

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



Study Units 1-8

Fall 2023

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Future Topics of Study

Gaining And Maintaining A Clear Conscience
Understanding The Long War Against God
Thinking And Walking As A Member Of My Church
Living In Hope Of The Things To Come
Avoiding And Opposing Corrupting Influences
Learning And Accepting Who You Are In Christ
Contending Earnestly For The Faith
Employing Your God Given Gift In Serving Others
Honoring God's Design Of Marriage
Drawing God's Lines In Our Relationships

The Biblical Principles of Leading Others for Christ

The Man Of God
The Godly Woman
Leading In Marriage
Leading In The Family
Leading As A Church Leader
Leading As A Church Member

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.

“Now,...applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.

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. 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

- ¹⁸ *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying,
“All authority has been given to Me
in heaven and on earth.*
- ¹⁹ *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,
baptizing them in the name
of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,*
- ²⁰ *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

- ² *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

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

2 Peter 1:5-9

- ⁵ *Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence,
in your faith supply moral excellence,
and in your moral excellence, knowledge,*
- ⁶ *And in your knowledge, self-control,
and in your self-control, perseverance,
and in your perseverance, godliness,*
- ⁷ *And in your godliness, brotherly kindness,
and in your brotherly kindness, love.*
- ⁸ *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.*
- ⁹ *For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted,
having forgotten his purification from his former sins.*

Jude 3

- ³ *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

- ²³ *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.”*

May the Mind of Christ, My Savior

Kate B. Wilkinson

Cyril Barham-Gould



1. May the mind of Christ, my Sav-ior, Live in me from day to day,
2. May the Word of God dwell rich-ly In my heart from hour to hour,
3. May the peace of God, my Fa-ther, Rule my life in ev-ery-thing,
4. May the love of Je-sus fill me, As the wa-ters fill the sea;
5. May I run the race be-fore me, Strong and brave to face the foe,
6. May His beau-ty rest up-on me As I seek the lost to win,



By His love and pow'r con-trol-ling All I do and say.
So that all may see I tri-umph On-ly through His pow'r.
That I may be calm to com-fort Sick and sor-row-ing.
Him ex-alt-ing, self a-bas-ing, This is vic-to-ry.
Look-ing on-ly un-to Je-sus As I on-ward go.
And may they for-get the chan-nel, See-ing on-ly Him.

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DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #1

Eph. 2:4-10 / 1 Cor. 15:1-4 / John 3:3, 14-18

CONFIRMING YOUR SALVATION FROM THE PENALTY OF SIN

Before we begin to study the principles of living life as a Christian who is saved from the penalty of sin and is going to heaven, let us confirm that we are indeed saved and ensure that we also know how to lead another person to saving faith in Christ.

The following three passages of God's Word clearly state and summarize the gospel (the good news) of the salvation that is found by trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ. They speak of the three essential aspects of this salvation, represented by the words **grace**, **Christ**, and **faith**. Note them as you read, for it is by **God's grace alone**, through **Christ's work alone**, and by **our faith** in Christ's work on our behalf **alone**, that any person is saved from the wrath to come.

*“You were dead in your trespasses and sins, 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. 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.*

***But God**, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together **with Christ (by grace you have been saved)**, and raised us up **with Him**, and seated us **with Him** in the heavenly places, **in Christ Jesus**, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His **grace** in kindness toward us **in Christ Jesus**.*

*For **by grace** you have been saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” — Eph. 2:1-10*

Again, please note the focus in the verses above on **God's grace**, **Christ's work** on our behalf, and **our faith** in this work. The following verses use the word GOSPEL as a summary of these concepts.

*“Now I make known to you, brethren, **the gospel** (the good news) which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain...*

*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, **that Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” — 1 Cor. 15:1-4*

The following verses are words spoken by our Lord Himself as He emphasizes that we must trust in and rely upon His work for us at Calvary or face the judgement to come. He preached the good news of salvation!!

*“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that **whoever believes in Him may have eternal life**. 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.*

*For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who **believes in Him** is not judged; he who **does not believe** has been judged already, because he **has not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” — John 3:14-18*

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation, read and study the above scriptures and their presentation of the gospel of salvation. Come prepared to discuss them and the following related questions and issues:

Confirming Your Salvation: Discussion Topics

Let us confirm that:

1. We know what the gospel is.
2. We know what God's grace, Christ's work, and my faith are, and can explain them.
3. We know what is required to be saved, and therefore what "believe" means.
4. We know what the most common error is regarding salvation.
5. We know the distinction between salvation from the penalty, the power, and the presence of sin.
6. We know what the apostle John said in 1 John is the evidence that we are indeed saved.
7. We know what eternal life is. Can it be lost?

Removing Doubts About Salvation: Discussion Topics

It is not uncommon for a person to experience doubts about their salvation. There are a number of reasons and we must learn the biblical remedies for them. Have you experienced doubts because of any of these?

1. Our incorrect expectation that we, as a Christian, would not experience suffering or hardship, or that these would become less and not worse after my salvation.
2. Our failure to say "no" to temptations and sin. What do I do when I fail and sin?
3. Our lack of knowing God and His Word well when we accepted Christ, perhaps as a child, and now wonder if what we did was adequate to be saved.
4. Our insecurity because we have accepted the lie that we can lose our salvation.

An Invitation To Be Saved From The Penalty Of Your Sin

If you have never confessed your sin and accepted, by faith, what Christ has done for you to fully atone for your sins, or if you have responded in some way to the gospel in the past, but still have doubts about your salvation, please read and respond to the gospel invitation below.

-Salvation occurs when we believe in our heart and confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior from sin.

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in sanctification.”
— Romans 10:9-10

-Salvation occurs when we put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”
— John 3:36

-Salvation occurs when we humble ourselves before God in recognition of our sinfulness and cry out to Him to save us.

“Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses.”
— Psalm 107:19

Prayer for Salvation

“Thank You, God, for loving me, a sinner, and for sending Your Son to pay the penalty for my sin. Right now I put my trust in His death and resurrection for my salvation and receive the eternal life that You offer me through Him. Thank you for hearing this prayer, for cleansing me of all of my sin through Christ’s blood, and accepting me now as Your child. Teach me and direct me through Your Word and Your Spirit to discover Your purpose and will for my life. Amen.”

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2:

Sharing The Gospel With Others: Preparation For The Study

In preparation for the second study session please do the following:

1. Read Mt. 24:14 and answer this question: Whose responsibility is it to fulfill this?
2. Review and evaluate your own sharing of the gospel and be prepared to share about it.
3. Remember your own salvation and how the Lord reached you. Be prepared to share.

Leading Another Person To Christ: Discussion Topics

Please comment on the following statements or questions regarding their usefulness in leading a person to Christ.

1. You must get a person lost, before you can get them saved.
2. If you were to find yourself standing before God, and He was to ask you why He should allow you into His heaven, what would you say?
3. Can you share the gospel using the following 5 words and the concepts associated with them? God, Man, Sin, Christ, Faith. In one minute?
4. Can you share the basic truths of the gospel using the following words: justified, regenerated, indwelt, empowered, glorified.
5. Sharing your personal testimony is an excellent way to share the gospel.
6. Asking questions like, "Are you a Christian", and "Have you accepted Christ as your Savior", can be very good, but be skeptical if the answer is "yes".
7. It is enough to act like a Christian and wait for people to ask about it.

Commitments

I am led to make the following commitments as a result of this study:

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #2

Luke 4 / 2 Tim. 3:16-17 / Col. 2:6-7

THE METHOD OF LIVING LIFE AS A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST

We begin our studies of how to live for God as a disciple of Christ in the midst of this fallen world by looking at **the example of our Lord Himself**.

"I came, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me"

— John 6:39

Please read Luke 4:1-14 and notice **the Minister** (the Holy Spirit) who leads and empowers us to live for God, **the Monster** (Satan) who seeks to get us to live for ourselves rather than live and die for God, and **the Method** (imposing the Word of God on our soul and circumstances in the face of life's tests) of living victoriously, usefully, and fruitfully for God.

The
Minister

The
Monster

The
Method

We shall look at our relationship with the Holy Spirit and our battle with Satan in coming studies, but our focus here is upon the **Method** by which God would have us live as His disciples until He returns. How we are to serve Christ, be what He wants us to be, and be useful to Him in the work of the age is our focus. Learning and applying this method of living for God is required for our success to be a mature disciple of Christ and therefore also for making disciples for Him as He has instructed us. We must learn and live by this method.

The **METHOD** of living life for God that Jesus demonstrated here, and throughout His life is this: Jesus **knew** God's Word and therefore God's will regarding what he faced in life and He **imposed** it on his soul and his circumstances in life.

The Holy Spirit led Christ into "tests" of whether He would live by this method or not, and the Devil did all he could to get our Lord to deviate from this way of life. Christ evaluated what He faced in life, allowed by God, in three separate tests of this method, and He **IMPOSED** God's opinion and commands, as revealed in His Word, on His soul and all His circumstances, leaving the results in God's hands.

*“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘**It is written**, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”*

*And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘**It is written**, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”*

*And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; for it is written, ‘He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You,’ and, ‘On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’” And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘**It is said**, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”*

And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.” — Luke 4:1-14

So, the METHOD of living life for God, as a disciple of Christ, is to **learn God’s perspective on the matter before me, and impose it on my soul and my circumstances in life**. Life for us as Christ’s disciples is a continual testing of this method. Notice that it has 2 parts:

1. Learning God’s opinion on the matter you face in life, and
2. Imposing that opinion on your soul (mind, will, and emotions) and your circumstances

It is quite a simple method – just obey the commands of God that He has revealed in His Word.

Let us note that:

1. **It is a TRANSFORMING method.**

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” — Rom. 12:2*

When a new Christian begins to live in this way – everything changes, because this is not the way of life of anyone but a committed Christian. This a learning process, both to become a disciple and to train one, for there is much to be learned and this takes time. But...

“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but will, with the temptation, provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.” — 1 Cor. 10:13

2. It requires that we learn to THINK BIBLICALLY.

We are exhorted to become wise and understanding, with wisdom being defined as “seeing life from God’s perspective”, and understanding as “responding to life from God’s perspective.

“The beginning of wisdom is: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her.

She will place on your head a garland of grace; She will present you with a crown of beauty. Hear, my son, and accept my sayings, And the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; And if you run, you will not stumble. Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.” — Prov 4:7-13

When Jesus was faced with those three ideas about life, three proposals about what He should do, it is obvious that He greeted them with these questions in His mind: “What is the biblical basis of that idea?, What is My Father’s opinion about it? What has My Father said about it?”

Oh, He knew the Bible. Even though these false ideas were packaged cunningly, even with Scripture taken out of context, He saw the errors and rejected them. He lived His life by this method.

“I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” — John 8:28-29

So, living life for God requires first that we learn His opinion and commands about what we face in life.

3. It requires that we **IMPOSE** God's perspective on what we face on our soul and our circumstances.

The methodology of living for Jesus Christ as His disciple is to yield to the Father's will for our life and obey the commands of His Word to us, by the power of the Spirit which indwells us.

*"From that time Jesus Christ began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem (this was the Father's will for Him), and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for **you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.**"*

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. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it."

— Matt. 16:21-25

A true and mature disciple **learns** what God's will is for him in a matter, and then, dying to his own opinions and self-interest, he **imposes** God's will on himself and his circumstances. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ involves more than learning and accepting as true the **concepts** of God's revelation to us. We are not just to hear the gospel and be saved. To be a disciple is to live life according to the principles of God's Word to us.

Being a disciple is to live a "follow-Me-as-your-way-of-life" life. It is to obey the truth. It is to walk in the truth, increasingly in a manner worthy of our calling to do so. It is to please the Lord in all respects as He has commanded us. It is to add to our "believing the truth" faith, with knowledge, virtue, self control, perseverance, and self denying love of God and others.

If we are examples of this biblically revealed way of life and are teaching it to others, we are fulfilling His purpose for us in life as His disciples. Can an immature Christian fulfill Mt. 28:18-20? Can he or she make mature disciples for Christ? No.

UNIT 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 Method I Use To Respond To What I Face In Life

1. When you face a decision in life, in any area, is it your routine to seek or ask, “what is God’s opinion regarding this”? and after clarifying this, to impose this opinion on yourself and your circumstances? Absolutely _____ .
It depends _____ . > On what? _____
2. Does this methodology describe your marriage? Is this how you and your spouse discuss life? _____ Is this a big part of how you pray together, i.e. asking the Lord for His direction? _____ Does searching the scriptures for His opinion describe your approach to living life together? _____
3. Does this methodology describe the raising of your children? Is this a major aspect of their training? _____
4. Does your knowledge of the Bible and your ability to find answers to your questions in it about what God has said allow you to use this method easily? _____
5. Do you get counsel from others who would know the Bible well, when you need to? How often do you do this? How often do you neglect this and go without biblical counsel on major decisions to verify you are in God’s will? _____
6. What is your assessment of how you are doing regarding this principle of life? Are you an example to be imitated? How would you grade yourself? __A__B__C__D__F__
7. What commitments are you willing to make, to do what God is asking you to do in this area of living for Him? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. How helpful was Luke 4 to you in understanding the method of living life for Christ?
2. Does God have an opinion on everything?
3. Which is harder – getting God’s opinion on a matter or imposing it on myself and my circumstances?
4. It seems to me that, if I do what God wants in many situations, that the cost may be significant. At least I often struggle to visualize how it could work out well. Am I still to do it? Always?
5. Can you give an illustration of choosing to “pay the cost” of obeying God’s will in a matter, and then God doing something “supernaturally” to make it work out for His glory?
6. How does Satan work to either get us to do something that is not God’s will or convince us that the right thing to do is actually the wrong thing? Can you give an example?
7. How can we “put the armor on” before we face a decision and the deceiver is there to do his thing? (Deut. 11:18, Ps. 119:11, 40:8, 1:2, Col. 3:16, Isa. 51:7) How do I do this?

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2

In preparation for the second study session please consider choosing one of the following projects:

- **Do a thorough study** of God's opinion about one of the following subjects, and be prepared to summarize it in 5 minutes and / or distribute your study of God's opinions on one page to the group.
 1. The Greek word for "church" appears 111 times in the New Testament referring to Christian churches or a local church. Identify 10 opinions God has about these.
 2. There are at least 14 qualifications for Elders, as far as God is concerned. What are these?
 3. How does a covenant differ from a contract and does this matter to God?
- **Memorize** one of the following portions of God's opinions.
 1. John 14:1-3
 2. Prov. 6:16-19
 3. Phil. 2:3-8
- **Read** a chapter of Proverbs and every thirtieth Psalm every morning (5 Psalms), and a chapter from the book of Romans, or another N.T. book every evening.

Discussion Questions

1. Did any of you do a study project in God's Word? Can you share it with us?
2. Did any of you memorize some of God's Word this week?
3. Did any of you Read God's Word morning and evening?
4. If we find that our personal knowledge of God's Word does not tell us His opinion on a matter we face, what should we do? What is God's opinion on this?
5. What do you think of this counsel: "If you ever cannot figure out what God wants you to do in a matter, just ask yourself what your natural inclination is – and do the opposite!"

Prayer

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #3

Luke 4 / John 4:23-24 / 1 Cor. 2:12-15 / John 14:26

PROPER ADJUSTMENT TO THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT

We live in two realms simultaneously, the seen and the unseen, the physical and the spiritual. There is a great war being fought between God and Satan in these comingled realms regarding who shall rule them as Lord and King. Both seek the worship of the eternal creatures of these realms, angels and men. This is why Jesus declared,

*"An hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father **in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. **God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**"*
— John 4:23-24

Two major changes have been done for a true disciple of Christ at the time of his salvation. First, his or her **personal spiritual capacity**, which was lost for humans at the fall, has been restored.

*"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But **he who is spiritual** appraises all things."*
— 1 Cor. 2:12-15

Second, the **Holy Spirit Himself** has been sent to be with a believer to teach, lead, and empower him according to the will of God.

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, **He will teach you all things**, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you."*
— John 14:26

*"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."*
— John 16:13

A proper, ongoing adjustment to the leading, teaching, helping, and controlling presence of the Holy Spirit, by the word of God, for the glory of Christ, is **the divine ideal** and the primary issue of our maturity and usefulness. Given the supernatural requirements of living the Christian life, being filled with the Holy Spirit **must** be our spiritual condition if

we are to walk in a manner worthy of our calling, please God in all respects, and bear fruit in those good works that God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Col. 1:9-11) To be properly adjusted to the Holy Spirit is what being filled with the Spirit means. So...

What Does It Mean To Be Filled With The Spirit?

To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit. Christ was full of the Spirit and every believer is to be also.

*“And Jesus, **full of the Holy Spirit**, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit.”* — Luke 4:1-2

*“Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, ... but **be filled with the Spirit**.”* — Eph. 5:15-18

The Christian life is not hard. It is impossible in our own knowledge and strength. Without being filled with the Spirit many believers do not go far along the path to maturity because they are never properly adjusted in their new relationship with the Holy Spirit. Our ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit as we live for Christ, is distinct from the Spirit’s work in us at the time of our salvation. After our salvation, the Spirit’s work in the life of a believer is transformative and continuous. God is transforming us into the image of His Son and this work is continuous and progressive throughout our life. Our usefulness and fruitfulness for the kingdom depends upon our responses to God’s command to **“be keeping yourself filled with the Spirit”** — Eph. 5:18.

To be completely “filled up” with the Spirit is to be totally controlled by Him. Three times in Scripture this filling of the Spirit is contrasted with being drunk with alcohol and totally under the control of it. That is the meaning of being filled in its biblical usage.

When totally controlled by the Holy Spirit, He works both in us and through us. **In us**, controlling our mind, our will, and our emotions, to transform, lead, and empower us. **Through us**, to fulfill God’s plans (Eph. 2:10, John 15:16) and produce spiritual fruit in others to God’s glory (John 15:4-5, 2 Pet. 1:5-8). The following summary addresses the biblical teaching regarding the nature, conditions, and results of the filling of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

1. The **NATURE** of the Spirit’s filling.

The Christian life is a relationship. It is a relationship that requires our proper adjustment to the authority, methods, and enablement of the Holy Spirit if it is to be all that it can be. We are not robots but beings with the ability to say yes or no in the relationship. The divine ideal is for a born again child of God to be always yielded, obedient, and empowered to do all that God wills, as taught, led, and empowered by

the Holy Spirit. That never happens 100% of the time because our old nature will not be completely eradicated until our earthly days are finished and we see our Lord face to face. But now, we can and do grieve the Holy Spirit by sinning (Eph. 4:30) and we can even quench Him by saying no to His clear will (1 Thess. 5:19).

These are the primary issues in the relationship. The Holy Spirit has been sent to teach us the Word of God (John 14:26), lead us in God's will (John 16:13), and empower us to do all that God asks of us. But, He is not a dictator. He is our Helper, Comforter, and Guide. He loves us, forgives us, and will never leave us or forsake us.

When we are controlled by the Spirit, He leads us by the Word of God to fulfill God's will and plans for our lives. This is an **objective** rather than a **subjective** leading. He also empowers us to do all that God asks of us. Jesus is our example.

We are far from being able to completely comprehend the operations of the grace and power of the Spirit Who dwells within us, for we are both completely dependent upon Him and yet required to fully cooperate with and submit to Him.

2. The **CONDITIONS** of the Spirit's ongoing filling.

Either from immaturity, a time of weakness, or from a false profession, many who profess faith in Christ do not live a Spirit filled life. There are three conditions that determine the extent of the Spirit's filling (control and influence) in our heart, resulting in our maturity, usefulness, and fruitfulness. (2 Pet. 1:5-9) To excel for Christ we must continually adjust ourselves to them. They are:

1. To **walk by means of the Spirit**, which is to learn the Word of God and impose it upon my soul and circumstances by the enabling power abundantly supplied through the Holy Spirit.

*“(Christ) condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, **who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit**. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.”*
— Rom 8:3-5

2. To **not grieve the Spirit** by unconfessed and undealt with sin.

*“And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*
— Eph 4:30

3. To **not quench the Spirit** which happens when we say “no” to Him.

“Do not quench the Spirit”
— 1 Thess. 5:19

*“But 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. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For **let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.**”*

— James 1:5-8

3. The **RESULTS** of the Spirit’s filling.

The varying maturities of Christians can be traced to the degree to which they are filled with the Spirit. The following results are a function of this proper and ongoing adjustment to the Holy Spirit. This adjustment to the Spirit is not a question of us getting more of the Spirit. It is a question of Him getting more of us!

*“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. 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

There are five primary results that come to us as we allow the Spirit to fulfill in us and through us all that God intended when He came to indwell us at our salvation.

1. **Our Progressive Sanctification**

*“Applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. **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.**”*

— 2 Pet. 1:5-8

As this passage reveals, this transformation of our soul involves a number of heart and conduct changes. Chief among them are the attitudes and actions of selfless love of God and others. (Phil. 2:3-11). This ongoing transformation of our soul and life is only possible when we are properly adjusted to the Holy Spirit.

2. **A Growing Assurance Of The Truth**

*“**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.**”*

— Rom 8:16-17 (See also Eph. 3:16-19, Gal. 4:6, 1 John 3:24, 4:13)

3. **Our Growth In The Knowledge Of God’s Word and Will**

“He (Epaphras) also informed us of your love in the Spirit. For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that

you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might.”
— Col. 1:8-11

*“But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ...**For to us God revealed them through the Spirit;** for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, **that we might know the things freely given to us by God,...** those taught by the Spirit.”*
— 1 Cor. 2:7-13

4. Sincere Worship, Praise, And Thanksgiving

*“**Be filled with the Spirit,** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.”*
— Eph. 5:18-20

5. Fruitful Participation In God’s Work To Build His Church

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
— 1 Cor. 12:4,7

*“**As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another,** as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified.”*
— 1 Pet. 4:10-11

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works,** which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*
— Eph 2:10

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of living for Christ, read and study the above scriptures and summary of our proper adjustment to the indwelling Holy Spirit and then complete the following self evaluation.

How Does Your Approach To Life Compare With These Commands?

1. Do you **grieve** the indwelling Holy Spirit by unconfessed sin and no repentance?
No ___ Yes ___ Often? _____
2. Have you ever **quenched** the Holy Spirit by saying no? _____?
Does this still stand? _____
Do you have “lines” that are as far as you will go in serving Christ? _____
3. If we define **pride** as “reserving the right to make final decisions for myself”, are you a proud or a humble disciple of Christ? _____
4. Overall, what is your assessment of how you are doing? How would you grade yourself?
___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ F ___
5. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to be doing to please your Lord and be growing in usefulness to Him in the work of the age? _____

6. What needs to change in your life for you to be mature in this area and be able to be an example to others? _____

7. What commitments are you willing to make at this time to do what God is asking you to do in this area of living for Him? _____

Discussion Questions For Session #1

- How important is it for a believer to understand the following five truths in applying and living by this principle of life? – and why?
 1. The truth about our existence in Adam. (Rom. 5:18)
 2. The truth of our crucifixion in Christ. Rom. 6:6,7,11)
 3. The truth of our resurrection in Christ. (Rom. 6:4-5)
 4. The truth of our present position in Christ. (Eph. 1:18-20, 2:6)
 5. The truth of the Holy Spirit living in us. (Rom. 8:9-16)
- Why does the Lord allow us to get into situations, as we serve Him, that are not good, and that we have no ability in ourselves to change or improve? (See, for example Judges 6:11-24, 2 Cor. 12:7-10, Luke 4)
- “Sometimes to learn that God is all we need, He leads us to places where He is all we’ve got.” How much truth is in this statement? Can you give an example from your own life?
- If I have grieved the Holy Spirit, what do I do to correct this? How do you do it?
- If I am living the Christian life in my own strength, what will happen?

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2:

Preparation For Session #2: Personal Application Project

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

Set aside a day of prayer and fasting to be with the Lord and seek His fellowship and leading in your life. If you have never done this, the following scriptures will give an overview. (Mt. 6:17-18, Isa. 58:6-12, Acts 13:2, 14:3, Dan. 9:3, Neh. 1:4, Luke 4)

The idea is to set yourself completely aside by stopping your normal activities and spending the time with the Lord seeking His fellowship, opinions, and will for your life. Be sure to drink water if you decide to fast, particularly if you fast for more than one day. Leave your phone, and try to find a time and place where you have no immediate responsibilities and will not be distracted. Just you and the Lord for as long a time as you can. Come prepared to share.

If this coming week does not allow an entire day, set aside a few hours if you can. The Psalms are a good place to start. Ps. 32:8, Ps. 37:1-11 will get you started.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to set aside a time to be with the Lord, can you tell us how it went?
2. If you have been able to spend extended times in the past with the Lord, can you tell us how these have gone?
3. What is your daily/weekly/yearly routine to be with the Lord? What would you recommend?

Recommended Resources For Further Study On The Holy Spirit

He That Is Spiritual by Lewis Sperry Chafer

The Person And Work Of The Holy Spirit by René Pache

The Holy Spirit by John F. Walvoord

The Other Comforter by Theodore H. Epp

The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life by Charles Stanley

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #4

Heb. 13:7,17 / Eph. 5:22-24, 6:1-8 / Rom. 13:1-7

HAVING RIGHT ATTITUDES AND RESPONSES TO AUTHORITY

Our proper attitudes and responses to those authorities that God has placed in our lives command a prominent place in the teaching epistles of the New Testament. We naturally want to be our own authority, but God is reestablishing His rule in our souls which began when we accepted Christ as our Savior. The great challenge of the Christian life, which we must meet if we are to be useful and fruitful to our Savior, is to also make Him our Lord.

Our Lord has placed each of us under one or more of five human authorities (parents, husbands, church elders, national governments, and masters) and given us clear and extensive instructions on how we are to view and respond to them. These authorities operate under His sovereign and providential rule and overrule which we must accept by faith and respond to as He has directed. There are limits to their authority which He also reveals.

These limits are important, but they must be viewed in light of the truths of this study unit or they become counterproductive. So, before looking at these five authorities and the commands we are given regarding them, let us note the consequences God has warned us will occur if we are weak and immature in this area of serving Him.

Do you struggle with the authorities God has placed in your life? Marriages struggle and are torn apart because men won't lead and women won't follow. Families do not flourish because children do not honor parents and fathers provoke their children. Churches are not built up, but torn down, because leaders are not wise and diligent and members do not honor them and heed their teaching and leadership.

This study deals with our attitudes and responses when UNDER authority. A discussion of the principles of BEING IN AUTHORITY as a Christian would be valuable in conjunction with this.

The Consequences Of Poor Attitudes And Responses To The Leaders And Authorities God Has Placed In Your Life

1. You miss God's calling and will for your life.

When the Father sent the Son to become a man and live a sinless life that qualified Him to die the substitutionary death that He did, He placed Him under the authority of human parents and required Him to honor and submit to them, even though they were pretty clueless about His person and work. Notice His response to them, which kept Him in the center of the Father's will.

“And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.

And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him. And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You. And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house? And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

*And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and **He continued in subjection to them**; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, **and in favor with God and men.**”*

— Luke 2:41-52

2. It will be “unprofitable” for you.

*“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

God chooses our leaders and authorities for us, our parents, our national leadership, our church leaders. (see 1 Cor. 12:18) To say, “I have my own counselors, I choose my own leaders”, is to be quite at odds with God's Word, and quite arrogantly proud.

3. You open yourself up to deception and further sin.

God warns us that, “*Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and divination*” (1 Sam. 15:23). Indulging in witchcraft exposes you to the realm and power of Satan and his deceptions. So does rejecting the counsel and leading of your leaders in their sphere of God given authority in your life.

*“You younger men, likewise, **be subject to your elders**; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*

Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” — 1 Pet. 5:5-8

Who Are These God-Ordained Human Authorities And What Are God’s Instructions To Us Regarding Our Attitudes And Responses To Them As We Serve Him?

The diagram below summarizes the answer to these questions. We shall briefly define the five words that are used to describe our attitudes and actions, which are used in the passages identified for each and associated with the authority in our life.

The first word which we translate “be subject to” or “SUBMIT TO” is the Greek word **hupotasso**. It is a military term, found as an imperative (i.e. a command) in these New Testament passages, which gives the sense of “place yourself under the command of”. Notice that it is used in regard to slaves as well as **all** of the other authorities.

*“Slaves, **be submissive** to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.”* — 1 Pet. 2:18-19

This does not mean that there are not limits to their authority (see Acts 4 and Peter’s “lines” for this, as well as Daniel 1/3/6), but what a shock this command must have been to Onesimus, the escaped slave of Philemon whom Paul sent back. In this same passage, in 1 Peter, the same word is used by the apostle Paul for wives.

*“**In the same way**, you wives, **be submissive** (hupotasso) to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”* — 1 Pet. 3:1-2

The second word is **hupakouo** which means literally “to hear under” or “listen to” and is translated “OBEY”. Again it is a command.

*“Children, **obey your parents** in the Lord, for this is right.” — Eph. 6:1*

The third word instructing us as to proper attitudes and responses is “**phobos**”, which means “reverential fear” and is translated as “honor” or “fear” or “respect”. Its primary use is of a right attitude toward God. We are to fear Him, honor Him, and respect Him.

Notice that this word is also used in regard to ALL of the human authorities that God has placed in our lives. We are fearing, and honoring God as we have proper attitudes and responses to these human authorities in our life.

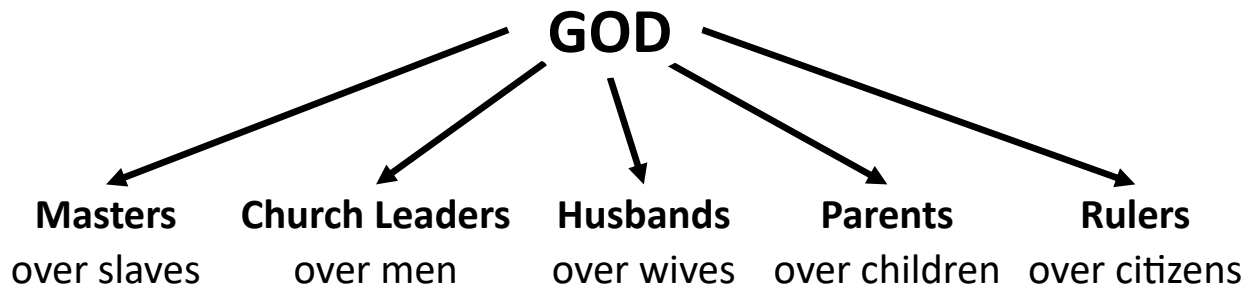
The fourth word is “**peitho**” and is found in God’s instructions to men regarding their attitudes towards the pastors and elders of their church. It means to be open to “let yourself be persuaded by” or “be convinced by” these men as you seek God’s will in a matter. Be open to their thinking and arguments and obey them!

*“**Obey (peitho)** your leaders, and submit (**hupeiko**) 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*

The fifth and final word is found in the verse above, addressed to men in the church. It is “**hupeiko**”. It is similar to peitho in that it means “give way to their admonition”. They have made an argument to you, they have exhorted, rebuked perhaps, and admonished you in a particular area, so heed what they say is the sense.

Do you have these attitudes and responses toward the authorities that God has placed in your life? What are the evidences that the answer to this question for a person is no?

1. You are your own authority, not always, but when it matters to you.
2. Your attitudes toward one or more of these authorities is dishonoring and disrespectful. You are not seeking but telling. Your authorities are not significantly involved in your life, but generally ignored, especially regarding what matters.
3. You are or have been openly opposed to one of these. Not neutral, but opposed.



**Right Attitudes and Actions Toward our Authorities —
Avoiding Deception and Finding God’s Calling**

	Slaves to Masters	Men to Church Leaders	Wives to Husbands	Children to Parents	Citizens to Rulers
1. SUBMIT TO	1 Pet. 2:18-24	1 Pet. 5:5-11	1 Pet. 3:1-6	Luke 2:52	Rom. 13:1, 5
2. OBEY	Col. 3:22	2 Thess. 3:14	1 Pet. 3:6	Eph. 6:1-3	
3. FEAR/HONOR	Eph. 6:5	2 Thess. 3:4	1 Pet. 3:2	Eph. 6:2	Rom. 13:4, 7
4. BE PERSUADED BY		Heb. 13:17	1 Pet. 3:1		
5. YIELD TO		Heb. 13:17			

UNIT 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 Attitudes And Responses To The Authorities God Has Brought And Allowed In My Life

1. Responding to fallible human authorities as God asks is not hard, it is impossible in our own strength. How would you rate the difficulties that you face in this area of life?
Easy right now ____. A constant challenge _____. Very hard _____.
Hard with some, easier with others _____.
2. Concerning your family authorities (parents, husbands), how would you rate your attitudes and responses with these challenges? __ Excellent __ Ok __ Poor __.
3. Concerning the leaders of your church, do you see and use them to discern God's will in the important decisions you face in life?
No _____. They are not really authorities to me in anything but going to church ____
Counsel yes, authority no. ____
Yes _____.
4. Concerning governmental laws, rules, prohibitions, and requirements, do you honor and respect them as far as you are able to as a Christian? Yes _____. No _____.
Do you cheat on your taxes? Yes _____. No _____.
5. When I am in the world, as a student or as an employee for example, do I honor those who are the authorities in these venues, being an example to others?
Yes _____.
Not in a purposeful way _____.
No _____.
6. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to do to please your Lord and be growing in usefulness to Him as a witness to a world of fallen creatures that are their own authority? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. How does Rom. 8:28 help us in responding with honor and respect to a difficult or even sinning authority?
2. We are instructed to pray for “all who are in authority” over us. What is the reason given for this (1 Tim. 2:1-8) and why would we be told to pray for this?
3. At what point, when our authority is requiring something or leading us somewhere or in some way, are we to say, “I cannot”? Where are these lines to be drawn – and how? (see Exo. 1:15-21, 1 Sam. 14:44-45, 22:17-18, Esther 3:2-4, 4:11, 16, Dan. 1/3/6, Mark 2:23-28, Acts 4).
4. Daniel was both a godly man who held biblical convictions and an example of right attitudes toward his God ordained authorities. (He was a slave) His APPEAL to avoid violating one of his convictions was successful. What are the basic elements of it? Does God want us to make appeals like this?
5. *“Rebellion is as the sin of practicing witchcraft, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.”* This is God’s warning to His people in 1 Samuel 15:23.

Can this statement be applied accurately to our attitudes, not only toward God, but toward the authorities He has placed over us in life? If so, are the effects of exposing ourselves to Satanic influence what He had in mind?

Is avoiding deception to the point of believing that what is false is true, to the point of opposing the truth, what he had in mind? (see 2 Tim. 2:24-26)

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2

Preparation Session #2: Application Project

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

Choose one of the following three projects to pursue and come prepared to share how it is going.

- Purpose to get in the right place with your God appointed authorities. This may mean clearing up past attitudes and actions by asking forgiveness, or it may mean just asking them for their counsel for the path ahead.
- Purpose to be the authority God wants you to be, as a protector and leader of those he has assigned to you. This may mean clearing up past actions by asking forgiveness, or beginning to act like a leader going forward. Or both.
- If you are struggling with a poor or abusive authority, purpose to get counsel from others as to where and how you are to draw God's lines to say "I cannot", "I will not". Counsel from your Elders is a good place to start. (Heb. 13:17)

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue the application project, can you share with us what you learned and what happened?
2. What are the limits of my authority's authority?
 - What are the limits of parental authority?
 - What are the limits of a husband's authority?
 - What are the limits of church elders' authority?
 - What are the limits of an employer's authority?
 - What are the limits of governmental authority?
3. How do I handle multiple levels of authority – if they disagree?
(government/elders/husband)
4. What are we to do in helping a Christian friend with an "evil" authority that is doing them much harm – such as an abusive husband or a predatory father? What is the church's responsibility in these cases, if any?
5. What are the principles of BEING an authority for God? (a parent, a husband, an elder, the boss in some capacity in the world)

Prayer Together

Examples In Scripture Of Responses To Human Authorities

- Paul/Onesimus/Philemon
- Daniel 1/3/6
- Numbers 12
- Acts 4:18-20

Resources For Further Study

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| • Brave By Faith | Alistair Begg |
| • Live Not By Lies | Rod Dreher |
| • The Church In Babylon | Erwin Lutzer |

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #5

Eph. 6:18 / Rom. 12:12

BEING DEVOTED TO EFFECTUAL PRAYER

Our study of God's principles of living as a disciple of Christ God's now leads us to consider our prayer life with God. How would you rate yours? Our first text to consider is James 5:13-18. Notice that prayer is mentioned seven times in these verses.

*"Is anyone among you suffering? **Let him pray.** Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and **let them pray** over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and **the prayer offered in faith** will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and **he prayed earnestly** that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And **he prayed again**, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit."*

— James 5:13-18

We want first of all to understand why God so emphasizes prayer to us. If you have not studied prayer and do not have a significant prayer life, then you have not understood **the great privilege and duty** that is yours as a Christian. This passage answers the four basic questions we have about prayer.

1. What prayer is for Christians.
2. Why God tells us to pray.
3. How we are to pray.
4. What we are to pray for.

So, let's observe first of all what God has revealed to us about prayer.

1. WHAT PRAYER IS

Prayer is a conversation with God and because of that **it is a great privilege** indeed. Prayer is life's greatest privilege as it is an audience with the King of Kings who loves us and wants to bless us beyond all that we can imagine or think.

Prayer is an audience with the Creator of the universe. It is a personal conversation with your Savior and Lord. It is of such importance to our God that He has sent the Holy Spirit to teach, guide, and assist you in this relationship and these conversations. (*Rom. 8:26-27*)

Learning about prayer comes down to learning about God and your relationship with him. So, as you get to know God's heart, and His plans, and His ways, and as you make him Lord of your life, prayer becomes more frequent, intimate, specific, and powerful.

The examples we have of prayer in the Bible tell us that men of God began their day habitually by talking with God. (*Ps. 5:3*) Then, they went through their day in a running conversation with God (*1 Thess. 5:17, Eph. 6:18*) Then, they ended their day by thinking and talking about it with God. (*Ps. 4:3-4*) So, we see that **prayer is the great privilege of having a conversation with the God of the universe.**

Let us note something else. Prayer is something that **God invites us** to do! It is His idea and delight. "Is any among you hurting?, come let us talk." (*Mt. 11:28*) "Is any among you sick?, come talk to me about it." (*James 5:14*) "Are you confused about life and what I think and what I am doing? Come let us talk. (*James 1:5*) There are 25 of these "Come let us talk" passages in the New Testament.

There is another aspect of the nature of prayer that we must learn. We are invited to talk with Him about anything and everything, we have seen this. God also tells us about His responses and answers to our prayers. He tells us that He answers us and that He does so **that through us He might be glorified!!** The big deal about prayer is not that we get what we ask, but that, in the fulfilling of our requests, God is glorified.

*"You did not choose me but I chose you and I appointed you that you should go forth and bear much fruit... **that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit.**"*
— John 15:16

So, prayer is perhaps life's greatest privilege, it is something the Creator and Ruler of the universe has invited us to do, and He delights to hear and answer us because He wants to glorify Himself through us!!

2. WHY WE PRAY

Now, let us note that our text makes a **great assertion** regarding our prayers as Christians. Notice verse 17.

"The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
— James 5:17

James does not only say that proper prayer **can** accomplish much but that **it does** accomplish much when we pray according to God's will and consistent with His Word.

Prayer can heal sickness. Prayer can move God to draw a person to Christ and forgive his sin.

The examples we have of answers to intercessory prayer in the Bible are numerous. They include, **natural events** such as stopping and starting rain, and **creative events** such as causing people to be born again with a new nature. Prayer is asking our supernatural God to intervene in the world to change things that would not change unless He answers our prayers.

The great assertion of the New Testament about a Christian coming to talk to God at His invitation and command is this: if you learn the right motives and goals of it, prayer can accomplish much, because it is asking God to intervene supernaturally in the world to do what would otherwise not be done! You can change the universe and all eternity from your kitchen table! The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish **much!**

The prayers of Christians are a big deal with God. This is because God has chosen to glorify Himself by intervening in history at the request of and through His people. This is because He has chosen to do the work of the present age, the building of His church THRU His people. (see Mt. 28:20) God has chosen to glorify Himself through his people, and through their prayers to Him.

*“With **all prayer** and petition pray at **all times** in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with **all perseverance** and petition for **all the saints.**”*

— Eph 6:18

*“**As a matter of first importance**, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”— 1 Tim. 2:1-4*

So, we see very clearly why we as Christians are to pray. We are exhorted to pray and be devoted to it because God has chosen to glorify himself by intervening in history at the request of and through his people. Not just by their personal character and outward deeds, but also by their entreaties and petitions to Him. The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man accomplished much!

Now let us look at James’ answer to our third question about prayer which is how we are to talk to God.

3. HOW WE ARE TO PRAY

Here in our passage James clearly states **how** we are to pray. What is the secret of answered prayer? Let us note that James makes three points about this.

First of all, our **prayers are to be fervent**. “The **fervent** prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.” Without vision and hope and ardor and assurance that great things to God’s glory can attend our prayers, we become complacent, we think it a perfunctory exercise. We neglect it.

Secondly, our **prayers are to be effective**. “The fervent, **effectual** prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.” So, what is effectual prayer? There are three clearly stated conditions in the New Testament regarding prayer that God will answer. Effective prayer must be:

- 1) according to **God’s word**,
- 2) according to **God’s will**, and
- 3) according to **God’s character**.

*“If you abide in Me, and **My words** abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”*
— John 15:7-8

*“And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.”*
— 1 John 5:14-15

*“And whatever you ask **in My name**, (consistent with My character) that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.”*
— John 14:13-14

Thirdly, our text declares that effective **prayer must come from a righteous man** to be answered. “The fervent, effectual prayer of a **righteous** man accomplishes much.” The prayers of unsaved people are not heeded. This does not mean that he will answer every prayer of the Christian because of what we’ve just seen, but it does mean that those who have been born again and who come to him according to his word and his will and his character will be heard and will be answered.

Puritan Pastor William Law, summarizing these three conditions and promises, wrote:

“We readily acknowledge that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our prayers: that in them we are to look wholly unto Him, and act wholly for Him; that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and such ends, as are suitable for His glory.”

4. WHAT WE ARE TO ASK GOD FOR

This leads us to consider our final question about prayer: **what** we are to ask God for. James' answer in verses 13-20 is that God will glorify Himself by responding to our prayers in four areas:

1. We are to pray **for ourselves** (vs. 13)
2. We are to pray **for those God has given us responsibility for** (vs. 14)
3. We are to pray **for one another in the church** (vs.16)
4. We are to pray **for the lost** (vs. 19-20)

Remember the primary point here, that we are to ask for that which would glorify God. The big deal about prayer is not that we get what we ask for, but that God is glorified in our getting what we ask for

*"Whatever you ask in my name, that will I do, **that** the Father may be glorified."*
— John 14:13-14

So, given this, in each of these four areas of life and relationship, one approach to organize our thoughts and conversations with God is to ask **two questions** about each of these four areas.

#1. What is God's perspective on this? (Whatever you or others are facing in life.) What is His opinion? His will? What is revealed about this in His Word?

#2. How can God be glorified in and through this?

So, when you talk to God about:

6. **What you are facing in life**, ask yourself what God's will is concerning this, and then talk to Him about it. *"Let your requests be made known to God."* (Phil. 4:6) Also ask yourself how God could be glorified in this and *"with prayers and supplications make your requests known to God"* (Phil. 4:6-7).

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him."
— James 5:13-15

It is certainly appropriate, when we are facing trials, hurts, and opposition to ask God to change these things for the better. We know He will eventually do this. We also know He will not allow these things to push us beyond our ability to endure them by His enabling grace (I Cor. 10:13). We also know that He may allow them to remain for a season, for reasons He may not explain, but will eventually be shown to glorify Him the

more. The “with thanksgiving” for these difficult things is to be heard consistently in our prayers because we know that God will ultimately use them for our good and glory. (John 15:16)

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”* — Phil. 4:6-7

2. **When you talk to God about your friends** and what is going on in their lives, ask what God’s will is for them and how He can be glorified in their lives - and ask for these things.

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.” — James 5:16

3. **When you talk to God about those you are responsible for...** your family, your flock, those you are discipling ... ask what God’s will is for them and how He can be glorified in their lives - and ask for these things.

*“Is anyone among you sick? **Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray** over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”* — James 5:14-15

Notice, and this is very important, there are two things **spiritual authorities** often will have to some degree when we ask them to pray for us: discernment regarding God’s will, and effectual power because of what they ask.

4. **When you talk to God about the lost**, ask yourself what God’s will is for them and how He could be glorified and ask for this. (vs. 19-20)

“My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.” — James 5:19-20

Because God has chosen to work for, with, and through His people, our fervent effectual prayers accomplish much for the salvation of lost souls, the encouragement and growth of the saints, and the glory of God. Therefore, be devoted to prayer (Col. 4:2), pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), with all prayer, at all times, with all perseverance, for all the saints!! (Eph. 6:18)

A Final Point

Have you ever made an “impossible” prayer list? What is an “impossible prayer”? It is asking God to change something or someone that will not change unless He intervenes supernaturally to do what you ask. Something that only He can do, that is consistent with His word, His will, and His character.

What unsaved people in your life are on your impossible prayer list?

What Christian folks that you know, going the wrong way, are on your list?

"Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" — Matt. 7:7-11

"You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures." — James 4:2-3

UNIT 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 Prayer Life As A Disciple Of Christ

1. How Would You Evaluate Your Prayer Life?

Are you devoted to talking with God? On a scale of 1 to 10 where are you? _____

Do you begin and end the day talking with God? (see Psalms 4 and 5) _____

Do the 4 “alls” of Eph. 6:18 describe your efforts? _____

Are you a leader and initiator in the prayers of your family? _____

2. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to be doing (or keep doing) to please your Lord and be an example in this area? _____

3. What commitments are you willing to make in this area? Are you willing to be accountable to someone to help you keep these? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. What testimonies could you give regarding answered prayer?
2. Can you explain why our prayers often go unanswered?
3. Do you follow David’s example of daily prayer times? We see that this was his habit in the following prayers of his from the Psalms. (5:3, 88:13, 55:17, 59:16, 119:147, 130:6)
4. What hinders our prayers?
5. How is it possible to pray for “all the saints”?
6. What insights might you have about teaching a child how to pray effectually?

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2

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

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

- Keep a prayer journal with daily entries and the answers received.
- Pray through your church directory once a day.
- Pray for all the Christians in a different country each day this week, trying to pray for a person/ministry/church that you know of there. Contact them, if possible, and ask for prayer requests.
- Memorize the following verses on prayer and be ready to quote them: John 15:7-8, 14:13-14, 1 John 5:14-15.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue a prayer project, can you tell us how it went?
2. What have been your prayer habits since becoming a Christian, and how have you been encouraged by answered prayer?
3. Paul's prayers for those he was discipling are found in three passages in his epistles. Do you know what he asked for in these?

Prayer Together

Recommended For Further Study

- The Prayer Life by Andrew Murray
- Life's Ultimate Privilege by Devern Fromke
- Prayer and the Knowledge Of God by Graeme Goldsworthy

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #6

James 1:2-4

RESPONDING TO SUFFERING AND ADVERSITY

The Christian life is not hard...it is IMPOSSIBLE in our own strength. To live as God commands us to live, after our salvation, in the midst of the adversity and sufferings that come with serving Christ here in this fallen world requires a spiritual maturity and power that is often lacking.

*“Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but **to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing**; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but **if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.**” — 1 Pet. 4:12-16*

“Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that

- 1) you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that*
- 2) you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,*
- 3) to please Him in all respects,*
- 4) bearing fruit in every good work and*
- 5) increasing in the knowledge of God;*
- 6) you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience;*
- 7) joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.” — Col. 1:3-12*

The Word of our God tells us that the hard things we face in life as we serve Him can only be understood if they are seen:

1. In light of where we are in the long war against our God Whom we serve.

*"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**" — John 16:33*

We are faced with adversity against us as we seek to serve Christ from **three great enemies** of His and ours: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. This fallen world is under the judgment of our God because it has put Him out and does not subject itself to Him and His will. Our Adversary the Devil seeks to defeat and destroy our efforts to glorify God and get us to join Him in opposing the will of God. And finally, we have a great battle within ourselves between our new nature and our old flesh.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”
— Gal. 5:16-17

2. In light of what will happen to us when our life in this war is over.

*“Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, **for behold, your reward is great in heaven;** for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.”*
— Luke 6:22-23

Unless we embrace the PROMISES that God has given us in His Word regarding what He will ultimately do, and how He will take the grievous things that He allows to come into our lives and turn them by His power into glory for Himself and us, we cannot respond to adversity and suffering with the thankfulness and joy that He wants from us.

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

3. In light of what God has said He will do about these hurtful things.

*“And we know that **God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.** ...What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ...But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”*
— Rom. 8:28-37

As one hymn writer has expressed it:

Yes, its good for me to praise my Lord and Savior
And to thank Him for the trials that come my way...
For He takes these grievous things,
And He turns them by His power,
Into glory for Himself and those He loves!

4. In light of what God intends to accomplish in us and then through us by allowing these trials and tests.

Here is a story you can probably relate to:

When I was a boy, my parents wanted me to grow up to be a mature man., with knowledge and skills to be useful in *life*. So... *they PURPOSELY put some adversity and trials in my life.*

If they caught me playing in the street, I got a lecture and a switching – to correct my natural thinking and behavior. Those cruel parents – taking away all the wonderful things in life. But we know that “a child who gets his own foolish way, brings grief to his mother – because he keeps on this track into adulthood.

The same is true of our heavenly Father who disciplines us for our good. All discipline for the moment is sorrowful, but afterwards it yields the fruit of righteousness.

When I got to be 6 my parents put me in a 12 year training program called a school. Talk about tests and trials. You had to sit in a chair most of the time – the only real fun was a 20 minute recess when you could really do what you wanted. But there were tests regularly that you had to pass – and then guess what – *if you passed, you got promoted to a HARDER class the next year.*

They said that all that trouble and testing had the goal of my graduating from something called a high school, with the goal of me being qualified, able to be useful in life somehow.

Just after that high school graduation I was hired on at a wood products *plant near home*. The supervisor said on the first day. “Kid, we are going to test you for a couple of days. If you can do this work safely, if you have the character to work hard, if you have enough skills for this, then, we will be able to use you. If not, you will need some more training and maturing and we won't be able to use you.”

Just like this maturing and training to be useful in the world, there is work for us to do for our Savior that He has prepared for us in advance. But we must learn how to do it, and have the character to pursue it with diligence and perseverance. His schools and training are often full of hard and hurtful things.

And in addition to all this our Lord expects us to go out and teach others how to face and persevere in the adversity they will face – so we need to be good students to become good teachers.”

So...

What Happens When We Do Not Understand God's Purposes For Allowing Suffering And Adversity?

If we do not understand God's purposes for suffering, affliction, troubles in life, weaknesses, hurts, and wrongs, they often become the means of our greatest discouragements. They can lead us to lose heart and give up our efforts to live for God. The things we face in life become our greatest sources of discouragement if we fail to see them in the context of God's Providential Hand.

- **We grow weary and lose heart** and give up running the race of life for God.

*"Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not **grow weary and lose heart.**"* — Heb 12:1-3

Have you run hard – but have grown weary in the battle?

- We easily become **bitter** toward God and our offenders and it controls our thoughts and emotions

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."— Heb 12:15

Are there people who have hurt you that you have not forgiven and are bitter toward? _____ See to it.

- **We focus on removing these hard things** rather than thanking God for them and allowing Him to use them to reveal our true weaknesses and transform us into His image.

"And He said to me...My strength is made perfect is your weakness." — 2 Cor. 12:9

How could this be illustrated in your life? _____

- **We try to live for God by our own efforts** in facing these hard things in life rather than relying on the power of the indwelling Spirit.

"...that He would grant you... to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." — Eph 3:16

Is your life an illustration of walking in the power of God? _____

However, if we do understand God's purposes in allowing them, they can be our greatest motivation and means for spiritual growth and fruitfulness. The following lines, written in reflection on a difficult life filled with adversity and suffering express this well:

*I asked God for strength, that I may achieve;
I was made weak, that I might humbly learn of His power.
I asked for health, that I might do greater things;
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.
I asked for riches, that I might be happy;
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men;
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.
I asked for things, that I might enjoy life;
I was given life, that I might enjoy things.
In spite of myself, my prayers were answered.
I among all men am most richly blessed.*

Perhaps the most fruitful of all the apostles of the early church was Paul. Over a period of about 30 years he labored and served as the Lord led him. Please read the following description of the things that he said the Lord allowed and used in his life to fulfill His plans for him.

“Beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. (40 was considered a death sentence) Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.”
— 2 Cor. 11:23-28

Why God Allows Suffering In The Life Of A Believer

What are the primary reasons God allows His people us to suffer in life, especially as they purpose to serve Him and live for Him?

1. **To discipline us in our immaturity** both to prevent sin and cause us to turn from it.

“But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.”
— 1 Cor. 11:32

*“Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, **but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.** All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”* — Heb. 12:9-11

2. **To have us learn to rely on His power, not ours, to live life.**

*“...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.**”* — Col. 1:10-11

3. **To have us grow in our faith and our hope** and thus face life with these.

“For indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.” — 2 Cor. 1:9-10

4. **To have us gain spiritual experience** that allows us to be an example to others, and equip them in the faith.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.” — 2 Cor 1:3-7

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study on responding to the trials of life while serving our Lord here "in the midst", read and study the scriptures and summary above and complete the following self - evaluation.

1. How would you rate your own responses to the trials God has allowed to come into your life? ___Ok___ Poor___ Good___ Lousy___ Excellent___ Better___

2. What do you think God would have you do at this point?

With past hurts that you still struggle with. _____

With present trials and difficult relationships. _____

3. What commitments are you willing to make?

I accept as true these primary reasons that God has allowed suffering and adversity in my life. _____

I purpose to thank the Lord on a daily basis for these grievous things, knowing that He will use them for His glory and mine. _____

I commit to live by the attitudes and responses God asks and requires of His people as I face the tests and trials that the Lord has said I will face if I am serious about serving Him. _____

I will use my life experiences to teach and comfort others who face similar things. _____

Discussion Questions For Session #1

- How can we help a person who is “in the midst”? How can we give them God’s perspective and comfort them wisely and effectively? Does it vary?
- How will our various spiritual gifts and motivations tend to lead us in helping others differently? Such as comforting vs. challenging, helping vs. exhorting.
- How long and how much do I invest myself in a person? When do I keep giving and helping them and when is it time to “move on”?
- If I am facing suffering and there is nothing I can do to fix it, how can I go forward with joy, thankfulness, and perseverance? Let alone help others?

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2

Preparation For Session #2: Personal Application Project

In preparation for the second study on this principle please consider doing the following:

1. Memorize Eph. 2:10, John 15:16, and Rom. 8:28. These verses give us God's perspective that we must accept and impose upon our difficult circumstances if we are to succeed in responding to what God allows in life in a manner that pleases Him.
(Col. 1:9-12)
2. Review list your past trials and greatest hurts in light of Rom. 8:28 and see what God has done to date. What has happened for good that would not have happened had you not experienced them? Be prepared to share and encourage others if you can.
3. Hope is required to live as a mature disciple of Christ and be able to help others. Study what the New Testament says about hope and be prepared to share what you learn as it relates to facing life "till He comes".

Discussion Questions

1. How many of you were able to memorize one or more of our memory verses? Have you been using them?
2. If you have been considering what God has done to use the difficult things that He has allowed in your life, could you encourage us by sharing about them?
3. Did any of you do a study on what the NT says about hope and would like to share what you learned?
4. What would you say to a Christian that is discouraged because they have believed or been taught the "prosperity gospel".
5. What commitments going forward have you made in this area of serving Christ while facing what He promised? How would it compare with this: "Down any road, at any cost, all for the love of my Savior".

Prayer Together

CONQUERING BITTERNESS WITH FORGIVENESS

“See to it that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it, many be defiled.” — Heb. 12:15

It is quite common for a Pastor to have one of his sheep attacked by wolves. Their wounds are real and painful. Binding them up and helping them practically is not the real challenge. The real challenge is helping them with the damage to their heart caused by the BITTERNESS that the wrongs and hurts have produced.

Hurtful things and offenses naturally produce anger, discouragement, depression, and thought of revenge. They often gain control of their mind, rob them of their peace and joy, fill them with fear, and make them bitter about what people have done to them and what God has allowed.

Bitterness often so consumes their thoughts and feelings and decision making that they cease being givers and helpers to others and they become energy takers, not energy givers. The key to successfully escaping this bitterness is by learning and applying what God has said regarding FORGIVENESS.

In this study we shall consider God’s instructions to **CONQUERING BITTERNESS WITH FORGIVENESS**. We want to understand these truths – not only for our own sake, but also, so that we can help others who have suffered hurts and wrongs in life.

First, let’s clarify some biblical insights about **forgiveness**:

1. **Biblical forgiveness is the giving of mercy and grace to a person who has wronged or hurt you or yours.** It is the opposite of seeking justice or revenge.

Recently a young man was exhorted to forgive some folks who had hurt him deeply. “But what they did was wrong! They need to be rebuked! They need to apologize!” He was consumed with anger. But biblical MERCY is to **NOT give an offender what they deserve**, nor is it seeking justice because of what they did.

But our instructions go beyond even being merciful. We are also to be gracious to them, blessing them and **giving them what they do not deserve**. That is GRACE.

The young man was told that he needed to forgive those that had hurt him and to ask the Lord how he could bless them. “Where is that found in the Bible”, he demanded. “Well, it is the message of the entire Bible”, he was told. “Here is the clear instructions of our Lord to us from Luke 6:27:

“I say to you who hear, love your enemies, pray for those who mistreat you, bless those who curse you.”

“I can’t do that”, was his response. Well, the Bible agrees with that. In our own strength we can’t, but we can do all the things that God wants us to do – even this – by His enabling power. (Phil. 4:13) This young Christian was faced with either being a light shining in a dark place, or of continuing to feed his root of bitterness.

2. Biblical forgiveness is defined by God’s forgiveness of us.

“...forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone, just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” — Col. 3:13

When the Lord forgave you - paying a debt He did not owe, because you had a debt you could not pay – He sent your sins away from His own presence “*as far as the east is from the west*”. (Ps. 103:12) That is a very long way! The Greek word for forgiveness means “to cancel, to remove, to send away”.

God is able to make us to stand before the presence of His glory, blameless and with great joy – because He is a Being of love/acceptance/and forgiveness. Because He has FORGIVEN US from His heart. We are to do to others who have hurt us, who are sinning sinners, what He has done for us.

This is not hard – it is impossible in our own strength. But, “*we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.*” (Phil. 4:13) God makes all grace (the desire and power to do God’s will) abound to us, so that, always having all sufficiency, we may have an abundance for every good deed.” (2 Cor. 9:8) There is grace to forgive as we have been forgiven.

3. True forgiveness is only possible for a Christian, and only for a Christian yielded to and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- Forgiveness is the EVIDENCE that I have accepted God’s forgiveness of me.
- Forgiveness is the EVIDENCE that my heart has been changed by the new birth.
- Forgiveness is the EVIDENCE that the Holy Spirit is at work in me, both to will and to do for His good pleasure.
- The ABSENCE of forgiveness is the EVIDENCE, either of not being yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit, or of not been born again.

Now, let us note: some truths and insights about **bitterness**.

1. Bitterness toward God, because of what He has allowed to happen to us, **CAN** dominate the life of a Christian.

Bitterness begins to control our thoughts, and then our emotions, and then what we say and do. This is why we are told to “See to it that...no root of bitterness...causes trouble.” When a memory of a past hurt comes to mind, as they do, we must learn to “take it captive” (2 Cor. 10:5) right away. Stop and begin to talk to God. Thank Him for allowing it (James 1:12) and then “Romans 8:28” and “Luke 6:27” it.

2. **Bitterness damages our relationship with the Holy Spirit** and can quench His power in our lives to do the will of God in all areas of life.

This is a serious consequence. When we refuse to forgive an offender, we are willfully disobeying the Lord. This grieves the Holy Spirit and has the effect of damaging our relationship with God. (Mt. 6:14-15)

3. **Bitterness, with its resentments and anger, spills over and affects ALL of our relationships.** (“...and by it (bitterness) many are defiled.” Heb. 12:15)

An angry Christian is focused on something that has happened to him. He is not focused on others. He is not able to give his heart and attention to meeting the needs of others. The wives and children of angry, bitter men are often full of fear. Turning bitterness to forgiveness avoids and changes these things.

4. Finally note that, full and complete forgiveness goes beyond only dismissing the offender’s offense or debt. It adds to this, **blessing and investing in the offender**.

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.

And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount.....

But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."
— Luke 6:27-39

God's forgiveness of us did not stop in the neutral position, only to the forgiveness of our sins. No, He added blessings beyond imaging to it!

*"But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 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 2:4-7

5. A forgiving Spirit and full forgiveness of the offender DOES NOT, in itself, restore the relationship with the offender.

The first benefit of forgiving an offender is that it frees me from the bondage of bitterness in my soul. But it takes a sincere response and genuine repentance **on the part of the offender** to completely restore the relationship.

A relationship involves 2 people. A relationship damaged by sin cannot be completely restored unless the sinner is truly repentant. This is true of our relationship with God and it is true of our relationship with others.

We are not to grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30) by unconfessed sin. If we do we have damaged our relationship. But... if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us. He has never left us nor forsaken us, and promises to completely restore our fellowship, but until WE deal with what we have done, He cannot trust and use us as He would like.

In our relationships trust leaves on horseback...it comes back on foot. But we are to do our part, be the initiator by forgiving the offense, and like the father of the prodigal son, be waiting and looking anxiously and longingly for a repentant sinner to be coming home to us.

UNIT STUDY SESSION #1

In preparation for the group study of this principle of conquering bitterness in our life by forgiving our offenders, read and study the above scriptures and summary and the complete the following self examination.

Evaluating My Life As A Christian Regarding A Root Of Bitterness In Me

1. Do you struggle with bitter thoughts that control you for a time? _____
2. Are there people who have wronged you that you have never forgiven? _____
3. Have you experienced the joy of blessing and investing in an offender? _____
4. How would you grade yourself in this area? ___A___B___C___D___F___
5. What commitments regarding this area of living for Christ are you willing to make? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Do you have questions or comments on the summary of this biblical principle of living for Christ that you have before we consider these other questions?
2. Is it true that if I do not forgive an offense that, to some extent, and perhaps significantly, my mind and life will be controlled by it?
3. Does bitterness get worse as it “lingers” in my soul? What is the evidence of this?
4. What are the precise steps of forgiving an offender?
5. Can you give us an illustration from your own life of facing offenses and what you did?
6. What counsel and insights on the practical “hows” would you offer to someone who needs to pursue this?

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

In preparation for the second study section please consider doing the following:

1. Memorize Heb. 12:15
2. Choose one of the following projects, depending on your history with this principle.

- If you have never made a list of those you need to forgive to gain freedom from the control of bitter thoughts and feelings – **make an initial list.**

Then, make your way through the list, 1) thanking God for His forgiveness of you, 2) forgiving them of their wrongs and offenses toward you, and 3) blessing them in some way. (Asking God to bless them, and/or doing something for them.)

- If you have forgiven others in the past, but still struggle...purpose to invest in them whenever they, or what they have done comes to mind. Take these negative thoughts captive by using them to stop and ask God to bless these folks who have hurt you and yours. Ask Him to give them the opposite of what they deserve. Ask Him to bless them, perhaps with salvation, perhaps in their family, perhaps like He has blessed you. Tell Satan that whenever He brings a negative remembrance of their offenses, you will respond in this way.
- If you are generally free of bitterness consider how to counsel another person who struggles with it and write out on one page how you would encourage them. What would you tell them to do, with past offenses and going forward when new offenses come. What has worked for you and why.

Discussion Questions

1. How many of you have been able to memorize Heb. 12:15? Is this verse a suggestion, or a command?
2. How many chose project #1 and would like to share how it is going?
#2?
#3?

Prayer Together

DISCIPLESHIP PRINCIPLE #8

Phil. 2:3-8

ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS

Our Savior considered us more important than Himself. He gave up what He was and had to meet our great need of forgiveness and justification before the Father. He paid a debt He did not owe, because we had a debt we could not pay. Now, He instructs us to be like Him and do what He has and is doing for us.

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind **let each of you regard one another as more important than himself**; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”— Phil. 2:3-8*

Considering others more important than ourselves, and assuming responsibility for them and their needs by giving our lives sacrificially to them in self-denial is the measure of our maturity as a disciple of Christ.

The Amazing Example Of Barnabas

Besides Christ, perhaps the greatest illustration of this essential aspect of the Christian life in the New Testament is found in the life of Barnabas. As much as any other person in the Bible, he illustrates the secret of fruitfulness that comes by **assuming responsibility for others**.

In the first place, Barnabas 1) **assumed responsibility for the infant church in Jerusalem**. Thousands of Jews like himself had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost and had been saved after hearing the gospel. They were away from their homes and relatives and in need of support as they stayed to learn and grow in their new life as believers. Barnabas, prompted by the Holy Spirit, decided that it was his responsibility to see to their needs.

*“And Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means, Son of Encouragement), and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”
— Acts 4:36-37*

Secondly, he 2) **assumed responsibility for the success of the apostles' ministry.** They were so encouraged by his deeds that they called him Bar-nabas, son of encouragement. His given name was Joseph, but because he lived a life that encouraged others, because he assumed responsibility for them, he became known to everyone as Barnabas, the name the apostles gave him.

Thirdly, he 3) **assumed responsibility for Saul,** when no one else would. Saul became the apostle Paul, but not without years of discipling by Barnabas. We must remember that Saul ravaged the church by putting many in prison and voting to put many Christians to death (Acts 26: 10-11). Then he had become a Christian but no one wanted to associate with him, let alone assume responsibility for him in the faith and in life.

*“And when he had come to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. **But Barnabas took hold of him** and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. And he was with them moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.”* — Acts 9:26-28

Later, after Barnabas left Jerusalem for ministry in Antioch, Paul made his way to Tarsus which was his home, but there is no record of there being Christians there. He stayed there until Barnabas came to find him and put him to work with him teaching Gentiles about the faith in Antioch. Again, Barnabas was the only one assuming responsibility for Saul and discipling him to maturity in Christ and usefulness in the work of discipling others.

Fourth, he 4) **assumed responsibility to be a pastor to the world's first Gentile church.**

*“But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and **they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.** Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord; for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.”* — Acts 11:20-24

Fifth, he 5) **assumed responsibility for the first missionary journey.** It was Barnabas that led this first journey, not Saul. Saul was yet to be the primary leader (Acts 14:1-2). But, like a true Mentor, Barnabas gave way to the younger man as his experience and capabilities arose to the task. Whose job was it to take the gospel to the Gentiles in Asia Minor? Barnabas assumed this responsibility too.

*“Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me **Barnabas and Saul** for the work to which I have called them.”*

— Acts 13:1-2

Sixth, he 6) assumed responsibility for the needy Jerusalem church during the great famine.

*“Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius. And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, **sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.**”*

— Acts 11:27-30

Since Barnabas was the chief Pastor and Teacher, it is reasonable that he led this effort for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. Given his track record, his own contribution was probably significant. This is the first gift of its kind in the history of the world! One culture gathering a substantial gift to give to another culture without strings attached. Gentile pagans giving to Jews who for centuries had avoided them as unclean dogs! **Barnabas led them to assume responsibility for the needs of others.**

In a seventh recorded instance, Barnabas, 7) **assumed responsibility for John Mark.**

“And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.”— Acts 12:25

This was surely Barnabas' idea. John Mark was his cousin. His mother seems to have been a widow (Acts 12:12). Because **assuming responsibility for others** was a way of life for Barnabas, his journey to Jerusalem with Saul to take the gift led him to offer to mentor the young man. It seems he did not have enough to do pastoring a large Gentile congregation, and running a seminary of sorts for pastors (Acts 13:1)! He offered to raise an immature and inexperienced young man who had no father.

All of this **assumption of responsibility** produced spiritual fruit in amazing quantities. He mentored two men no one else would, who eventually wrote about half of the New Testament. Surely without his assuming responsibility for them this would not have happened. The first Jewish church, the first Gentile church, the first missionary journey, all of these he assumed responsibility for to see them succeed.

Who have you assumed responsibility for? To what extent do you consider living for others as more important than living for yourself?

What Does It Mean Practically To Consider Others More Important Than Yourself, To Assume Responsibility For Others?

- It means purposing to live for others and not yourself.

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, **even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* — John 13:34-35

- It means giving up all you are and have to God, to use as He will – for others.

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God." — Eph 5:1-2

- It means to accept and love the people God chooses for you.

"Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; ...Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." — Rom 15:2-7

- it means to give these folks, that the Lord brings or sends us to, what **they** need to grow and mature, regardless of the cost."

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,... teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." — Matt. 28:19-20

WHO Am I To Assume Responsibility For And Give My Life To?

So, who does the Lord tell us to assume responsibility for?

- 1) We are, in the first place, to assume responsibility for **our family members**.
(see Eph. 5:22-6:9)

*“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church”,
“Fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”*

Our Lord did this as the oldest son, assuming responsibility for his widowed mother, even when he was on the cross, and near death. (see John 19:26-27)

- 2) We are, further, to assume responsibility, as a member of a local church, to employ ourselves for the good and the growth of **every member in our church**.
(see Eph. 4:15-16)

“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

- 3) Even beyond this, we are to assume responsibility to spend time in prayer for **all the Christians, in all the world**.

*“With **all** prayer and petition pray at **all** times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with **all** perseverance and petition for **all** the saints.”*
— Eph 6:18

Wow. What a responsibility. Millions and millions of God’s people. Notice the four “alls” in this command. All prayer, at all times, with all perseverance, for all the saints...But it is more than even this.

- 4) We are to assume responsibility to get the gospel to **all the nations of the world** and make disciples among these peoples for God, of those He draws to Himself through these self-denying efforts. So...we are to assume responsibility in some form **for all the unsaved souls on the earth!**

*"Go therefore and make disciples **of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
— Matt. 28:19-20

Welcome to the work the Lord wants to do with you and through you! As you do NOTHING from selfishness...but are considering **others** more important than yourself! Like the Lord did for you. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Him. This is the measure of our maturity in Christ.

UNIT 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 Life As A Christian Who Assumes Responsibility For Others

1. Have you assumed responsibility for others? Who? Would you say that you consider them more important than yourself? _____

2. Have you assumed responsibility to disciple others for the Lord as He has commanded us? (*Mt. 28:18-20*) This takes commitment, study, and sacrifice. How would you rate yours? _____

3. Have you assumed responsibility for the success of the members of your church? Whose job do you really believe this is? _____

4. Have you assumed responsibility for those who have hurt you, or are hurting you – to be light to them by your responses, to pray for them, and to love them for the Lord? _____

5. Have you assumed responsibility as a friend, as a brother or sister in Christ, to go to a sinning brother or sister to tell them their fault and seek their repentance and restoration? Whose responsibility is this? (*Gal. 6:1-2, Mt 18:15-20*) _____

6. Have you assumed responsibility to see that the gospel gets to the lost? How? At what cost? _____

7. What does the study of this area tell you, as a disciple of Christ, that you need to do to please your Lord and be growing in usefulness to Him in the work of the age? _____

Discussion Questions For Study Session #1

1. Why do you go to church? Or not. Is the answer all about you – or is it all about others?
2. Are you a good listener? When another person is talking what are you thinking about?
3. The usefulness and fruitfulness that God says is the goal of maturing as a disciple (see 2 Pet. 1:5-8) are usefulness and fruitfulness in what?
4. Has God brought a “Barnabas” into your life for a season? Can you share about this?
5. What is the difference, if any, between assuming responsibility for someone and making a disciple? For us, as Christians, should there be?
6. I can't assume responsibility for everyone. How do I know who God wants me to invest in and when it is time to stop?
7. What is the difference between loving someone and assuming responsibility for them somehow? Does this mean I am to assume responsibility for my enemy? (see Lk. 6:27-35)
8. When you pray and “make your requests know unto God”, who are you making requests for? (James 4:3)

UNIT STUDY SESSION #2:

Preparation For Session #2: Application Project

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

Do a “BARNABAS PROJECT” this week. Here are some ideas to choose from:

1. Write notes of encouragement to three people every day.
2. Call someone every day and ask them how they are doing and how you can pray for them. Try to encourage them. Listen. Bless them.
3. Go and talk with a person who needs to be lovingly exhorted in a weak area or in a matter of sin. Barnabas would.
4. Think about who has been a Barnabas for you that you have never really thanked. Contact them after remembering their investment in you and what it meant.
5. Do something anonymous for 2 people. Ask the Lord who.
6. Ask the Lord to put on your heart 5 people to pray for every day in a specific area of their life you are aware of. Set aside time to intercede for them fervently every day.
7. Memorize Phil. 2:1-8.

Discussion Questions

1. If you were able to pursue a “Barnabas project”, can you tell us how it went?
2. What are your plans for discipling others and what are your needs to do this?
3. When Paul exhorted Timothy to “finish his course” and “fulfill his ministry” what course was he talking about? How does this apply to us? (see 2 Tim. 4:5-8)

Prayer

Recommended For Further Study

- Walking His Trail by Steve Saint
- A Chance To Die, the life of Amy Carmichael by Elizabeth Elliot
- Fox’s Book Of Martyrs