cor. 5:17). The next step in proving our faith is to walk after the Spirit not after the flesh (Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:19-23).

To walk worthy of our vocation (Eph. 4:1) is to behave or conduct one's life so others can see Christ living in us (Gal. 2:20). As we continue in our quest to prove our faith it becomes our own, not the faith of our parents or others but our own. This becomes very important in the development of each Christian. It is also the point in life where some people begin to question their own beliefs, the things they've been taught from childhood. When that questioning is directed to a deeper study of the Scriptures then you prove your own faith and take a step forward on the path of life.

If we walk in light (1 Jn. 1:6-8) the blood of Christ continually keeps us clean as we continue to walk in the light. This is the *only* basis of true Christian fellowship. To walk in the light is to follow God's word (Ps. 119: 105,130; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; Lk. 1:6).

To continually prove our faith we must walk as the Lord walked (1 Jn. 2:6).

Our Lord walked:

- ◆ Forgivingly—Lk. 23:34
- ◆ Obediently—Heb. 5:8-9
- ◆ Courageously—Mt. 21:12-13
- ◆ Servingly—Jn. 13:1-17; Mk. 10:45
- ◆ Prayerfully—Lk. 6:12; Jn. 17
- ◆ Zealously—Jn. 2:17; 9:4

There are a great number of passages that direct our steps on the walk of life and give us direction on how to prove our faith.

- ◆ Humbly—Mic. 6:8
- ◆ By faith—2 Cor. 5:7
- ◆ In good works—Eph. 2:10
- ◆ Worthy of the Lord—Col. 1:10
- ◆ Honestly—1 Thess. 4:12; Rom. 13:13
- ◆ In wisdom—Col. 4:5
- ◆ In love—Eph. 5:2

The multiple relationships we have with the Father and His children can be seen in the term "walk" as it is used in these passages:

- ◆ Before God—Gen. 17:1 we are continually under His inspection
- ◆ After God—Deut. 13:4 following His leadership and pattern
- ◆ In Christ—Col. 2:6 living in the sphere provided in the church
- ◆ With God—Gen. 5:24 going where He goes
- ◆ By faith—Heb. 11:5 being in agreement with Him

All of these keep us in step with God which keeps proving our faith as our own.

Discussion Questions

1. What shows us to be unwise in Ephesians 5:15? _____

2. How does 1 John 3:9 affect our daily lives? _____

3. What does it mean to walk after the flesh? _____

4. Define the following terms:

Vocation _____

Avocation _____

5. As we “walk in the light” how does Ephesians 5:8 help us to stay in the light? _____

6. How would you describe the multiple relationships with the Lord? _____
