

**The Biblical Principles  
of Living Life  
as a Disciple of Jesus Christ**



Study Units 9-18

Spring 2024



# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	3
The Mission of Our Church .....	5
Hymn: “Savior, Teach Me Day by Day” .....	7
Unit 9 – Gaining and Maintaining a Clear Conscience Before God and Men.....	9
Unit 10 – Accepting Your Assignments In The Long War Against God.....	17
Unit 11 – Thinking and Walking as a Member Of My Church .....	27
Unit 12 – Living In Hope of The Things To Come .....	33
Unit 13 – Avoiding and Opposing Corrupting Influences.....	43
Unit 14 – Learning and Accepting Who You Are In Christ .....	51
Unit 15 – Contending Earnestly For The Faith .....	57
Unit 16 – Employing Your God Given Gift In Serving Others.....	67
Unit 17 – Honoring God’s Design Of Marriage .....	75
Unit 18 – Drawing God’s Lines In My Relationships.....	83



## Introduction

Welcome to these studies of the biblical principles of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ that God has given us in His Word. Matthew 28:18-20 has provided our goal, the teaching epistles and the gospels of the New Testament have provided our content, and 2 Tim. 3:16-17 has provided our study format.

Each of these study units presents 1) **a summary of a primary biblical principle** taught by our Lord and His apostles, 2) **a personal self-evaluation** of our understanding and maturity regarding this principle of life, 3) **personal projects** to complete that guide us in responding to these commands of our Lord, and 4) **discussion questions and topics** that address the major issues and associated principles that apply to what we face in life regarding each principle.

Each study unit is designed to be studied in two meetings over a two week period to allow the personal projects to be pursued and the group discussions enough time to be fruitful. Each study session has guidelines to follow that the leader may adjust as needed.

You should prepare for the initial meeting on each unit by a careful and thorough study of the principle presented in the initial 4-6 pages of the study. Following this you should take the time to complete the self-evaluation before this initial group meeting.

May the Lord bless your time and efforts personally, and your investment in the other members of your study group.

*<sup>5</sup>Now,...applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; <sup>6</sup>and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; <sup>7</sup>and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

*<sup>8</sup>For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>9</sup>For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. — 2 Pet. 1:5-9*



## The Mission of Our Church

The Mission of Our Church, and the means to accomplish it, are clearly stated in the following instructions from our Lord and His apostles:

### Matthew 28:18-20

- <sup>18</sup> *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,  
“All authority has been given to Me  
in heaven and on earth.*
- <sup>19</sup> *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,  
baptizing them in the name  
of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*
- <sup>20</sup> *Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;  
and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

### 2 Timothy 2:2

- <sup>2</sup> *The things which you have heard from me  
in the presence of many witnesses,  
entrust these to faithful men,  
who will be able to teach others also.*

### 2 Timothy 3:16-17

- <sup>16</sup> *All Scripture is inspired by God  
and profitable for teaching, for reproof,  
for correction, for training in righteousness;*
- <sup>17</sup> *So that the man of God may be adequate,  
equipped for every good work.*

## 2 Peter 1:5-9

- <sup>5</sup> *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,  
in your faith supply moral excellence,  
and in your moral excellence, knowledge,*
- <sup>6</sup> *And in your knowledge, self-control,  
and in your self-control, perseverance,  
and in your perseverance, godliness,*
- <sup>7</sup> *And in your godliness, brotherly kindness,  
and in your brotherly kindness, love.*
- <sup>8</sup> *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing,  
they render you neither useless nor unfruitful  
in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- <sup>9</sup> *For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted,  
having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*

## Jude 3

- <sup>3</sup> *Beloved, while I was making every effort  
to write you about our common salvation,  
I felt the necessity to write to you  
appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith  
which was once for all handed down to the saints.*

**Being and making mature disciples for Christ** is the Mission of Our Church. The studies that follow present the primary principles of living required to accomplish this. As you begin, and continue, please remember:

## Luke 9:23

- <sup>23</sup> *And He was saying to them all,  
“If anyone wishes to come after Me,  
he must deny himself,  
and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

# Savior, Teach My Day by Day

Jane E. Leeson, 1842

Arr. from Georg C. Strattner by J. A. Freylinghausen, 1705



1. Sav - iour, teach me, day by day, Love's sweet les - son to o - bey;  
2. With a child's glad heart of love, At thy bid - ding may I move;  
3. Teach me thus thy steps to trace, Strong to fol - low in thy grace;  
4. Love in lov - ing finds em - ploy, In o - be - dience all her joy;



Sweet - er les - son can - not be, Lov - ing him who first loved me.  
Prompt to serve and fol - low thee, Lov - ing him who first loved me.  
Learn - ing how to love from thee, Lov - ing him who first loved me.  
Ev - er new that joy will be, Lov - ing him who first loved me. A - men.



# Others

1. Lord, help me live from day to day,  
In such a self-forgetful way,  
That even when I kneel to pray,  
My pray'r shall be for OTHERS.

Refrain: Yes, others, Lord, yes, others,  
Let this my motto be;  
Help me to live for others,  
That I may live like Thee.

2. Help me in all the work I do  
To ever be sincere and true,  
And know that all I'd do for You  
Must needs be done for OTHERS.

3. Let "Self" be crucified and slain  
And buried deep: and all in vain  
May efforts be to rise again,  
Except to live for OTHERS.

4. So when my work on earth is done,  
And my new work in heav'n's begun,  
May I forget the crown I've won,  
While thinking still of OTHERS.

## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #9

1 Tim. 1:5-6; 1:18-19; Acts 24:14-16

### GAINING AND MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD AND MEN

<sup>18</sup> *This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight, <sup>19</sup> keeping faith and a **good conscience**, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith.* — 1 Tim. 1:18-19

<sup>14</sup> *“I do serve the God of our fathers, ...<sup>15</sup> and have a hope in God... <sup>16</sup> In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a **blameless conscience** both before God and before men.”* — Acts 24:14-16

How many people stand between you and a clear conscience? How many people could say to you, “you wronged me and have never tried to make it right.”? Our need for a clear conscience before God and man is addressed 27 times in the New Testament. It is essential to our usefulness and fruitfulness in serving our Savior in the work of the age.

Many believers, saved by grace and sin’s penalty, have weak, calloused, or defiled consciences. The resulting GUILT in their souls, if not cleared up by gaining and keeping a clear conscience, diminishes their capacity to love God and others, which is the consummate attribute of a mature disciple of Christ. Such a guilty conscience can bring doubt, fear, and depression and keeps them from the confidence, assurance, and power that should and can be theirs in Christ.

<sup>5</sup> *The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a **good conscience** and a sincere faith. <sup>6</sup> For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion.* — 1Tim. 1:5-6

We can gain and keep a clear conscience before God and men by learning:

1. What our conscience is.
2. How to gain a clear conscience.
3. How to keep our conscience clear.

## 1. What Is Our Conscience?

Adam and Eve were created with a conscience. It differed from the other capacities of their soul (their mind, will, and emotions) being **an internal recognition of right and wrong**. Our conscience evaluates the moral quality of our thoughts and actions compared to God's standards. Guilt is not a function of our mind. Whether we agree with God regarding what is right or wrong, our conscience bears witness to our conduct.

God told Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of a certain tree in the garden of Eden. But they considered their opinions better than God's, so they decided to do something wrong in God's sight. We call this "sin".

But something happened within them as they were convicted by their consciences and were ashamed. They got some leaves and used them to "cover up" their guilt. When God appeared to them again, He said "who told you, you were naked?" They were dealing with the guilt that had come from their conscience.

When a little child does something his mother has said not to do, although he may not even be able to talk yet, his conscience bears witness to him and his bodily expressions bear witness to his mother. They say, "I did something wrong."

God wants us to have a clear conscience which Paul describes as one that is "void of offense"

<sup>16</sup> *"I do my best to maintain always a **blameless conscience** both before God and before men."* — Acts 24:16

Paul used the Greek word "aproskopos" which is translated "blameless" here. It means "void of offense". It is a conscience that is not troubled or distressed by the guilt that must be removed if we are to be most useful to our Lord. The guilt that has come is to be removed by confession and forgiveness. Christians who do not clear their consciences experience hindrances in their life, which is why the Lord said to his disciples,

<sup>23</sup> *"If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup>leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."* — Matt. 5:23-24

**A good conscience is one that allows me to look every person in the eye knowing that not one of them can point a finger and say, "you wronged me and you never tried to make it right!" So...**

## 2. How Do I Gain A Clear Conscience Before God And Men?

How do I remove guilt from my soul? There are a number of do's and don't's here.

### 1. LIST YOUR OFFENSES IF YOU HAVE NEVER DONE THIS.

Ask God to bring to your mind what needs to be dealt with. (See Ps. 139:23-24)

Members of your family and past relationships will probably lead the list.

### 2. COMMIT TO ASK FORGIVENESS.

### 3. THINK THROUGH A WISE PLAN AS TO WHAT YOU WILL SAY AND WHAT YOU SHOULD DO – AND NOT DO.

There are several factors here that are important.

- You must have a genuine spirit of repentance and grief before you go.
- You should carefully choose appropriate wording and even write it down before you go.
- You should consider whether restitution is required.
- You should determine whether writing a letter or direct contact is best.
- Don't embarrass the other party. Don't cause relational problems for the other party. Ensure it is done privately.

## 3. How Do I Keep A Clear Conscience Before God And Men?

Paul, speaking of his lengthy service for Christ after his salvation said,

<sup>16</sup> *"I do my best to **maintain always a blameless conscience** both before God and before men."* — Acts 24:16

This tells us that, for Paul, there was ONGOING confession and asking forgiveness for his personal weakness and his failures to heed God's will and sin. He undoubtedly applied 1 John 1:9 on a regular basis to be able to say this. His example leads us to not let a day go by, after we have failed in our walk, to clear our conscience with the Lord. Let us not let the enemy use our failures to convince us that God cannot and will not use us as "vessels of honor".

<sup>20</sup> *Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor.*  
<sup>21</sup> *Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, (by maintaining a clear conscience) he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.*

<sup>22</sup> *Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.* — 2 Tim. 2:20-22

## UNIT 9 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the preceding scriptures and summary and then complete the following evaluation.

### What Is The Status Of My Conscience Before God And Men?

1. I understand what my conscience is, how it differs from my own standards of right and wrong, and I can explain and define it. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. I understand what guilt is, what causes it, and how it can be removed from my soul.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I have been able to clear my conscience **before God**, accepting His forgiveness of my past sins through Christ, even though they may have been great. (see Jude 24-25)  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. I understand that I need to gain a clear conscience **before men**. I have done this \_\_\_\_\_. I have done this partially \_\_\_\_\_. I need to do this \_\_\_\_\_.

4. I have cleared my conscience in the past, but I know that **I must maintain** a clear conscience as I go on in life, serving Christ. I am doing this \_\_\_\_\_. I am doing this poorly \_\_\_\_\_. There is work to do \_\_\_\_\_. (see 1 John 1:9)

5. Helping other Christians in this important area of serving Christ is part of making mature disciples for Him. I am able to help others in this area \_\_\_\_\_. I have \_\_\_\_\_.

6. How many people stand between you and a clear conscience? How many can say, "You wronged me and never tried to make it right"? \_\_\_\_\_  
Will you commit to correct this? \_\_\_\_\_

## Discussion Questions for Unit 9 Study Session #1

1. If I have stood for truth and, by doing that, I have offended some, is that an offense I need to remove? (See 2 Tim.4:3-5). What about the way I spoke to them? Does that matter? (See 2 Tim. 2:24-26)
2. Are you clear on what a conscience is? Does it operate even if with my mind I don't think something that is sin to God is not sin in my opinion?
3. The steps to a clear conscience involve asking to be forgiven for your sin. What must we be careful about when pursuing this with those we have wronged, lest we possibly make matters worse?
4. How does Jude 24-25 help me with God and 1 John 1:9 help me with both God and men in the matter of a clear conscience?
5. What about those who have wronged me and never cleared it up, leaving the relationship damaged or broken? What responsibility do I have in this instance? (See Study #7 which addresses this question)
6. Having a good conscience before God and men means that both my past sins **and** my ongoing sins must be dealt with. How do I deal with **my ongoing sins** as a Christian? What happens when we do not do this?

## UNIT 9 STUDY SESSION #2

In preparation for the second study session please consider doing one or more of the following projects for the coming week.

### Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

- Make a list of those you have wronged in the past and never tried to make it right and purpose to prepare and seek forgiveness of each one. Ask the Lord to bring to mind all those who should be on your list, to remove this hindrance to your usefulness to Him. Carefully prepare how to proceed, and begin to work through your list.
- If your ongoing manner of dealing with the inevitable sins that you commit as a Christian is not allowing you to maintain a clear conscience, commit to applying 1 John 1:9 every day, every time you sin. Begin keeping a daily journal of your asking forgiveness of the Lord for your “secret” sins and of others when you wrong them. Keep doing this in this formal manner until it is a habitual life practice. Commit to doing it until you can say,

<sup>16</sup> *“I always do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.”* — Acts 24:16

Let your conscience be your guide.

- Memorize 2 or more of the 27 references to our conscience in the N.T. (e.g. Acts 23:2, 24:16, 2 Tim. 1:3, 1 Tim. 1:5, 18-19, 1 Pet. 3:16)

## **Discussion Questions for Unit 9 Study Session #2**

1. If you were able to pursue one of the application projects, can you share with us how this is going?
2. What are the consequences of the primary approach of modern psychotherapy, that is, to blame others for your problems and not therefore to clear your conscience? If personal guilt is covered up and not dealt with, what would the symptoms be?
3. Can the sensitivity of our conscience be diminished? How? How could a person's conscience become "calloused" or "scarred", and therefore less sensitive to sin?
4. We observe much of the church in our day increasingly accepting and adopting the standards and conduct of our humanistic culture. This often is not producing outward signs of guilt, shame, remorse, or concern. What has happened to their consciences? Why? What is the remedy?
5. Why might it be hard for another person to forgive you if you asked them to? If they also have guilt in the matter and are able to live with it by blaming you, what would happen if the blame is gone? Is it probable that some may not forgive you, even if you ask, because of this?

## **Prayer Together**

## **Recommended For Further Study**

- Stand Firm (chapter 1) by John MacArthur



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #10

Eph. 6:10-18; 1 John 2:15-17; Rom. 7:18-25

### ACCEPTING YOUR ASSIGNMENTS IN THE LONG WAR AGAINST GOD

Our goal in this study is to help us grasp the setting of our lives in time and history as Christians. What is God doing on our earth? Where have we come from and where are we going? Why are we still here? Does history have a goal and why has it gone the way it has?

Asking and answering these questions is essential for two reasons. First, it helps us find and clarify the true meaning and purpose for our lives. Second, it reveals the conflict of the ages between God and Satan, that spiritual warfare which requires us to know our great enemy, prepare ourselves for battle, and become skilled in the use of our weapons.

Welcome to Christianity until the Lord returns to change things for the better! When He comes, He will put Satan away for 1000 years and eliminate injustice and all the bad things we now face. But until then, we live in the midst of the Long War Against God by unsaved mankind, in a world ruled by a demonic superpower who is our adversary in living for God.

When did God enlist you as a soldier, to fight in this awful war we are in until Christ returns? When were you saved and transferred from the kingdom of darkness to be a citizen of Christ's Kingdom? Perhaps you are a veteran. Thank you for your service and example to the rest of us. But perhaps you are a new citizen of Christ's kingdom and have been largely unaware of the war you are in, particularly the unseen aspects of what God has told us we face and why.

<sup>8</sup> *Join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God... <sup>3</sup> as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.* — 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:3

<sup>11</sup> ***Put on the full armor of God***, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.* — Eph. 6:11-12

<sup>3</sup> *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.* — 2 Cor. 10:3-4

<sup>8</sup> **Be on the alert.** Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> But resist him, firm in your faith. — 1 Pet. 5:8-9

## 1. Our Three Enemies In This War: The World, Our Flesh, And The Devil

- **Enemy #1:** We are living in a **fallen world** filled with fallen men.

<sup>15</sup> Prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God **in the midst of a crooked and perverse race**, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the Word of life. — Phil. 2:15

We live in a world of fallen creatures who have rejected God's rule, God's design, God's Word, and God's will. Even more, we live in a world decimated by the consequences imposed by God on His creation because our race rejected God, denied His rule and disobeyed His Word. Adam's sin brought spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death in hell.

We are living in the midst of the downward progression of mankind described below from Romans 1, that guarantees decline toward depravity and wickedness that individuals and nations face if they remain unsaved and put God out.

<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God,...  
<sup>24</sup> therefore, **God gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to immorality, that their bodies might be dishonored among them...And...<sup>26</sup> **God gave them over** to unnatural affections...<sup>27</sup> men abandoning the natural function of the woman and burning in their desire toward one another...And...<sup>28</sup> **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,<sup>29</sup> being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil...<sup>32</sup> And, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. — Rom. 1:21-32

<sup>15</sup> Do not love **the world**, nor the things in **the world**. If anyone loves **the world**, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in **the world**, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from **the world**. <sup>17</sup> And **the world** is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. — 1 John 2:15-17

- **Enemy #2:** We are living “in the flesh”, our unredeemed fallen nature.

<sup>18</sup>For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. <sup>19</sup>For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. <sup>20</sup>But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

<sup>21</sup>I find then the principle that **evil is present in me**, the one who wishes to do good. <sup>22</sup>For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, <sup>23</sup>but I see a different law in the members of my body, **waging war against the law of my mind**, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

<sup>24</sup>Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? <sup>25</sup>Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, **with my flesh the law of sin.**  
— Rom. 7:18-25

Our salvation has created in us a new inner self that hates sin. Sin no longer rules our life but manages to survive in our “flesh”, the unredeemed part of our humanness that remains until we meet the Lord either at the Rapture or at death.

<sup>17</sup>For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another.  
— Gal 5:17

The only way a Christian can win this constant battle within and be victorious in the tests and temptations of life is to walk in the truths of God’s word by the power of the indwelling Spirit.

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.  
— Gal. 5:16 (see Vol 1, Principle #3)

- **Enemy #3:** We are living where **Satan** is active and is our adversary.

We are living in the midst of the Satanic rebellion against God and the evil presence of the fallen angels who live to deceive, discourage, divide, and destroy God’s people in their war against God.

<sup>8</sup>Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. **Your adversary, the devil**, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup>**But resist him**, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.

<sup>10</sup>And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you.  
— 1 Pet. 5:8-10

## 2. What We Are Fighting For: The Salvation Of Others To The Glory Of God

Why is God tolerating this? Why not immediate judgment? Why thousands of years of human history allowing this to exist? Why are we living in the midst of this Satanic rebellion, in this fallen, immoral, depraved, wretched world of suffering and death? Why are we, God's children, God's beloved, still living here?

It is not because God is weak. It is not because God is surprised. We are living in the midst of a crooked and perverse race and world still after all these centuries because He has been waiting for you, and others – to be born and to hear what He has done to set you free from the judgment and wrath to come. Because your name was written in His Son's book of life before the foundation of the world.

<sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, <sup>21</sup>in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

<sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. <sup>24</sup>For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.  
— Rom. 8:20-25

<sup>1</sup>And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup>Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

<sup>4</sup>But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.  
— Eph 2:1-7

### 3. Our Role In This War: We Are God's Soldiers

The Apostle Paul builds upon the analogy of warfare to describe Christians as soldiers, with weapons, who need training to be useful on the battlefield. Furthermore, we are to have courage, determination, and perseverance to endure and be victorious. In addition to all of this, we must be willing to die.

<sup>3</sup> *Suffer hardship with me, **as a good soldier** of Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> **No soldier** in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a **soldier**.* — 2 Tim. 2:3-4

<sup>3</sup> *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup> for **the weapons of our warfare** are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.* — 2 Cor. 10:3-4

<sup>11</sup> *Put on **the full armor** of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, **take up the full armor of God**, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**.* — Eph. 6:11-13

<sup>24</sup> *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, **let him deny himself, and take up his cross**, and follow Me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it."* — Matt. 16:24-25

### 4. What We Must Do In The Battle: Be Content, Persevere, and Rejoice

**Contentment, perseverance, and joy** are the words that describe the mature responses of a veteran soldier for Christ in this long war.

<sup>11</sup> ***I have learned to be content** in whatever circumstances I am. <sup>12</sup> I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. <sup>13</sup> **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*** — Phil. 4:11-13

**CONTENTMENT** while we are suffering through the battles of this awful war only comes when we have learned who our God is and what this means for the war we are fighting for Him and those He loves. Are you content in the trials that you are facing? The back of the Book tells us that we win! The promises in our training manual tell us of the return of our Lord in total victory, with us in the celebration! The infinite power of our commanding general assures us of the truth that *“He causes all things to work together for good, for us who love Him and are the called according to His purpose”!*

Are you content with the foxhole you have been assigned to? The wounds that you have suffered? The things you have lost? Paul was. The verse above tells us why.

**PERSEVERANCE** in this long war, in the face of incredible trials and suffering, was illustrated by the apostle Paul’s life and his exhortation to Timothy in his final words to him.

<sup>5</sup> *But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.* <sup>6</sup> *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.* <sup>7</sup> ***I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;*** <sup>8</sup> *in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*  
— 2 Tim. 4:5-8

In a similar exhortation to the Christians in Phillipi Paul used the word describing an athlete running the final laps of a long and arduous race, summoning all his energy, and focusing on the finish line, striving not to leave anything unspent at the finish line.

<sup>13</sup> *Forgetting what lies behind, **I press on** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*  
— Phil. 3:13

When the going gets tough, the tough get going. Does this describe your service for Christ? When you have run out of your own strength, have you found that you can do all things through Him who strengthens and empowers you? (*Phil. 4:13, 2 Cor. 12:9-10*)

The third, and shocking, description of a disciple of Christ living a hard life of doing what the Lord has asked and allowed, is **JOY**.

<sup>2</sup> Consider it all **joy**, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,  
<sup>3</sup> **knowing** that the testing of your faith produces endurance. <sup>4</sup> And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.  
— James 1:2-4

Joy, in the face of trials and suffering, requires that we know and embrace what God has revealed to us that He 1) has done, 2) is doing, and 3) will do.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

<sup>6</sup> **In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.**  
— 1 Pet. 1:3-7

## UNIT 10 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study read the summary above and then complete the following self- evaluation.

### Evaluating My Service In This Long War

1. I am fully trained, equipped in the Word, and useful in the battles for my Lord.  
100%\_\_\_80%\_\_\_60%\_\_\_Less\_\_\_
2. I have the character to stand and persevere where the Lord sends me, alone if necessary.  
100%\_\_\_80%\_\_\_60%\_\_\_Less\_\_\_
3. I am willing to die in the service of my Lord. Yes, willingly\_\_\_It depends\_\_\_No\_\_\_
4. I am fighting the good fight, fulfilling my ministry, finishing my course.  
Yes\_\_\_Somewhat\_\_\_
5. I am leading others in the battle. Yes\_\_\_No, I am not leading\_\_\_
6. I have been wounded in battle. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_Stronger now, or weaker?\_\_\_\_\_
7. Contentment in the Lord, where I am and in what I face describes me:  
Well\_\_\_Somewhat\_\_\_No\_\_\_
8. Perseverance as a faithful Christian, despite my trials, describes me:  
Well\_\_\_Somewhat\_\_\_No\_\_\_
9. Joy, when I encounter various trials, describes me: Well\_\_\_Somewhat\_\_\_No\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 10 Study Session #1

1. We fight in three separate theaters of this long war, the world, our flesh, and the invisible war we face with Satan and the fallen angels. Which of the instructions we have to fight in these areas have been a help to you? Which of these three is the most difficult for you?
2. What do Christians face today in China, Russia, India, and the Moslem nations? What does it mean to be an obvious soldier for Christ there?
3. The war in America between good and evil, truth and error, and Christianity and humanism has changed in the last 50 years. How does Romans 1:18-32 help us understand what is happening?

## **UNIT 10 STUDY SESSION #2**

In preparation for session #2 choose one of the following projects to pursue and come prepared to share what you have learned.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. Study Eph. 6 regarding putting on the armor and clarify what it means practically. Do it diligently for the week.
2. Study the flesh vs. spirit aspect of the war addressed in Gal. 5:16-25 and Rom. 8:3-14, then clarify 1) what the flesh is, 2) how to “put it to death”, and how to “walk in the spirit.
3. Study Psalm 101, particularly the “I wills” of the Psalm. Consider how a person could apply these practically living “in the midst” of our corrupt culture.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 10 Study Session #2**

If you were able to pursue one of the study projects can you share what you learned?

### **Prayer Together**



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #11

Rom. 12:3-18, 1 Thess. 4:9-10, Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Cor. 12:11-27

### THINKING AND WALKING AS A MEMBER OF MY CHURCH

We have been studying the principles of living our new life in Christ. They all require some changes and adjustments to living life for God rather than for myself. The principle that we now consider requires perhaps the MOST RADICAL changes that God requires for His disciples. Perhaps the greatest weakness of the evangelical churches in America today is the lack of maturity in this area and its increasing failure to hear and heed the instructions that we shall now consider.

What is it? What is this tremendous change in life that must come when we decide to deny ourselves, be a disciple of Christ, and live as He asks? It is to be a MEMBER in the church He is building, serving where He places us, not primarily for our benefit, but for giving our life for the other members there.

<sup>3</sup>For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think... <sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>**so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**  
— Rom. 12:3-5

<sup>12</sup>For even as our human body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.  
<sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. <sup>14</sup>**For the body is not one member, but many.**

<sup>15</sup>If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.... <sup>18</sup>But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, **just as He desired.**

<sup>19</sup>And if they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you"...

<sup>24</sup>But God has so composed the body,... <sup>25</sup>that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another...

<sup>27</sup>**Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.**

— 1 Cor. 12:12-27

<sup>15</sup> *Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,* <sup>16</sup> *from whom **the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*** — Eph. 4:15-16

## WHY CHRISTIANS WITHOUT A CHURCH FAMILY HAVE LESS FRUIT

### 1. They Are Trying To Operate Outside Of God's Design (1 Cor. 12:14, 21-22, 27)

The compromises with our humanistic culture both among church members and leaders is indeed a challenge, and it has led many to be estranged from their church or to give up trying to do their part as a member. However, if this continues for some time there are often severe consequences that begin to be evident in their lives and their family.

### 2. They Do Not Have All They Need To Be "Successful" (1 Cor. 12:26-27)

No individual person or family has all the gifts, strengths, or resources to accomplish what God has planned for them. God does not supply what is needed the way we want Him to. He supplies what is needed for His purposes according to His design for the church He is building.

### 3. They Are Exposed To Strong Deceptions (Eph. 4:11, Heb. 13:17, 1 Sam. 15:23)

Church leaders provide God-given protection when they are properly honored as part of God's design, just as fathers and mothers do for children. When this protection is missing or rejected it exposes families to Satan's deception and power.

### 4. They Find Themselves Resisted By God (1 Pet. 5:5)

An independent spirit is often found in strong individuals and families. It is not easy to stand alone in our day. Many believers have to serve the Lord even against strong opposition from friends and family. However, we must be careful that this does not lead to independent and prideful attitudes toward the church and church leaders, effecting our calling as a member.

When we are led to serve Christ in a local church where leaders and/or other members are not strong in their biblical convictions (*see 1 Cor. 12:18*) we need to cry out for the grace and power God has promised us to stand, not only for truth, but also with the attitudes He wants.

<sup>24</sup> And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, <sup>25</sup> with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

— 2 Tim 2:24-26

## THINKING OF YOURSELF AS A MEMBER OF A CHURCH

There are a number of common misconceptions about being a member that rob us of our usefulness and fruitfulness as a disciple:

- “I get to choose my church and my shepherds”

This is not true. (see 1 Cor. 12:18 and Eph. 4:11) God has a plan and we are to be yielded to it. Our thinking about church should not be “this is where I go to get what I need”, but “this is where God has told me to go to serve others”.

- “I really don’t need a radical change in lifestyle, to give my life to the other members, to live for them, with them, and by them. I really don’t need them, to be where God wants me, and to do what He wants me to.” But...

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.— 1Cor. 12:21-22

- “My family is a higher priority and ranks ahead of my membership.”

The family has no such exalted priority in the New Testament instructions on living for Christ. This is a surprise to many, but a careful comparative study of both membership and family leaves no doubt for New Testament disciples of Christ.

*(Note: We can get out of balance here and over-neglect family for church, but the vast majority of believers are not out of balance in this way, but the other.)*

## WALKING AS A MEMBER OF A CHURCH

### 1. Loving One Another

Self-denying love is the consummate characteristic of a mature disciple. If we are to love the other members of our church, it means we are to give our life to them. We are to live for them, not for ourselves!

Notice from the following list of the “**one anothers**” how important this is to our Lord. Our attitudes and responses to our brothers and sisters in Christ are addressed

**105 times** in the New Testament. The members of our church are nearly always the object. Here are a few.

- Give preference to one another in honor. Rom. 12:10
- Be devoted to one another. Rom. 12:10
- Care for one another. 1 Cor. 12:25
- Teach and admonish one another. Col. 3:16
- Confess your sins to one another James 5:15
- Love one another. John 13:34
- Carry one another's burdens. Gal. 6:2
- Encourage one another. 1 Thess. 5:11
- Pray for one another. James 5:15
- 97 more

## 2. Using Your Gift To Serve The Body

<sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

<sup>6</sup>And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if **prophecy**, according to the proportion of his faith; <sup>7</sup>if **service**, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his **teaching**; <sup>8</sup>or he who exhorts, in his **exhortation**; he who **gives**, with liberality; he who **leads**, with diligence; he who shows **mercy**, with cheerfulness. — Rom. 12:4-8

We are told to “employ our God given gifts to serve one another”. (1 Pet. 4:10) You must know these spiritual abilities and motivations that God has given you if you are to actively employ them for your church. See Study #16 for a study of these gifts.

## 3. Responding With Right Attitudes To Church Authority

This important element of being a disciple of Christ is addressed in Study Unit #4. So many believers miss opportunities because they openly reject the clear instructions regarding our attitudes and responses to the pastors and elders that He has appointed for us, and suffer the consequences that are noted in this Study Unit. Beyond this, the rest of the church suffers because of their absence, inefficiency, and all too often, their prideful, selfish opposition.

<sup>17</sup>Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you. — Heb 13:17

## **UNIT 11 STUDY SESSION #1**

In preparation for the group session, read the study material and complete the following self evaluation.

### **Evaluating My Thinking And Walking As A Member Of A Church**

1. I rate my commitment and investment in a local church to be:  
Very good \_\_\_\_\_. Good \_\_\_\_\_. Ok \_\_\_\_\_. Poor \_\_\_\_\_. Not at all \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I know I am using my gifts in serving the members of my church:  
Yes I am \_\_\_\_\_. Some \_\_\_\_\_. Not at all \_\_\_\_\_.  
  
I do not know for sure what my gifts are \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The leaders of my church would say this, if asked if I was doing well as a member:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The following take priority over my involvement with the people, activities, and ministries of my church:  
Family \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_ Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_  
  
Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_ Projects \_\_\_\_\_
5. As far as helping me grow in Christ and ministering to me and my needs, my church family is:  
Very good. \_\_\_\_\_ Good. \_\_\_\_\_. Ok. \_\_\_\_\_. Poor. \_\_\_\_\_ Very poor. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 11 Study Session #1**

1. How has your thinking been as a Christian regarding being a member?
2. Do individuals and families, even ones with strong commitments to the Lord, really have less fruit if they are not active members in a church?
3. What do we say to this increasingly common statement? "I can't find a church that I like and is really a good church."
4. How can we serve and use our gifts in church?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 11 STUDY SESSION #2**

In preparation for the second group session, choose one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. Write notes or letters of thanks to all your church leaders for their work.
2. Contact 5 members, couples, or families with needs, to encourage and bless them.
3. Start a month-long prayer project to invest time interceding for your church.  
Keep a journal.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 11 Study Session #2**

1. If you were able to pursue one of the projects can you share with us how it went?
2. Mt. 18:15-17 tells us about dealing with “sin” in the church. Am I as an individual member to apply this? How often? How important is this? Isn't it risky?
3. When and how should I leave a church?
4. Why is it important to remember Mt. 16:18?

### **Prayer Together**

## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #12

Mt. 24-25, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11, Rev. 4-22

### LIVING IN HOPE OF THE THINGS TO COME

The King of kings is coming to rule and reign, and there will be a judgement which will send some to eternal damnation in hell and some to share eternal life with the King. How do we know these things will happen? On what do we base our **HOPE** in Christ's return?

The return of Jesus Christ is announced in over 1835 passages in the Old and New Testaments. Our **HOPE** of ruling and reigning with our Savior and Lord is based on these biblical prophecies.

The following summary addresses only the predictions relative to the future of our earth until the Millennium. The prophecies of things to come are so extensive that we cannot address here many other things we are told about, such as hell, heaven, the rewards for believers, the resurrections, the final judgement, the dead, etc.

Also, this summary of things to come is "dispensational" as shown in **the diagram below**. There are other interpretations of these many prophecies, which is not a surprise because of the difficulty to determine

- 1) the literal or symbolic value of some passages, and
- 2) the sequence or chronology of these predicted future events.

Please be cautioned, in light of the complexities and different interpretations of prophetic passages, to remember that **the main things** regarding the prophecies of Christ's return are simple and really only two:

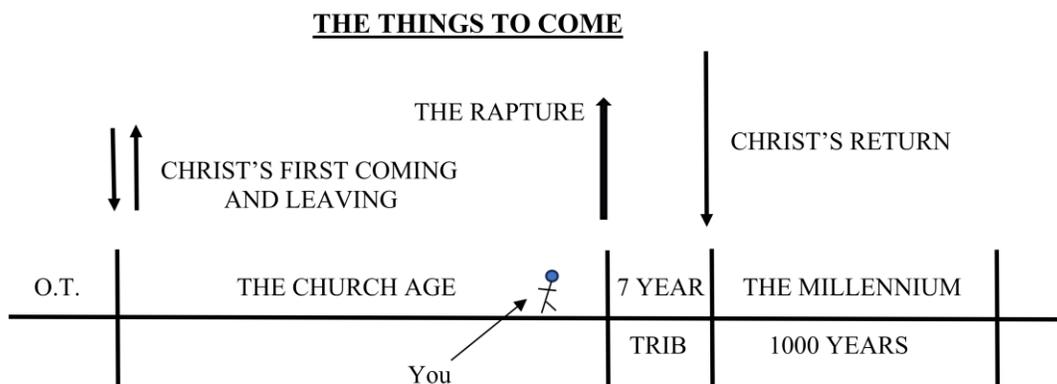
**1. Jesus Is Coming Back!**

**2. There Will Be A Judgement!**

*<sup>27</sup> "For the Son of Man is **going to come** in the glory of His Father with His angels; and **will then recompense** every man according to his deeds."*

— Matt. 16:27

Let us, therefore, focus on heeding these primary declarations, getting ready for the coming of our King by living a holy life and having, because of our **HOPE**, a steadfast witness of what He has done and will do.



## THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

Each of the following areas of prophetic announcement in the Scripture have many, many passages related to them. Only 1 or 2 passages are quoted for each and then a number of the additional passages are listed for further study.

### 1. When Will Jesus Christ Return?

#### 1) No one knows the day.

<sup>36</sup> *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”* — Matt. 24:36

See also: Acts 1:7, Mt. 24:42-44, 50, 1 Thess. 5:1-2, 2 Pet. 3:10, Mk. 13:33-37

#### 2) Christ delays His coming for a reason.

<sup>9</sup> *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.* — 2 Pet. 3:9

The reason? He has been waiting for you - and all those whose names have been written in the Lamb's book of life to be born, hear the gospel and believe unto eternal life.

See also: 2 Pet. 3:15, Mt. 24:14, 2 Thess. 2:3, Rom. 11:25

#### 3) Be on your guard.

<sup>23</sup> *“But **take heed**; behold, I have told you everything in advance.”* — Mark 13:23

<sup>42</sup> *“Therefore, **be on the alert**, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming...”*

<sup>44</sup> *“For this reason, you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. <sup>45</sup>Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? <sup>46</sup>Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.”* — Matt. 24:42-46

<sup>28</sup> *“And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.”* — 1 John 2:28

## 2. The Major Signs Of Christ's Return.

### 1) The universal spread of the gospel to all peoples

<sup>14</sup> *“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”* — Matt. 24:14

<sup>10</sup> *“And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.”* — Mark 13:10

The Bible, after the first 15 centuries of the church age, had only been translated into 14 languages. Today the Bible is available in 733 languages. This means that 5.9 billion people can read the Word of God in their mother tongue. Just the New Testament is translated into an estimated 1,622 languages, other parts of the Bible in another 1,255 languages.

Today, with the advent of the internet, the entire globe is being reached with the gospel.

### 2) The return of Israel to the land.

<sup>8</sup> *I will whistle for them to gather them together, for I have redeemed them; And they will be as numerous as they were before.* <sup>9</sup> *When I scatter them among the peoples, they will remember Me in far countries, and they with their children will live and come back.* — Zech. 10:8-9

<sup>15</sup> *“Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... <sup>16</sup> then let **those who are in Judea** flee to the mountains;... <sup>21</sup> for **then** there will be **a great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall.”* — Matt. 24:15-21

After nearly 20 centuries of non-existence as a nation, in 1948 Israel became a nation again and since then millions of Jews have returned.

### 3) Knowledge shall increase and many shall go “back and forth”.

<sup>4</sup> *“But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”* — Dan. 12:4

Undeniably, knowledge has increased, especially in the last century. And, every day in the United States alone, 90,000 airplane flights carry many “back and forth”.

#### 4) Apostacy, wars, earthquakes and famines.

<sup>3</sup> “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” <sup>4</sup> And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. <sup>5</sup> For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many. <sup>6</sup> And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. <sup>7</sup> For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.” — Matt. 24:3-7

### 3. The Removal (Rapture) Of The Church.

<sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

<sup>15</sup> For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. <sup>17</sup> **Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.** <sup>18</sup> Therefore comfort one another with these words.

— 1 Thess. 4:13-18

This event will occur before the great tribulation. Why? Because...

<sup>9</sup> God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. — 1 Thess. 5:9

See also the following texts, which permit us to believe that the church is taken up before the great tribulation: Rev. 3:10; Lk. 21:28, 36; 2 Thess. 2:6-8; Zech. 14:4-5; and Rev. 20:4-6.

## 4. The 7 Year Tribulation Period

<sup>15</sup> “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place... <sup>21</sup> then there will be a **great tribulation**, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. <sup>22</sup> And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.”  
— Matt. 24:15-22

This great tribulation and outpouring of God’s wrath is described at length in Rev. 4-19.

See also what the prophets say regarding it: Isa.13; Ezekiel 30:-1-2; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18,20; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Malachi 4:1

## 5. God’s Promises To Israel vs. The Church

<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, (as non-Jewish believers in the Messiah) that a **partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in.**  
— Rom. 11:25

The church, made up of souls from all the non-Jewish nations, (and Jews) has not replaced the Jewish people or cancelled the covenant promises God has made to them. The apostle Paul addresses this issue at length in Romans, particularly chapters 9-11.

## 6. The Millennium (1000-Year Reign Of Christ On Earth)

### 1) The Glorious Appearance Of Christ At The End Of The Tribulation

When our Lord left His disciples and returned to the Father after His resurrection, the angels said this to the disciples:

<sup>10</sup> And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was departing, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them; <sup>11</sup> and they also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come **in just the same way** as you have watched Him go into heaven.”  
— Acts 1:10-11

The verses that follow describe that this indicates He shall return personally, visibly, from heaven on clouds, suddenly, encompassed with glory, with all His angels and saints, to the Mount of Olives. See: John 14:3; 16:22; Zech. 12:10; Rev. 1:17; Dan. 2:34-35; 1 Thess. 5:2-3; Mt. 24:26-27; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Jude 14-15; Mt. 13:38-41; Col. 3:4; Zech. 14:3-5.

### 2) The Characteristics Of Our Lord’s 1000 Year Kingdom On Earth

<sup>1</sup> And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. <sup>2</sup> And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him **for a thousand years**, <sup>3</sup> and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, **until the thousand years were completed**; after these things he must be released for a short time.

<sup>4</sup> And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ **for a thousand years**.

— Rev. 20:1-4

This 1000-year reign of our Lord is a time of perfect justice, peace, prosperity, long life, good health, and happiness lived in a world delivered from the curse, as described in the following: Isa. 2:4; 11:3-5; Micah 4:4; Isa. 9:5-6; Isa. 8:22-9:2; Isa. 35:5-6; Isa. 65:20-23; Amos 9:13-14; Zech 3:10; 8:12; Rom. 8:19-22; Isa. 41:18-19; Isa. 11:6-9

## 7. The Exhortations Based On Christ's Return

### 1) To His Disciples

A great number of passages directly connect our hope in the return of our Lord with our lives as His disciples as we wait to see Him and be with Him.

<sup>11</sup> It is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. <sup>12</sup> The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. **Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day.** — Rom. 13:11-12

<sup>4</sup> But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief;

....<sup>6</sup> so then **let us not sleep** as others do, but **let us be alert and sober.**

— 1 Thess. 5:4-6

See also the exhortations and commands to be watchful, prudent, courageous, discerning, zealous, patient, joyful, sober, committed, and prayerful in our **HOPE** of Christ's return. Here are just a few: 2 Pet. 3:11-14; Phil. 1:6, 9-11; 1 Thess. 3:13; 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Pet. 3:14; Mt. 25:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:7-9; 4:13; James 5:7-8; Heb. 10:36-37; 1 Pet. 4:7.

## 2) To The Lukewarm And Unrepentant Who Say They Are Christians

<sup>15</sup> “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot.

<sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

<sup>17</sup> Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked... <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; **be zealous therefore, and repent...** <sup>21</sup> He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne... <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”  
— Rev 3:15-22

## 3) The 5 “Finals” In God’s Final Words Of His Revelation To Us.

In the final book in the Bible, in the final chapter, God has some final words to say to us to guide us and warn us until He returns, after His great plan of reconciliation is complete. There is a final invitation, a final warning, a final promise, a final prayer, and a final benediction. These are all in the context of His return to be with you. They were written for you.

## **UNIT 12 STUDY SESSION #1**

In preparation for the group session, read the primary prophetic passages quoted in each of the areas above and complete the following self-evaluation.

### **Evaluating My Hope In The Return Of My Lord**

If our Lord returned today would He be pleased with what you are doing in life as His disciple?

Are you fighting the good fight for Him, in self-denial, regardless of the cost?

Personally \_\_\_\_\_

In Your Marriage \_\_\_\_\_

With Your Children \_\_\_\_\_

As A Member Of The Church He Has Placed You In \_\_\_\_\_

As A Christian Standing For Him In The World \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 12 Study Session #1**

1. Is the diagram on page 33 helpful? Do you have questions about the primary events to come, i.e. the end of the church age, the rapture, the tribulation, the time of the Lord's return, or the millennium?
2. How many of the prophecies relating to the Lord's return have yet to be fulfilled before He comes?
3. Can you sum up the 1800+ announcements regarding things to come in two sentences?
4. Remember that our study of biblical prophecies in this study has been limited to those concerning things to come until the Millennium because of the breadth of prophecy in the Bible. Let us be careful to avoid too much attention to other areas at this time.

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 12 STUDY SESSION #2**

In preparation for the second study session please choose one of the following projects for the week and come prepared to share what you have learned in the process:

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. The word HOPE is used 145 times in the Bible, 77 in the N.T. Memorize 5 of these passages where it is found in reference to the return of our Lord.
2. Choose one of the 7 subject areas in “The Return Of Jesus Christ” material above. Read all of the quoted AND noted passages referenced and meditate on them this week. Come prepared to share what the Lord has shown you.
3. Remember that our study of biblical prophecies in this study has been limited to those concerning things to come until the Millennium because of the breadth of prophecy in the Bible. Let us be careful to avoid too much attention to other areas at this time.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 12 Study Session #2**

1. If you were able to pursue one of the projects can you share what you have learned?

### **Prayer Together**



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #13

2 Cor. 11:3 / 2 Cor. 6:14-18 / Col. 2:8

### AVOIDING AND OPPOSING CORRUPTING INFLUENCES

What is a corrupting influence? Eve faced one in the wonderful garden where God had placed her to live for Him. Satan's goal was to corrupt her thinking and influence her away from God's will and ways. He did. What a challenge God has given us by asking us to live for Him in the midst of a world that is **full** of corrupting influences that seek to turn our mind and hearts away from God, His will, and His ways.

**A corrupting influence is a person or thing that influences us to devote less of our life to following and serving Christ.**

If we are not actively **avoiding and opposing** these godless influences that abound in our world, we are in great danger of being **led astray** from our devotion to Christ just as Adam and Eve were. The apostles were very concerned about this and addressed it many of their letters.

<sup>3</sup> *I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be **led astray** from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.*  
— 2 Cor. 11:3

<sup>8</sup> ***See to it that no one takes you captive** through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.*  
— Col. 2:8

<sup>1</sup> *You foolish Galatians, **who has bewitched you?**...<sup>3</sup> *Are you so foolish...having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*  
— Gal 3:1-3*

<sup>17</sup> *Be on your guard lest, **being carried away** by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness.*  
— 2 Pet. 3:17

<sup>4</sup> *For certain persons have **crept in** unnoticed,...ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness.*  
— Jude 1:4

<sup>17</sup> *Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.* <sup>18</sup> *For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech **they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.***  
— Rom 16:17-18

<sup>14</sup> *We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, **by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming**; <sup>15</sup> but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.* — Eph. 4:14-15

God has raised us up in these last days to stand for Christ in an increasingly corrupt culture and an increasingly comprised church. He has called us to be a light shining in a dark place, both to our humanistic nation and to the compromised church in it. God has asked us to set ourselves apart for Him, and so to be “*vessels for honor, sanctified (set apart), useful to the Master, prepared for every good work*”. There are relatively few to stand with us and many to stand against us, even from within the Christian community, but that is not surprising given the nature of the age.

<sup>3</sup> *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance with their own desires; <sup>4</sup> and will **turn away** their ears from the truth, and will **turn aside** to myths.* — 2 Tim. 4:3-4

<sup>12</sup> *Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in **falling away** from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” lest any one of you be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*** — Heb 3:12-13

What a great challenge the Lord has given us. We are to called to live for Him in the midst of this fallen world **without being influenced by it!** But His instructions to us go even further than this. We are not only to **avoid** godless influences for the sake of our own godliness and usefulness, but we are to also to actively **oppose** these corrupting influences that we face in our lives, our families, and our churches.

<sup>11</sup> *I wrote to you **not to associate with** any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler— not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? <sup>13</sup> But those who are outside, God judges. **Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.*** — 1 Cor. 5:11-13

<sup>20</sup> *“I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and **leads My bond-servants astray**, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols... <sup>22</sup> Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, **unless they repent** of her deeds.*

*And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”* — Rev. 2:20-23

<sup>9</sup> But **shun foolish controversies** and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. <sup>10</sup> **Reject a factious man** after a first and second warning, <sup>11</sup> knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. — Titus 3:9-11

## What Corrupting Influences Do We Face?

The four primary ones addressed to us in God's Word are:

### 1. Corrupting Philosophies Of Life

The culminating quality of a mature Christian is loving others in self-denial.

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; <sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.** — Phil. 2:3-5

In the starkest contrast possible to this life of living for others, the dominate philosophy of life now in America is **humanism**. This world view 1) puts God out, 2) then, puts the individual man at the center of life as the measure of all things, and 3) further, makes truth itself relative and to a person's self-interests, e.g. do you want to be a woman instead of a man?

For the last 50 years in America, **humanistic thought** has increasingly dominated all of the secular educational institutions in our land. Our schools openly and aggressively teach that "life is all about you." Self-fulfillment, self-interest, and self-happiness is the goal of life.

Moreover, consistent with putting God out, and therefore rejecting the idea of special creation, **evolutionary teaching** about man's origin, value, purpose, and future dominates all areas of study. This evolutionary world view has also corrupted our Christian educational institutions.

So, given that our secular educational institutions oppose Christianity and teach evolution and its inevitable corollaries about life as fact, where do you send your children for their education? Are these institutions a "corrupting influence"? Self, self, self, self. Six hours a day for twelve years, and we expect ...what?

## 2. Corrupting People

Are any of those described in the following passages influencing you in life?

<sup>14</sup> Do not be bound together with **unbelievers**; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, <sup>15</sup> or what fellowship has light with darkness?...  
<sup>17</sup> “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord. “And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you.” — 2 Cor. 6:14-17

Leave the presence of **a fool**, or you will not discern words of knowledge.  
— Prov. 14:7

<sup>3</sup> I hate the work of **those who fall away**; It shall not fasten its grip on me. <sup>4</sup> A **perverse heart** shall depart from me; I will know no evil. <sup>5</sup> **Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor**, him I will destroy; No one who has **a haughty look and an arrogant heart** will I endure.  
— Psalm 101:3-5

<sup>24</sup> Do not associate with **a man given to anger**, or go with a hot-tempered man, <sup>25</sup> lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself. — Prov. 22:24-25

Do your friends influence you to devote more of your time and life to Christ - or more of it to something else? Do your friends say to you “imitate me, as I imitate Christ”?

<sup>20</sup> He who walks with **wise men** will be wise, but the companion of **fools** will suffer harm.  
— Prov. 13:20

In contrast to a corrupting influence that causes us to devote less of our life to God, **a godly influence** is a person who influences us to devote more of our life to following and serving Christ.

### 3. Corrupting Activities And Material

<sup>2</sup>*I will give heed to the blameless way... I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart.* <sup>3</sup>*I will set no worthless thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten its grip on me.* <sup>4</sup>*A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will know no evil...*

<sup>6</sup>*My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me; He who walks in a blameless way is the one who will minister to me.*

<sup>7</sup>*He who practices deceit shall not dwell within my house.— Psalm 101:2-7*

How many hours a day do you watch television? The answer for the average American today is 4.6 hours! The average screen time spent by users aged 16 to 64 across all media platforms and different devices is estimated to be **6 hours and 37 minutes per day!**

Would you say that today's television and internet is designed to influence those who watch it to give more of their life to God, or to influence them to do something else with their mind, their money, and their life? Is it a powerful godly – or corrupting influence? Silly questions.

### 4. Corrupting Christians and Churches

It is hard to find a body of believers who are standing steadfast, immovable for the truth, in the face of a culture that is selling out to wickedness and evil. It is hard to find church leaders who are fully committed to Christ and proclaim His Word as inspired and inerrant.

<sup>11</sup>*'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches... <sup>14</sup>I have a few things against you, because you have there **some** who hold the teaching of Balaam... <sup>15</sup>you also have **some** who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup>**Repent** therefore.'* — Rev. 2:11-17

<sup>15</sup>*'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot.*

<sup>16</sup>*So because **you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold**, I will spit you out of My mouth.*

<sup>17</sup>*Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,*

<sup>19</sup>*...Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and **repent.**'* — Rev. 3:15-18

## Opposing, As Well As Avoiding, Corrupting Influences

As **spiritual leaders** of others, as husbands, parents, pastors and elders, we are called upon to protect those under our care. By clear warning, by example, and by strong opposition, we are to keep godless influences and people away from them.

<sup>28</sup> **Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

<sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves' men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

<sup>31</sup> **Therefore be on the alert**, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears." — Acts 20:28-31

<sup>3:1</sup> But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; <sup>5</sup> holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and **avoid such men as these**.

<sup>4:1</sup> I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: <sup>2</sup> Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; **reprove, rebuke, exhort**, with great patience and instruction... <sup>5</sup> Be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, **fulfill your ministry**. — 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:1-5

## UNIT 13 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study, read the study material and complete the following.

### My Commitments Regarding The Corrupting Influences I Face In Life

1. I purpose to avoid or remove the following corrupting influences from my life that God has brought to mind: \_\_\_\_\_  
To what extent? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. I purpose to be a godly influence to others, and to do this I purpose to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I am responsible for \_\_\_\_\_, and I purpose to **lead** them to avoid and oppose those things and people that will corrupt them and destroy their usefulness and fruitfulness for Christ. Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_  
To do this I must change the following \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 13 Study Session #1

1. Is isolating ourselves as much as possible, even completely, from contact with the non-Christian world what God tells us to do? \_\_\_\_\_
2. We are to be “in the world, but not of it” (John 17:11, 14-15). If this is true, when is a young Christian ready to go out “into the world” alone, either for activities, education, or work? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is sending your children to a humanistic school to be taught, a violation of Eph. 6:4? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How can I work in a job that is requiring me to do what God says I cannot? What are the biblical principles related to this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Are women who dress immodestly, rather than discreetly, a corrupting influence for men? \_\_\_\_\_ To be avoided and opposed? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the difference between “avoiding” and “opposing” corrupting influences? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Prayer Together

## **UNIT 13 STUDY SESSION #2**

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

In preparation for Session #2, consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share what you learned.

1. Memorize Ps. 101, noting the “I wills”. Be prepared to share what commitments this led you to make regarding corrupting influences.
2. Choose one of the following areas where the world’s “influence” can be very strong and completely remove it as described.
  - a. Your cell phone for 12 waking hours. Twice during the week. Completely. Do not carry it with you. Turn it off.
  - b. Watching TV for 5 consecutive days.
  - c. Spend a day alone, fasting, praying, and seeking the Lord. Leave all electronics at home, away from any availability to you during the entire time.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 13 Study Session #2**

1. If you were able to pursue one of the projects, can you share with us how it went?

### **Prayer Together**

## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #14

Eph. 2:10; John 15:16; Rom. 8:28

### LEARNING AND ACCEPTING WHO YOU ARE IN CHRIST

Of all the things God could have made for Himself – He made YOU!! Of all the things your Savior could have given His life for – He gave it for YOU!!

<sup>10</sup>*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...* — Eph. 2:10

The Greek word we translate “workmanship” was used to describe the greatest masterpiece of an artist or a builder. We are God’s masterpiece! Wow. But...

But if this is true, why am I 4’11” instead of 6’4”? Why am I blind? Why was I raised in an abusive home and abandoned? Why am I like I am, facing what I face, if I really am God’s masterpiece? If He really loves me? How can this be?

#### What Are The Truths That Allow Us To Accept Who We Are In Christ And What We Face?

##### 1) The Truth About **You**.

- God designed your physical appearance before you were conceived and fashioned you in the womb before you were born.

<sup>13</sup>*For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb.*

<sup>14</sup>*I will give thanks to Thee, **for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;** Wonderful are Thy works, and my soul knows it very well. <sup>15</sup>*My frame was not hidden from Thee, When I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance; And **in Thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them.*** — Psalm 139:13-16*

<sup>5</sup>*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations.* — Jer. 1:5

- God designed you to fulfill His purpose.

<sup>5</sup> *And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant...*  
— Isa. 49:5

- God treated you as a person before you were born.

<sup>1</sup> *The LORD called me from the womb; From the body of my mother He named Me.*  
— Isa. 49:1

## 2) The Truth About **God's Choices For You** That You Cannot Change.

- **He** chose your parents, your gender, your brothers and sisters, your birth order, your physical features, your racial background, your national heritage, your time in history, your mental abilities, and your aging and time of death.
- God has waited a long time since the coming of Christ to deal in finality with man's sin. What has He been waiting for? You.

<sup>16</sup> *You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.*  
— John 15:16

## 3) The Truth About **God Himself**.

- God cannot and does not make mistakes. He made none regarding **you**.
- God knew you and His plans for you before He created the world. He designed you and planned your time on earth accordingly. He is omniscient, knowing everything that could and would happen.
- God's plans and will cannot be thwarted, because He is also sovereign. Nothing can separate you from Him or the fulfillment of His plans.
- God overrules all attempts by men and angels to thwart His plans and ultimately turns them by His power into glory for Himself and those He loves. *You. (Rom. 8:28)*
- God keeps His promises. He will keep them regarding you.

## 4) The Truth About **What God Does With The "Unchangeables"** In Your Life

- He causes all of the hard things that we did not choose for ourselves and cannot change ourselves (our bodies, our family and our situation in life and in the world), by His infinite power and predetermined plan...

<sup>28</sup> *...to work together for good, for those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose.*  
— Rom. 8:28

Satan thought that having Jesus crucified would be a great victory for him. How foolish. The very worst thing he could think of doing to thwart God was allowed by God to accomplish His eternal purposes, and glorify the One who was crucified!

The same providential rule and overrule is used by our God to use the grievous things He has allowed in our lives to accomplish His eternal purposes and glorify, not only Himself, but those He loves also.

*<sup>16</sup> “You did not choose Me (Jesus speaking), but I chose you, and I ordained that you should go forth and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.”*

— John 15:16

*<sup>10</sup> We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which He prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

— Eph. 2:10

Unless we know the perspective on life that these truths bring, and impose them on our mind, will, and emotions – the hard things in our life regarding how God made us and what He has allowed to happen to us – they bring us to bitterness and resentment rather than joy and contentment.

But remembering these truths, and that God takes these grievous things in our life and turns them by His power into glory for Himself and those He loves, gives us hope and allows us to thank Him and even have joy as we face them.

The apostle Paul is a wonderful example of these truths to us. He was born in a Jewish family, the son of a Pharisee, in the first century under Roman rule. He chose none of these, but God had a plan that these things fit perfectly.

He rejected Christ as an adult, by then a Pharisee himself, and he persecuted to the death many Christians. But God had a plan and began to reveal it in a flash of light that blinded him! Paul didn't recognize this as God's doing at the time, but it was.

After he was saved and began to have a fruitful ministry for Christ, God allowed a physical weakness that He would not remove, but rather used to glorify Himself! Paul asked God to remove it – three times – but God said no, that He had done it for a purpose.

Paul was then was put in a Roman prison, chained to a guard in a lousy cell. But, surprise, this did not hamper his ministry, it enhanced it!

Finally, Paul was executed by beheading. What did that accomplish? Well, that was what caused him to immediately stand in the presence of the glory of God, blameless, with great joy! Talk about a blessing. Wow.

## UNIT 14 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### Evaluating My Acceptance Of Myself In Christ And My Circumstances

I have prayed and said: Thank you, heavenly Father for...

1. The way you made me, especially those physical features I have wanted to change.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
2. My parents whom you chose for me.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
3. Each brother and sister You brought into my family.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
4. The color of my skin and racial characteristics You have given me.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
5. My mental and physical abilities and inabilities compared to others.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
6. The country and place (s) where I was born and have lived.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_
7. That I am growing older and physically and mentally weaker.  
Yes I have \_\_\_\_\_. No I have not \_\_\_\_\_. I still struggle with this \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 14 Study Session #1

1. How can I apply James 1:1-4 on a day to day basis – continually?
2. Is Romans 8:28 really true? It doesn't look like it.
3. How can I help another Christian who is struggling in this area?

## UNIT 14 STUDY SESSION #2

In preparation for the second study session please consider pursuing one of the following projects and sharing about it.

- Review and study the accounts of the some of the following people in Scripture who faced unexpected hardships and handicaps in life that God clearly allowed or initiated. May they encourage you as you face what He is using in your life.

**Daniel:** Enslaved as a teenager for the rest of his life and mutilated physically.

**All of the prophets:** “Which one of My prophets did you not kill?”

**Job:** Who was never given an explanation of “why”.

**Jonah:** Who was asked to give his life for a people he hated, and said “no”.

**The 11 apostles:** All of them martyred except John.

**Abraham:** Who grew very old waiting, and waiting, to see what God had promised.

- See how many of the following verses you can memorize before the next study session and share any encouragement this has been to you in this area as you “put on the armor of God”. James 1:2-4, Rom. 8:28, 2 Cor. 12:7-10, Matt. 14:28-31
- List the hardest things you have faced from the list on your personal evaluation (physical features, family issues, etc.) and answer the following question regarding each:  
“What has happened for good because these things were allowed or brought into my life that would **not** have happened without these things?”
- Read a biography from the list below before the next session. These are of Christians who faced difficult self-acceptance situations in life, but have and are, living by faith with them and through them, to the glory of God.

Fanny Crosby: The Blind Hymn Writer (reading her hymns might be more helpful!)

Joni Erickson: The Paralyzed Encourager Of So Many, Handicapped Less Than Her

Patch The Pirate: The One-Eyed Hymn Writer, With A Body That Doesn't Work

### Discussion Questions for Unit 14 Study Session #2

1. If you were able to pursue one of the study projects can you share what you learned?
2. How can we bless and help a brother or sister in the Lord who is struggling in this area?
3. Non-Christians are taught to accept themselves and self-confidently “go get em” because “you can do it”. What is the difference between this self-confidence and the Christian who has “self-confidence” in the Lord?

### Prayer Together



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #15

Jude / 2 Pet. 3 / Titus 1:10-16 / Gal. 1:6-9

### CONTENDING EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

Whose responsibility is it to stand up for the doctrines of the Christian faith taught in the church and lived out in the lives of the members?

<sup>3</sup> *Beloved, while I was making every effort to write **you** about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to **you** appealing that **you** contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.* — Jude 3

We come now, in our studies of living for Jesus Christ, to consider our instructions and duties in response to **false teaching, false teachers, and false brethren** that are found in our churches and among God's people. We find this addressed clearly, with dire warnings, and extensive descriptions of what we will face, and precise instructions on what to do.

False teaching and self-oriented church members, contradicting the truths revealed to us in the Scriptures, have always sought to infiltrate and influence the people of God. They deny the inerrancy of God's Word, the deity and work of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, and that life is to be lived loving God instead of self.

<sup>10</sup> *These men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.* <sup>11</sup> *Woe to them!...*

<sup>12</sup> *These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted;* <sup>13</sup> *wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.* — Jude 10-13

**Jude** lists 23 characteristics of such men, warning us regarding them, and telling us to “**contend earnestly**” with them. Our Lord, Peter, Paul, John, and James, all warn us of them and give instructions to contend earnestly with them for “the once for all delivered to the saints faith”. They are the entire focus of Peter's second epistle.

<sup>1</sup> *But just as false prophets arose among the people, **there will also be false teachers among you**, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.* <sup>2</sup> *And **many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned**; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words.* — 2 Pet. 2:1-3

**Peter** lists over 20 of their actions and motives and ends his letter with this warning:

*<sup>17</sup> You therefore, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard, lest, being carried away by the errors of these men, you fall from your own steadfastness.*  
— 2 Peter 3:17

**Paul** addressed their insidious work of false teaching and self-oriented living in the church several times in his letters.

*<sup>10</sup> There are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, <sup>11</sup> who must be silenced, because their lies [regarding the faith] are upsetting whole families, teachings things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain... <sup>16</sup> they profess to know God, but they actually deny Him, they are disobedient and detestable, and worthless for any good.*  
— Titus 1:10-16

*<sup>6</sup> I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; <sup>7</sup> which is really not another; only **there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.** <sup>8</sup> But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*  
— Gal. 1:6-8

To Timothy he warned of them and spoke of their effect upon young, unaware, and unprotected believers. He was not subtle in dealing with them!

*<sup>4:1</sup> The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic doctrines... <sup>3</sup> men who teach against God's design of marriage and add to God's revelation with their own doctrines... <sup>1:20</sup> among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, who I have delivered over to Satan, that they may be taught not to blaspheme...  
<sup>6:3</sup> If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, <sup>4</sup> he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, <sup>5</sup> and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.*  
— 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1:20; 6:3-5

**John** warned of those who taught a false faith, both by their words and their lives:

*<sup>4</sup> I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. <sup>5</sup> And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, **that we love one another.**  
<sup>6</sup> And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. **This is the commandment,** just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.*

<sup>7</sup>For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

<sup>9</sup>Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

<sup>10</sup>**If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting;** <sup>11</sup>for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. — 2 John 4-11

Jude's entire letter is devoted to warning us about false teachers and influences, how to respond to them, and how to help those influenced by them. He tells us:

1. What we are to do – contend earnestly.
2. What we are to contend for – the once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith.
3. Who we are to contend against.
4. Six responses we are to have in regard to them and those that are influenced by them.

Let us briefly clarify each of these.

### 1. What does it mean to contend earnestly?

The Greek words mean “to combat intensely”, carrying the sense of intensive force against someone in combat. We are to enter into aggressive repulsion of an enemy. We are to go into battle.

### 2. What are we to contend for?

“The once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith.” This is not just the gospel, but the whole body of revealed truth given to us in the Scripture. Is this only the theological concepts and doctrines of the Christian faith, or both correct theology AND correct living? Is godly living to be contended for as well as sound doctrine? It is.

<sup>1</sup>Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but **test the spirits to see whether they are from God**; because many false prophets have gone out into the world...<sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love...<sup>20</sup> **If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar**; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

<sup>21</sup>And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. — 1 John 4:1, 8, 20-21

This leads us to briefly note how we are to respond to 1) those who are engaged in false teaching and unbiblical living, and 2) those who are being influenced by them.

### 3. How are we to contend earnestly for the truth against false teaching and teachers in the church?

Let's not be naïve here about what we are facing. It is good to expect a little blood on the floor in this combat against the forces of darkness, disguised as good guys, seeking to harm our children, family, and brothers and sisters in Christ at church. The creeps.

<sup>3</sup> *Beloved,.. I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.* <sup>4</sup> *For certain persons have crept in unnoticed (creeps!), those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly persons** who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

— Jude 3-4

Remember the words used to describe them by Peter and Jude and Paul:

<sup>1</sup> *There will also be false teachers among you, who will:*

- *secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them...*
- <sup>2</sup> *many will follow their sensuality.*
- *because of them the way of the truth will be maligned.*
- <sup>3</sup> *in their greed they will exploit you with false words....*
- <sup>10</sup> *They indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.*
- *daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,...*
- <sup>12</sup> *But these, like unreasoning animals...reviling where they have no knowledge....*
- <sup>13</sup> *They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime...in their deceptions...*
- <sup>14</sup> *having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls,*
- *having a heart trained in greed,*
- <sup>15</sup> *forsaking the right way they have gone astray,...*
- <sup>18</sup> *speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality.* — 2 Pet. 2:1-18
  
- <sup>16</sup> *These are grumblers,*
- *finding fault,*
- *following after their own lusts,*
- *they speak arrogantly,*
- *flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.* — Jude 16
  
- <sup>13</sup> *For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ...as servants of righteousness.* — 2 Cor. 11:13

Dealing strongly with them is required as described in the following passages: (Rom. 16:17, 2 Thess. 3:6,14, 2 John 1:10, 1 Cor. 5:9-11, Mt. 18:15-17, Titus 3:10 and many others)

Contending strongly with false teachers and brethren is only half of the battle. Helping other brothers and sisters who are being influenced by them is an equaling challenging and important task for those making disciples for Christ.

Jude provided some direction for us, identifying three categories of Christians we are to help: in mind here: 1) those **confused** by false teachers and teaching, those **convinced** by false teachers and teaching, and those **committed** to false teaching.

<sup>22</sup> <i>And have mercy on <b>some</b>, who are doubting;</i>	<b>(they are confused)</b>
<sup>23</sup> <i>save <b>others</b>, snatching them out of the fire;</i>	<b>(they are convinced)</b>
<i>and on <b>some</b> have mercy with fear,</i>	
<i>hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.</i>	<b>(they are committed)</b>
— Jude 22-23	

Let's look briefly at these three categories of believers needing our help.

1. We are to **help those in our church who are confused** about what is true and what isn't.

The deceptive statements made by false teachers, coupled with their worldly lifestyles, can easily confuse some immature Christians within the church. Without much experience and teaching, they find themselves **confused**, –unsure of what is biblically true and what isn't. Jude calls upon the mature ones in the church to have mercy on ...“those who are doubting”. Like wolves stalking sheep, false teachers prey on the weak (2 Tim 3:6) and those mired in doubt. (James 1:6, Ps. 73:13-16, 77:7-9)

Those of us who are strong must show mercy to such souls as they are torn between truth and error (Eph 4:14), and commitment and non-commitment (Heb 3:7-4:13; 6:1-12). Showing mercy here means exhorting such people with the truth to help them before they are permanently caught up in heresy. This takes time, patience, and sympathy.

Now, whose responsibility is this? At this level, when we are talking about weak, immature, young, naïve brothers and sisters in our church. It is **everyone's** responsibility to be helping everyone with “the whole body, working together”. Help these believers get to the truth early on in their battles, because if someone does not...the deception gets worse

2. We must **bluntly warn those who have become convinced** of false teaching.

*“Save others, snatching them out of the fire.”*

Jesus modeled these first 2 during His ministry to those who were confused, unsure, and filled with doubts. He patiently and gently presented the gospel and His commands. But to those who were convinced of false teaching, such as the scribes and Pharisees, He was blunt, confrontive, and gave them grave warnings about the consequences.

“Snatching” is the word *harpatzo* and means “to seize or take something by force”. The picture here is seeing someone on the very edge of the cliff, convinced that jumping off is really God’s will! What a challenge, rescuing **those now convinced of false teaching**. But we must be willing to be used of God to save others. It is only His power that draws. He drew you. He draws, Pharisees, Mormons, and others convinced of false teaching. But we must contend **for** them regarding the truth.

3. We must **with great caution and wisdom proclaim the truth to those committed** to false teaching.

*“And on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh”*

Heretics are profoundly deceived individuals, deeply committed to their own deceptions. When reaching out to such people, we who know the truth must proceed with the utmost caution and wisdom. The admonition ‘have mercy with fear’ indicates the sobering, frightening nature that outreach to such people entails. This wise fear stems from an awareness that getting too close to corrupt, apostate error, could result in being tainted by those lies. This warning is repeated 5 times! (See Matt 16:6,12; 1 Cor 5:6-7; 15:33; Gal 5:7-9).

Jude used very coarse language to highlight the danger involved in this type of outreach. Garment translates “*chiton*” and refers to the clothing that the people of the day wore under their outer tunics. It was their underwear. The word translated “polluted” is form of the verb *spiloo*, meaning “to stain” or “to spot”.

To be “polluted by the flesh” means “to be stained by bodily function.” Just as no one wants to handle someone else’s dirty underwear and be defiled physically, so we should be extremely wary of getting too close to the spiritual defilement of those corrupted by false teachers. Even in bringing the gospel to committed apostates, saints must exercise great caution and wisdom. (Matt 10:16).

But, you may be thinking, I thought we were to love our enemies. How does that square with this contending with them, hating their teaching and even their presence?

Truth and love are found often together in our Bibles. How they are linked in this situation is expressed clearly by Paul in Eph 4:25. "Speak the truth - in love." Speaking truth is what we are to do, for it contains the Words of life. Love describes the way in which we are to speak it. See also 2 Tim 2:24-26 and note that **correction** is the exhortation. The manners in which correction is to be done are also noted, and important, but not the imperative.

Let us close our study by asking ourselves:

1. Am I mature enough, to discern false teaching and false teachers?
  - a. by my knowledge of Scripture.
  - b. by my relationship with the Holy Spirit.
  - c. by my lifestyle of seeking God's opinion and imposing it.
  
2. Can I help others in this fierce battle for souls? Do I study? Do I pray? Am I alert? Am I an earnest contender for the faith?

## UNIT 15 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study complete the following self-evaluation.

### Evaluating How I Am Contending For The Faith

1. I see it as my responsibility to confront error when I see it in my church, both in its teaching and in the lives of its members. Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Not really\_\_\_
2. I have contended with false teaching and sinning church members in the past.  
\_\_\_\_\_ How often?\_\_\_\_\_ How many in the last year?\_\_\_\_\_
3. I feel that I am mature enough to discern error doctrinally and am committed to doing this as the Lord leads regardless of the costs relationally.  
100%\_\_\_ 75%\_\_\_ 50%\_\_\_
4. I would rate the commitment and protection given by my church leaders against all opposition to the truth and practice of the faith as \_\_\_\_\_.
5. I appreciate those who have led me and taught me and have expressed this to them.  
Well\_\_\_ Poorly\_\_\_ Often\_\_\_ Not Often\_\_\_
6. Overall I would say that my church contends for the faith...Well\_\_\_ Poorly\_\_\_  
It could improve by\_\_\_\_\_
7. I am committed to discussing this with the leadership when necessary\_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 15 Study Session #1

1. Is contending for the faith a matter of only addressing the right doctrines of the faith, or is it also a matter of addressing our life of faith? Is it contending only against false teaching or also against wrong attitudes and conduct by believers?
2. If we see “self-love” rather than “selfless love of others” in others, is this a “contending” matter for us? When?
3. What happens to the flock if church leaders do not address the challenges their members face to “depart from error and iniquity”? What happens to a family if the parents do this?
4. How does this principle relate to sending children to schools taught by humanists? To Christian colleges with subjects taught by evolutionists?
5. What does 2 Tim. 2:24-26 say about how we are to “correct” or “contend” with error? What does this mean practically? What must we avoid?
6. Does contending for the faith mean getting involved in politics?
7. What people are MY responsibility to go and talk to about what they are doing in life and/or teaching that is not according to “the once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints faith”?

### Prayer Together

## **UNIT 15 STUDY SESSION #2:**

In preparation for the second study session consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it appropriately.

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

1. If you have a concern about a doctrinal issue or imbalance in your church, ask for a meeting with one of the elders and address your concern with him.
2. If you know a person at church that is clearly sinning and needs to change his or her attitudes or conduct, consider how Matt. 18:15-20 should be applied to the situation and do so.
3. If you have a leader(s) at your church who have been standing against false teaching and/or false brethren in/or for the church body, write a letter of appreciation and encouragement and/or ask to see them and bless them for their protection and example.
4. If there is a false teacher or doctrine that has “crept” into your life, seek counsel from your leaders regarding how to proceed.
5. If you know someone at church who is following a false teacher or is being influenced by false teaching consider with the Lord how to wisely address them and do so.
6. Study the following passages regarding Paul’s example and exhortations to be of good courage. Memorize at least three of them. Define courage.
7. Gal. 1:10/Phil. 1:27/Col. 1:29/Eph. 6:18-20/1 Cor. 16:13/Phil. 4:1/Rom. 1:16/2 Cor. 5:6-8

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 15 Study Session #2**

1. If you had an opportunity to pursue one of the application projects can you share with us how it went?

### **Prayer Together**



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #16

1 Pet. 4:10-11 / Eph. 4:4-16 / Rom. 12:3-8 / 1 Cor. 12:12-31

### EMPLOYING YOUR GOD-GIVEN GIFT IN SERVING OTHERS

Living your life for OTHERS is the appropriate context for studying the special gifting that God has given to every Christian.

<sup>10</sup> *As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.* — 1 Pet. 4:10

There are no private gifts. Spiritual gifts (charismata) are the abilities and motivations that God has created in each believer, with the goal that they be used to benefit OTHERS.

<sup>6</sup> *So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly.* — Rom. 12:6

Furthermore, we are to work with each other, recognizing that our abilities and motivations are different.

<sup>16</sup> *The whole body, working together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.* — Eph 4:16

Do you know what your God-given gifting is? If not, how can you do what God is asking of you? To employ your gift in serving others in the body you must know something of what it is. It is also very helpful, since we are to work together and our gifts differ, as noted above, to know how others are gifted and motivated.

Spiritual gifts are so important that false teaching about them abounds. However, it is possible to understand and organize these special capacities, abilities, and motivations given to each believer, so that we can serve one another and be useful in the work of making disciples and building Christ's church.

If you are saved, you are gifted and you are needed. God has chosen to include you in building His church and unless you “employ your gift in serving” where “God has placed you, as a member” the whole church where you should be “properly working” will suffer, just like a human body that is missing a hand or a leg. Please reread the verses above and note these truths. In addition, please notice **our interdependence with one another** as Paul again addresses spiritual gifts in this passage:

<sup>20</sup> But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup> and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, <sup>24</sup> whereas our seemly members have no need of it.

But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, <sup>25</sup> that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

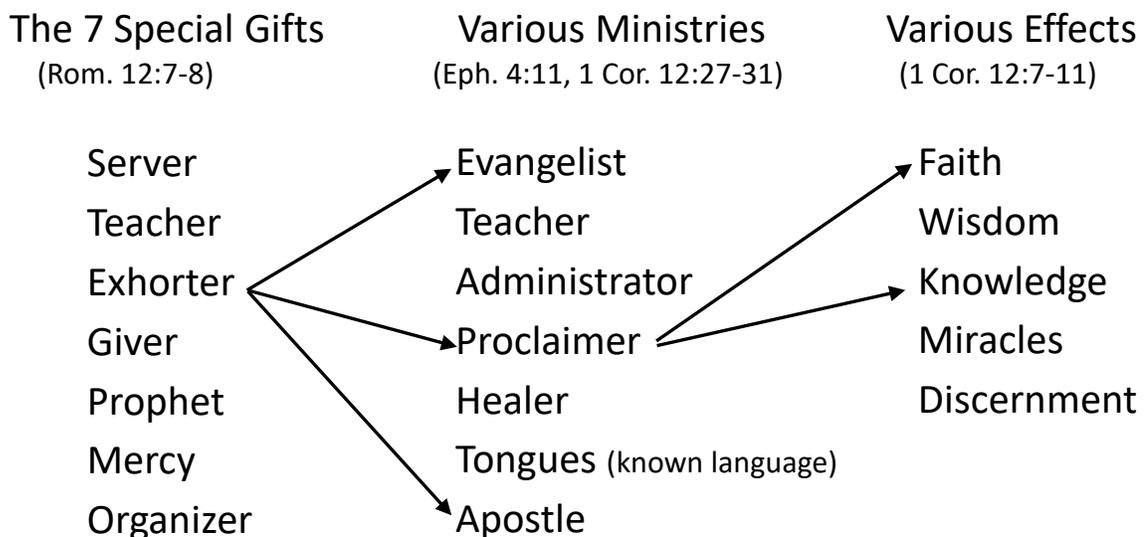
<sup>27</sup> Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.— 1 Cor 12:20-27

Using the diagram below, the gifts are organized and explained in this study according to Paul's identification of them in 1 Cor. 12:4-7 and Rom. 12:7-8. Notice how our gifts can be employed in different ministry areas, and through these ministries have various effects on others as God works:

<sup>4</sup> Now there are **varieties of gifts**, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup> And there are **varieties of ministries**, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> And there are **varieties of effects**, but the same God who works all things in all persons.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.  
— 1 Cor 12:4-7

<sup>6</sup> Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us exercise them accordingly: If PROPHECY, according to the proportion of his faith, <sup>7</sup> if SERVICE, in his serving, or he who TEACHES, in his teaching, <sup>8</sup> or he who EXHORTS, in his exhortation; he who GIVES, with liberality, he who LEADS, with diligence; he who shows MERCY, with cheerfulness.  
— Rom. 12:6-8



Are you perhaps, an **EXHORTER**? Are you motivated like the Apostle Paul to see people grow in their faith and commitment to the Lord's will and ways? You like to exhort. It is necessary.

Or - perhaps you are a gifted **TEACHER** like Luke. You are motivated to ensure that the truth is taught accurately and thoroughly. The details are important to you.

Or – perhaps you are able to sense when a person is hurting and are motivated to comfort and console him like John did at the last supper. He was full of **MERCY** and helped hurting people.

Or – perhaps you are a gifted **ORGANIZER** and can lead a group of people to work together to achieve a common goal. You can see what needs to be done, how to do it, and, if asked, can coordinate things quite efficiently. Like Nehemiah. Wow. In 53 days.

Or – perhaps you are a gifted speaker who hates “sin”, things that are not right, and wants them corrected, sooner rather than later, like Peter. You are also pretty good at communicating and making your point. You are a **PROCLAIMER** of truth, a prophet.

Or – perhaps you are motivated to meet practical needs like Timothy seemed to be. He was a wonderful **SERVER** to Paul and many, many others. He loved doing this, it appears, rather than to organize new churches, teach, exhort, or even preach. (see Paul's exhortations to him to also do these important things in 1 and 2 Tim.)

Or – perhaps you get great delight in being a **GIVER**, usually anonymously, to help meet the financial needs of God's work. Matthew seems to have this gifting, with the discernment in wise investments and encouragement to motivate others to give, as found in the Gospel he recorded.

So...using 1) the meaning of the word used to describe each of these 7 gifts and the brief exhortation associated with each in Rom. 12:6-8, and 2) a person in Scripture who seems to exhibit each gift, let us note the major characteristics and weaknesses of each gift.

### **The Gift Of Exhortation (Paul)**

#### 1. Its Primary Characteristics

- Is motivated to stimulate others to grow in their faith and obedience
- Is able to discern a person's spiritual maturity, and give good counsel
- Is able to give precise steps of action and reasons why they should be taken

#### 2. Its Major Weaknesses

- Not patient with slow progress
- Gives counsel before discernment
- Can be “pushy”

### **The Gift Of Teaching (Luke)**

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to search out, validate, and clarify the truth
  - Delights in research and emphasizes accuracy
  - Likes to present truth in a systematic sequence
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Concentrating on the details rather than the principles of life
  - Being less concerned with application and response than with research
  - Pride

### **The Gift Of Mercy (John)**

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to comfort those who are hurting
  - Can sense when others are in distress and acts to give them aid
  - Are strong where prophets are weak
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Sympathizing with those who are violating God's ways
  - Making emotional decisions rather than objective ones

### **The Gift Of Organization (Nehemiah)**

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to coordinate the activities of others to achieve goals
  - Is able to discern what is needed and how to complete a project
  - Is able to inspire and encourage others toward achieving the goal
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Goals and projects becoming more important than people
  - Taking on projects without God's direction

### **The Gift Of Prophecy (Peter)**

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to expose wrong actions and motives by presenting biblical truth.
  - Is persuasive in speech
  - Despises what is wrong, sinful, and evil
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Impulsive and lacks caution in expressing their opinions
  - Demands a positive response to a harsh confrontation
  - Tends to expose rather than restore

## The Gift Of Serving (Timothy)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to demonstrate love by meeting practical needs
  - Overlooks personal needs to serve others
  - Desires to be with others
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Personal desire to meet needs leads to excluding others from helping
  - Wearing themselves out physically
  - Overemphasizing practical needs to the neglect of spiritual needs

## The Gift Of Giving (Matthew)

1. Its Primary Characteristics
  - Is motivated to give personal assets for the furtherance of God's work
  - Is able to organize personal business to gain assets
  - Is frugal and content with basic necessities
2. Its Major Weaknesses
  - Tendency to control people and ministries by gifts
  - Investing in people or ministries without God's direction

Here is **an illustration** that has helped many see how the different gifts respond to life situations.

One evening 7 Christians, each with a different gifting were sitting around the dinner table after the meal waiting for dessert to be served. The hostess came in with dessert on a large plate, but as she was about to set it on the table she dropped it on the floor breaking the plate and ruining the dessert. Here is how everyone responded:

The Server: "Here, let me help you clean this up!"

The Mercy: "It's ok honey, it could have happened to anyone!"

The Teacher: "The reason that fell is because it was too heavy on one side!"

The Prophet: "That's what you get when you are in a hurry!"

The Giver: "It's ok honey, I'll buy you another dessert!"

The Exhorter: "Let's serve the dessert with the meal next time, and avoid this!"

The Organizer: "Frank, will you clean this up, Sally, can you sweep the floor, and Jerry, will you go to the kitchen and get another dessert!"

## UNIT 16 STUDY SESSION #1

### Evaluating How I Am Using My Gifts In Serving The Body

1. However I am gifted, I am committed and trying to serve others for the Lord, especially in my church.  
Yes, as a first priority in my life \_\_\_\_\_  
Not really, not much \_\_\_\_\_ Not at all \_\_\_\_\_
2. My involvement in the lives of others at church is:  
Significant \_\_\_\_\_ A little \_\_\_\_\_ Insignificant \_\_\_\_\_
3. I know, based on the 7 gifts of Rom 12:6-8, what my primary gifting is. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
I am not sure \_\_\_\_\_  
I have the characteristics of: A Prophet \_\_\_ An Exhorter \_\_\_ A Teacher \_\_\_ A Server \_\_\_  
A Mercy \_\_\_ An Organizer \_\_\_ A Giver \_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Weaknesses are often helpful in discerning our gifting. My weaknesses, when pursuing my personal motivations and ministries are: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 16 Study Session #1

1. Why, according to our study passages has God given us gifts?
2. The diagram used in the study organizes gifts, ministries, and effects using 1 Cor. 12:4-7, and then uses Rom. 12:4-8 in saying that there are 7 basic gifts, one of which every Christian has been given. What questions do you have regarding this understanding and interpretation of the gifts of the Spirit to the church?
3. Peter divides the primary gifting of all Christians into only two categories of 1) speaking gifts and 2) serving gifts. (See 1 Pet. 4:10-11) How does this relate to the 7 categories of gifts given by Paul?
4. What can strong gifting in a believer, with its abilities and strong motivations, look like in the possession of an immature Christian? What can strong gifting in a church look like when it is not well balanced with the other gifts?
5. Some gifts are “up front” and some are “behind the scenes”. What does Paul say about which are more important? (see 1 Cor. 12:20-27)

### Prayer Together

## UNIT 16 STUDY SESSION #2

### Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for Session 2 consider pursuing one of the following projects and be prepared to share about it.

1. If you are not sure what your gift is, ask three people who know you this question: "I am trying to learn how God has gifted me, so I can begin to serve others for Him. Of the seven gifts listed in Romans 12, which one would you say describes me best?"
2. Using the individual(s) in Scripture mentioned in the study, that you believe have your gifting, review the accounts of their actions, ministries, and conduct. Look for and write out the weaknesses that seem to come with their gifting. Compare yourself regarding these weaknesses and, as appropriate, set goals for yourself regarding them.
3. Understanding others and their motivations in serving the Lord are very important for the unity God wants in our working together. Using the basic motivations of each gift, think through some of the conflicts that you have observed between sincere believers:
  - in ministry \_\_\_\_\_
  - in marriage \_\_\_\_\_
  - among children \_\_\_\_\_
4. Barnabas and Paul, two very gifted men, actively involved in serving others for the Lord, had a conflict over John Mark and could no longer work together. Think through this conflict from the standpoint of their probable gifts and write out your thoughts and applications. \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 16 Study Session #2

If you were able to pursue one of the projects can you share with us what you have learned?

### Prayer Together



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #17

Gen. 1:26-28, 2:18-25 / Eph. 6:15-33 / 1 Cor. 7:34-35

### HONORING GOD'S DESIGN OF MARRIAGE

Building our lives around the principles of God's Word is the purpose and goal of these studies. The principle of life that we now address, **God's design of marriage**, has a primary, even dominating, place in the life of every disciple of Christ.

This is true regardless of whether we are married or single, divorced or widowed. Building, **and rebuilding**, our life around God's design of marriage often presents us with our greatest opportunities to be a useful and powerful witness for Christ. Why is this true? Because God and His design for life is rejected and opposed by fallen man who lives for himself. Rejecting God's design of marriage is the way of the world. Immorality, adultery, unnatural affections and many other descriptions of our sinful conduct are really descriptions of our violation of God's design for marriage. But, enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can build and rebuild our lives around His design – to His glory. Furthermore, making disciples requires that we teach and assist others in being examples of living according to this design of marriage.

#### 1. God's Design Of Marriage

God's design of marriage is the first topic addressed in the Bible for the man God has just created.

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "**It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.**"...<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup> And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."

<sup>24</sup> **For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.** — Gen 2:18-24

Marriage is also among the last subjects found in the Bible, as the consummation of what Christ has promised His bride is described.

<sup>6</sup> And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. <sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and be glad and give

*the glory to Him, for **the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.*** <sup>8</sup> *And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*  
<sup>9</sup> *And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to **the marriage supper of the Lamb.**'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."  
— Rev 19:6-9*

God's design and institution of marriage dominates human life and is the object lesson or analogy used to explain God's relationship with Israel, and Christ's relationship with His bride, the church. It is essential that we understand it if we are to fully understand our God, human history, our redemption, and the things to come.

### The Primary Characteristics Of God's Marriages To Israel And The Church:

#### 1) PERMANENCE describes these relationships.

If, in a normal **contract** between two parties, the agreement is broken by one of the parties, this frees the other from his obligations in the contract. Not so with a **covenant** agreement. In this type of relationship, a covenant promise of one party is to be kept, even if the other party does not keep his. For example, when we sin, do we lose our salvation? Are the promises of eternal life voided? No, not if we are really saved. God has promised.

The word covenant is found 320 times in the Bible. The word contract not at all.

<sup>5</sup> *He Himself has said, "**I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.**"*  
— Heb.13:5  
(See also, John 17:3, Heb. 13:8, Gen. 28:15, Dt. 13:6,8, Joshua 1:5, 1 Chr. 28:20)

<sup>12</sup> *"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father...  
<sup>16</sup> and I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, **that He may be with you forever;** <sup>17</sup> that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because **He abides with you, and will be in you.**"*  
— John 14:12-17

#### 2) ONENESS describes these relationships.

<sup>11</sup> *"And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are... <sup>20</sup> I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word, <sup>21</sup> **that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us.**"*  
— John 17:11-21

Our marriages as Christ's disciples are, by God's enabling grace, to reflect this "oneness".

<sup>28</sup> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of His body.

<sup>31</sup> For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and **the two shall become one flesh.** <sup>32</sup> **This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.** — Eph 5:28-32

### 3) **FRUITFULNESS** describes these relationships.

<sup>18</sup> For through Him (Christ) we...have our access in one Spirit to the Father.  
<sup>19</sup> So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, <sup>20</sup> having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, <sup>21</sup> in whom **the whole building, being fitted together, is growing** into a holy temple in the Lord. — Eph. 2:18-21

<sup>8:9</sup> You are...in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you... <sup>5:22</sup> (and) **the fruit of the Spirit** (in and through us) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control... — Rom. 8:9; Gal 5:22-23

No man can have children on his own. His children are conceived, mature, and are born in and through his wife. As husbands and wives live as "one", they bear fruit together. The wife must agree to conceive and bear the children of the husband, just as we must yield to the leading, and power of the Holy Spirit Who is present and at work for us, in us, and through us. Apart from the Spirit's work in us and through us, God's fruit is not produced in our lives.

<sup>4</sup> "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing." — John 15:4-5

### 4) Self-Denying **LOVE** describes these relationships.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." — John 3:16

<sup>9</sup> *By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.* <sup>10</sup> *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

<sup>11</sup> ***Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.***

— 1 John 4:9-11

## 2. Honoring God's Design In Marriage

The marriage vows spoken in Christian ceremonies have, for many centuries, been chosen to reflect God's covenantal design for our marriages. They have usually included words like the following: "Do you...covenant to...for better or worse...for as long as you both shall live?"

In American, until recently, attempts to terminate a marriage have been strongly opposed by our judiciary because of these Christians concepts. A divorce had to be granted by a judge and that was rarely sought and rarely granted until recently. Now it is granted for any cause.

Even the words of our marriage vows have changed, because 50% of those saying these original words over the last 40 years have not keep their word and are divorced. Today, the words are now often "for as long as love shall last". The desire and power to do God's will has waned. Marriage is God's idea. But our nation no longer cares. Neither do many in our churches.

<sup>13</sup> *"And this is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because **He no longer regards your offering** or accepts it with favor from your hand. <sup>14</sup> Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been a witness between you and **the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.** <sup>15</sup> Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.*

<sup>16</sup> *"For **I HATE DIVORCE,**" says the LORD, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the LORD of hosts. **"So, take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."***

— Malachi 2:13-16

## 3. Honoring God's Design Before Marriage

Singleness is a calling and major part of God's plan for all of us for part of our life, and for some Christians it is a special calling for all of their life. In addition, singleness is a status that is encouraged above marriage for some because it frees a person from the responsibilities of marriage and family to give more of one's life to others.

<sup>32</sup> *But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord;* <sup>33</sup> *but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife,* <sup>34</sup> *and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.* <sup>35</sup> *And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and **to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.*** — 1 Cor. 7:32-35

<sup>7</sup> *Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.* — 1 Cor. 7:7

<sup>4</sup> *No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.* — 2 Tim. 2:4

Purity and virginity before marriage is sought by the Lord for His people. Wise standards, principles of dating, accountability to others, and personal convictions, are essential if improper and immoral relationships before marriage are to be avoided and we are to be kept from guilt, have joy, and be most useful and fruitful. What convictions do you have, and what commitments have you made if you are single?

#### 4. Honoring God's Design As A Rebuilder Of Broken Marriages

God is a rebuilder of ruined relationships. The Bible says that He has been divorced. He knows what you are facing and feeling if you are faced with the consequences of a failed marriage like He is. His responses to betrayal, rejection, and opposition are quite amazing.

The life that God asks us to live for Him is not hard – it is impossible in our own strength. Here are some points to consider regarding rebuilding broken relationships.

1. God would have you to be free of guilt. (*see Study #9*)
2. God would have you conquer bitterness. (*see Study #7*)
3. God wants you to understand why He allows suffering. (*see Study #6*)
4. God want you to help others rebuild their lives and marriages. (*see Study #8*)
5. God wants you to rebuild your marriage as far as possible. (*see Mk. 8:34*)
6. God wants you to demonstrate Christ-like attitude and actions to your children.

## UNIT 17 STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study read the above summary regarding God's design of marriage and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### Evaluating My Life In Light Of God's Design Of Marriage

1. Contentment describes me well in my present situation regarding marriage.  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
2. In my marriage situation, I would say that I am doing well \_\_\_\_\_ I am a good example \_\_\_\_\_  
I am doing ok \_\_\_\_\_ I could be doing better \_\_\_\_\_ I do not think I am a good example \_\_\_\_\_
3. I understand the difference between a contract and a covenant commitment.  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_
4. I am committed to God's design of a covenant relationship for marriage.  
Yes, because \_\_\_\_\_  
No, because \_\_\_\_\_  
With these limitations and exceptions \_\_\_\_\_

### Discussion Questions for Unit 17 Study Session #1

1. Four characteristics of God's relationship with the nation of Israel and the Church are emphasized in the study material as those that should characterize our own marriage relationships: Permanence, Oneness, Fruitfulness, and Love. Is this biblically sound? How does this relate to premarital sex, divorce, remarriage, and abortion?
2. Would you attend a wedding of a Christian who has been married before and divorced? If so, are there any reasons you would not attend such a marriage?
3. What guidelines or counsel would you give to a young unmarried woman regarding invitations to pursue a "casual", dating relationship with a man? A young man regarding pursuing the same with a young woman?
4. The consequences to the children of those who reject God's design for marriage are often significant. What does the Word of God say about this? (*see Num. 14:18, Ps. 106:44-46*) How might these be addressed as we seek to help those who are facing these?

### Prayer Together

## **UNIT 17 STUDY SESSION #2**

### **Preparation For Session #2: Application Project**

In preparation for Session 2 consider pursuing one of the following projects depending on your marital status and be prepared to share about it.

1. Read and study the book of Hosea. Summarize the issues regarding God's design for marriage that are addressed or illustrated there and what applications are appropriate for our own lives.
2. Husband Project  
Husbands are exhorted to live with their wives in an understanding way. Write a summary of 1) what you have learned in this regard, and 2) what counsel you would give to young husbands.
3. Wife Project  
Write a summary of the counsel you would give to a young wife based on the lessons you have learned living with a man.
4. Still Single Project  
Write a one or two page summary of the counsel you would give to an unmarried Christian girl or boy in their late teens or early 20s regarding their goals, approach, cautions, and commitments, regarding 1) dating, 2) engagement, and 3) marriage.
5. Rebuilder's Project  
Write out a summary of 1) what you have faced and learned through your experience, 2) what you would have done differently, and 3) how your trials and tests have affected your relationship with Christ.
6. Widower's Project  
If you have lost your spouse, think through what the Lord has taught you in retrospect about marriage and be prepared to share the most important things a Christian should focus on in marriage.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 17 Study Session #2**

If you have been able to do one of the projects, can you share it with us?

### **Prayer Together**



## DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #18

Lk. 10:3 / Phil. 2:15 / 2 Thess. 1:4

### DRAWING GOD'S LINES IN MY RELATIONSHIPS

What are **my boundaries** in regard to what I can and cannot do as I serve Christ here in this fallen world? And what are **the lines** I must draw in regard to what **others** can and cannot do in our relationship with one another? This is perhaps the most complex subject of our discipleship studies, because of the many variables involved.

When, for example, do I say “No, you cannot” to the conduct of others in the midst of this fallen world? How do I both love and accept my enemy and yet hate evil and reject being associated with it? When do I adjust my own life, for a season, for the sake of an immature member of my church and when do I confront him with the truth? When do I obey the government and when do I say, “I cannot, I will not” for God has instructed me otherwise?

Furthermore, how do I draw these lines? With what attitudes? Are they important? They are! For,

*<sup>24</sup> the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but **be kind** to all, able to teach, **patient** when wronged, <sup>25</sup> **with gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition.*  
— 2 Tim. 2:24-25

These complex issues are addressed in God's Word to us regarding our many relationships as servants of Christ, members of His church, citizens in a nation, part of a family, living in the world, and facing our adversary. The decisions we make regarding these issues are among the most important and the most difficult to discern and obey that we make as Christ's disciples.

So, let us:

1. Establish **the principles** regarding the lines or boundaries we are to draw in our relationships. When are we to say, “I cannot” or “You cannot”? Where are the lines?
2. Clarify **our instructions regarding how** we are to draw these lines. What has God said about our motives, our attitudes, and our methods in doing this?

## The Principles Regarding Our Behavioral And Relational Lines In Life

### 1. God is a line-drawer in His relationship with us.

God drew a line in the garden of Eden and told Adam and Eve of the consequences if they “came across the line”. These dire consequences still impact every one of their descendants eternally unless they accept God’s invitation to cross another line and come in faith to the cross of Christ. (See Gen.1 and Mt. 11:28-30)

### 2. God draws the lines for His people as they serve Him in this world.

<sup>36</sup> “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” <sup>37</sup> And He said to him, “**You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**” <sup>38</sup> This is the great and foremost commandment.”  
— Matt 22:36-38

He is our Lord and we are to love Him. He gets to determine everything. He is the Boss.

Daniel and his friends illustrate this in Daniel 1, 3, and 6. God had told them to draw **personal lines** regarding what they could eat, who they would worship, and their prayer life, regardless of the consequences. They faced a human authority that had instructed them otherwise.

When they were challenged about saying “no, I cannot, I will not”, they attributed this to God. They had **personal convictions**, personal lines they could not cross regarding what they would and would not do, because God had so instructed them.

Peter and John give us another clear example of this in Acts 4 when they were told to stop doing what God had instructed them to do.

<sup>18</sup> And when the Council had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. <sup>19</sup> But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; <sup>20</sup> for **we cannot** stop speaking what we have seen and heard.”  
— Acts 4:18-20

Now, let us distinguish between a personal **conviction** and a personal **preference**. A conviction, for a Christian, is a biblical principle or command that he or she purposes to keep regardless of the circumstances. A preference, in contrast, is a biblical principle or command that we purpose to keep – as long as the consequences are not too costly. Christians with strong convictions are rare. Many drift with the downstream current of the culture and take their lines with them.

### 3. God also gets to draw the lines in our relationships with others.

Now it starts to get complex. We are called, not only to love God with all of our heart and live for Him, but we are faced with this:

<sup>17</sup> “*This I command you, that you **love one another.***” — John 15:17

- We are not to draw the lines in our relationships with others solely, or even principally, for our own sake, but for the sake of the other person. Paul’s instructions in Romans 14 and 15 address this challenge.

<sup>14:13</sup> *Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this- - not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. [Because of his convictions that are immature and not biblical]* <sup>14</sup> **I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean...** <sup>8:13</sup> *Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, that I might not cause my brother to stumble.* — Rom. 14:13-14; 1 Cor. 8:13

So, when we want to say, “I cannot, I will not”, or “You cannot, you will not” in one of our relationships, we must take into consideration the other person, their maturity and knowledge. We are to love them, considering them more important than ourselves. However...

- **Setting clear boundaries or behavioral lines for the conduct of others in our relationships is certainly also to be done.**

<sup>11</sup> *I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler- not even to eat with such a one.* <sup>12</sup> *For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?* <sup>13</sup> *But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.* — 1 Cor. 5:11-13

(See also: 2 Thess. 3:6,14; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 10:14; Mt. 18:17; Prov. 14:7; 20:19; 22:24; and 24:21)

When does a wife say to an abusive husband, “You cannot, you will not” and, as necessary, “I cannot, I will not”? When does she leave for safety and get help? There is a time. When do we say “No, I cannot, I will not” to the governing authorities that we are to obey? There is a time. When do we say, “No, you cannot, you will not” to a friend? There is a time. When do we say “I cannot, I will not” to our church leaders that we are to hear, heed, obey, and submit to? There is a time.

God’s will must be sought in all of our relationships, at all times. Thankfully, He has promised us that:

<sup>8</sup> *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you.* — Psalm 32:8

<sup>5</sup> *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.* <sup>6</sup> *But let him ask in faith without any doubting.* — James 1:5-6

<sup>8</sup> *Good and upright is the LORD. Therefore, He instructs sinners in the way.* <sup>9</sup> *He leads the humble in justice, And He teaches the humble His way...* <sup>12</sup> *Who is the man who fears the LORD? **He will instruct him in the way he should choose.*** — Psalm 25:8-12

#### 4. How we draw the lines in our relationships is very important to God.

- **Parents** are to draw lines in their relationship with their children. Indeed, the primary role of a parent is to teach their children to hear and heed God’s lines.

<sup>4</sup> *Fathers bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* — Eph. 6:4

But, in doing this essential task, they are not to “provoke their to anger” by disciplining them in an inappropriate manner.

- **Pastors and Elders** are called upon to reprove, rebuke, exhort, admonish, and correct those they are assigned to, to build them up in the faith by word and example. But the **manner** of doing this is to be heeded.

<sup>24</sup> *The Lord's bond-servant [Paul is writing to Timothy about the manner of performing his Pastoral duties] must not be quarrelsome, but **be kind** to all, able to teach, **patient when wronged**, <sup>25</sup> with **gentleness** correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.* — 2 Tim. 2:24-26

- **Citizens** must draw lines with governments that require them to do what God has said they cannot (e.g. Acts 4, Dan. 1, 3, 6 as we have seen) but this is to be done with respect and appropriate honor.

<sup>1</sup>As a matter of first importance, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, <sup>2</sup>**for kings and all who are in authority**, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. <sup>3</sup>This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.

— 1 Tim. 2:1-3

- **Slaves** like Daniel and his friends in captivity in Babylon were not, and still are not, uncommon situations for Christians to face. There are lines to be drawn here also, but the **manner** of drawing them is clear here also. Imagine Paul's encouragement to Onesimus regarding this as he sent him back to Philemon.

<sup>5</sup>Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; <sup>6</sup>not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

— Eph. 6:5-6

If Christian slaves can do this by God's grace and power as slaves, surely we can draw the boundaries in our relationships with these same attitudes and responses. May God be seen as we do.

## 5. What happens if we do not draw the lines God wants us to draw?

- Other people, who we should not allow to do this, begin to control part of, or a lot of our life, whether it is our thinking, our time, our actions, or our other relationships.

<sup>14</sup>Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm;... <sup>15</sup>**Be on guard against him** yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching.

— 2 Tim. 4:14-15

<sup>17</sup>Now I urge you, brethren, **keep your eye on** those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and **turn away from** them. <sup>18</sup>For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. <sup>19</sup>For the report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you, but I want you to be wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil.

— Rom. 16:17-19

<sup>8</sup>**See to it that no one takes you captive** through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

— Col. 2:8

- Others do not face the “consequences” that would be good for them, because you are not establishing the boundaries you should.

We are called upon to influence others for their good. This includes correction, reproof, rebuke, exhortation, and admonition. Drawing appropriate lines in our relationship with others is what doing these things is. We cannot make choices for them, but we must make the choices that God leads us to make in the relationship, regardless of their response.

<sup>14</sup> *Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and **able also to admonish one another.*** — Rom 15:14

<sup>24</sup> *Be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged,* <sup>25</sup> *with gentleness **correcting** those who are in opposition...* — 2 Tim 2:24-25

As Christians we face a double task, a balancing challenge, of drawing BOTH God’s lines of holiness and God’s love, simultaneously! Exhibiting God’s love without His holiness is only compromise, and exhibiting His holiness without His love is just harshness. Our goal, by His grace, is to do both well, at the same time, that the Father may be seen and glorified by what we do.

<sup>16</sup> *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* — Matt. 5:16

## **UNIT 18 STUDY SESSION #1**

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### **Evaluating The Lines I Have Drawn In My Life And Relationships**

1. Most of the time, others determine what I do in life. I go with the flow. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I draw boundaries in my life depending on the consequences of doing it. \_\_\_\_\_
3. To what activities have you said, "I cannot"? \_\_\_\_\_  
When did you do this? \_\_\_\_\_  
What has been the result in your life? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How have you handled the intrusion of TV, Cell Phones, and the Internet to consume your time and control your mind? \_\_\_\_\_
5. There are people in my life that I know I need to say "You cannot" but I have not. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 18 Study Session #1**

1. Have you lost any relationships because you drew God's lines in your life?
2. Have you lost any relationships because you drew God's lines in the wrong way?
3. What does a church that draws lines of love without lines of truth look like?
4. What does a church that draws lines of truth without lines of love look like?
5. We are told to leave the presence of fools ( Prov. 14:7, 13:20), and avoid immoral people (1 Cor. 5:4), those who cause dissensions (Rom. 16:17), and creeps (2 Tim. 3:5). Reasons are given. Can you give examples from your life of doing this?
6. In Daniel Chapter 1 we are told that Daniel drew a line based on his personal convictions as God had led him. The manner in which he did this is also revealed. He made an appeal to his authority that was successful. Why was it successful?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 18 STUDY SESSION #2**

In preparation for the second study session please consider doing the following project:

- Think through the primary relationships that you currently have, using the principles noted in this study of Drawing God's Lines of truth and love, and commit to take those steps in each that you are convicted about.

### **Discussion Questions for Unit 18 Study Session #2**

1. If you were able to pursue the application project, can you share with us how it is going?
2. How do I know if God wants me to tolerate an issue – or address it and draw a line?
3. How do I handle disagreements on saying “no” with my family and my church? How do I draw my lines in my relationship with them, when we cannot agree on drawing other lines?
4. How do the consequences of drawing lines in my relationships relate to several of the other principles of living for Christ we have already studied: bitterness and forgiveness, responding to authority, and avoiding and opposing corrupting influences?
5. Our rapidly changing and declining culture is disruptive to our relationships at all levels. How can we help one another as we face this?

### **Prayer Together**