

# Selfless Love of Others

Thinking biblically, living obediently, loving selflessly,  
accepting the costs of living for God and others,  
by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit,  
for the glory of our Lord Jesus.



Discipleship Study

volume 3

Fall 2024

# Selfless Love Of Others

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## Introduction

Welcome to Volume 3 of our 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.

**These Volume 3 Study Units are addressed to MATURE DISCIPLES.** If you are relatively new in the faith, learning the basic principles of living life for Christ, which are the focus of Volumes 1 and 2, would be a wise first step before studying these Units. Laying a foundation for a house is essential before building its structure and adding the features that make it most useful. Note such a progression in the following command. Get some counsel if you are unsure.

*“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, **self-denying love.** (the focus of this Volume)*

*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

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.



## Suggested Format of Study Units and Discipleship Group Meetings

### The Participant

### The Session Leader

#### Session #1 For Each Life Principle:

1. Read and study **the material on the principle** before the group meeting.
2. Complete **the personal evaluation** of the principle before the meeting.

1. Teach and clarify the principle to begin the group meeting. 10 minutes
2. Then use **the discussion questions** to encourage sharing and ensure understanding. 30 minutes.
3. Briefly discuss **the personal application project** for Session #2.
4. Prayer

#### Session #2 For Each Life Principle:

1. Pursue **the application project** before Session #2.

1. Review the principle and the application project. 10 minutes.
2. Share and discuss **the application project**
3. Prep briefly for the next principle
4. Prayer

**The Miracle Of  
Christian America**

A Government and Culture  
Based On Biblical Values  
Led By Committed  
Christians

**1750-1950**

Strong And Dominate  
Christian Churches

**“In God We Trust”**

- The Great Commission
- The Dominion Mandate
- The Support of Israel

Psalms 33:12-22

**Present Day  
America**

A Government and Culture  
Without Biblical Values  
Led By Humanists

**1950-2020**

Lukewarm And  
Compromised  
Christian Churches

**“No Longer Subject to God”**

Immorality  
Sodomy  
Depravity

Rom. 1:18-32

**The Coming  
Persecution**

A Government and Culture  
Persecuting Biblical Values  
Led By Haters of God

**2020 - ?**

Opposed And Persecuted  
Christian Churches

**“Sheep Among Wolves”**

Matt. 5:10-16  
Matt. 10:16-42

**As A Nation  
and Culture**

**As A Church**

## STUDY UNIT 1

Rom. 1:18-25 / Mt. 10:16-42 / Mt. 5:10-16

### **THINGS TO COME: LIVING IN A POST CHRISTIAN AMERICA**

America is a miracle as a nation, unique among all the nations since the church age began 2000 years ago. But things have changed in the last 75 years and are beginning to get worse. Our decline is clearly predicted and described in Romans 1:18-25, and which the attached diagram attempts to summarize visually. Studying it will help you follow the thoughts presented in this Study Unit which concludes by addressing what we most probably will be facing as disciples of Christ in America in the coming days. The subsequent studies of this volume will concern what God has said we are to be and do as we face them. So...let us consider:

1. The Miracle of America as a Christian Nation in the **Past**
2. Our **Present** Day Humanist American Culture
3. The Opposition And Persecution **to Come** to Committed Christians,

#### **1. The Miracle of America as a Christian Nation**

No other people since the church age began 2000 years ago have enjoyed a culture, a government, and churches that have exalted the Lord Jesus Christ and the Bible as has America. Perfect we have not been, but openly trying and helped by the Holy Spirit, with “In God We Trust” as our boast and intent, and, to a wonderful extent, the result has been the blessing of those who have lived their life here.

America has sent out more missionaries to the rest of the peoples of the world in obedience to Mt. 28:19-20 than all the other nations combined. Our government officials and judiciary during our formative and ensuing years has declared that “we do not make laws, we find laws” meaning that we search God’s Word to understand His will, His principles, and His commands, and doing so, we follow them.

Moreover, America has done more to pursue God’s “Dominion Mandate” (see Gen. 1:27-28) than any other nation (and most of all the rest combined) and have supported God’s people Israel more than all the other nations since Israel’s founding. As a result, God has richly blessed us – until we began to embrace **humanism** as shown in the diagram, the lie that “there is no God, that man is the measure of all things, and that there is no true truth, truth being relative to what is good for each person, as they decide for themselves.”



## 2. Present Day Humanist American Culture

Beginning, as the diagram shows, about 75 years ago, the philosophical view of the world that is called **humanism** began to be embraced and taught in our educational schools and even our mainline churches. As our culture embraced this world view, rejecting the inspiration and authority of the Bible as from God, Who they said did not exist, Americans began to face choices that were new in America. Do we stand against the current of the culture as it proceeds down the “**Romans 1 Road**” or do we drift along with it? Notice the clearly spelled out, 5 stage decline, of any person or people or culture or nation that “puts God out”.

*“For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.*

*Therefore 1) **God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to immorality**, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for the lie (i.e. that man is the measure of all things) and worshiped and served the creature (man) rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

*For this reason 2) **God gave them over to perversion** (i.e. sodomy and LGBTQ); for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.*

*And because they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, 3) **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, (i.e. a mind that doesn't work) and 4) **to do those things which are not proper**, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, 5) **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them**”*

*Rom 1:18-42*

There began to be a cost to stand for Christ, relationally at all levels, and in all environments in America. The increasing exposure to humanistic values, immorality, and evil, encouraged Christians to respond in two ways over the last 75 years with much biblical direction:

- **Avoid the influence of a godless culture**, and
- **Address weaknesses and compromises in the church** that have come by “drifting with the current” of our increasingly godless culture.

Good examples of this are:

- The Home School movement that began in America in the early 1980's with a few Christians removing their children from the best schools in the world, and that now involves more than 6 million children.
- Conflicts in the churches over doctrine, associations with other "Christians" and organizations, and conduct.

But now, what we are beginning to face is an open and increasingly aggressive OPPOSITION and PERSECUTION of both biblical values and God's people. It was not long ago that sodomy was a crime. Now it is a crime to oppose it. It was not long ago that men were men. Now it is not allowed to prevent men from using women's locker rooms and showers.

The list grows longer by the week and the opposition to biblical values and the freedom to hold them grows stronger. Children, without caution or permission from parents are being taught to choose their sex themselves, etc. You can imagine where this leads, along with much more, in our nation's growing opposition and persecution of biblical truth, values, and practices.

*"Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.*

*He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And **he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.**"* *Matt. 10:34-38*

### **3. The Opposition And Persecution To Come To Committed Christians In America**

Rather than just seeking to avoid a godless culture and a compromised church, committed American Christians are faced with the prospect of a humanistic culture that will **come after them** to OPPOSE and PERSECUTE them, as Christians have been opposed and persecuted throughout the centuries and are being so treated in most places on earth today. We have not faced this like we will, if the Lord does not return soon.

How we are to respond and what we are to do is the focus of the remaining studies of this volume. These issues and questions are not hard to find in God's Word. They are a found everywhere we look! The Christians of the first century faced OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION, didn't they? The nation of Israel has faced OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION, hasn't it? So, both the N.T. and the O.T. tell us how to respond and what to do.

*"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*

*“But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.*

*And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, **“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”*

*Acts 14:19-23*

*“I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*

*Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; **but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.”***

*2 Tim. 1:6-8*

***“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you...***

***Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”***

*Matt. 5:10-16*

## **UNIT 1 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 Understanding of America’s Christian Foundation and Decline**

1. I am familiar with a) the biblical foundation of the original 13 colonies, the “miracle at Philadelphia” and c) the resulting constitutional structure and resulting national laws of America. \_\_\_\_yes\_\_\_\_some\_\_\_\_no
2. I can explain the basis of the following statement by a “founding father” of our nation, and how it explains our current cultural state:  
  
**“Democracy, as a form of government, cannot succeed unless the people govern themselves. If not, they cannot be governed”**  
\_\_\_\_yes\_\_\_\_no
3. I am familiar with the writings of Francis Schaeffer and others in the 1970s regarding what will happen to America and why. \_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_No
4. I think I know what to do if things get worse. \_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_No\_\_\_\_I am confused
5. I have confidence in my family and church leaders that they know what to do  
\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_Not Sure\_\_\_\_No

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

1. Do you think there is a political solution to our present problems in America?
2. What did the Covid related issues and divisions in the churches across America reveal about our unity, love for one another, and readiness for the things to come?
3. Do you agree with the assessment of the study regarding our past, present, and future as a nation and what Christians will probably face in the days ahead?
4. Do you see the Romans 1:18-25 path in our country today? Where are we on this path?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 1 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Many Christians have fled their countries and come to America over the last 50 years because of chaos, opposition, and persecution. They have experienced what we have not and could perhaps help us. Contact 1 or 2 that you may know or know of and ask them about their experience and thoughts about what we are facing.
2. Study Matthew 5:10-16 and 10:16-39 looking for principles that may help us.
3. Study the letter Paul wrote to Timothy (2 Timothy) when he was concerned that Timothy was NOT handling the pressures he faced from growing opposition and persecution. Identify and summarize Paul's exhortations. Evaluate your maturity and the maturity of your church, based upon them, to respond to what we are now facing and what will come.
4. The Voice of the Martyrs is an organization that has addressed and made known what is happening in the area of our study (opposition and persecution) around the world for many years. Find their site and/or read some of their material this week.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you were able to pursue one of the Application Projects, can you share with us about it?

### **Prayer Together**

## STUDY UNIT 2

2 Pet. 1:5-8 / 1 Cor. 13:13 / Col. 3:12-14 / Phil. 2:1-5

### HOW SHALL WE THEN LIVE? – FOR OTHERS!

UNIT 1 of this study series proposed that we are living in a “Post Christian America” that is bringing new challenges, opposition and suffering to committed Christians. If this is true and we will increasingly face these things – how are we to respond? What does God want us to do? How then does God want me to live? The answer is: He wants me to live - **for others, like He does.**

*“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.”*  
Phil. 2:3-5

Would you say that you are a mature Christian? The biblical principles of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ that have been presented in Volumes 1 and 2 are listed at the end of this study unit. If you have studied them and are living your life committed to keeping them – does that make you a MATURE CHRISTIAN? It depends completely on the extent to which you are living your life for OTHERS. Because...

*“But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is LOVE.”*  
1 Cor. 13:13

*“And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. And beyond all these things put on LOVE.”*  
Col. 3:12-14

*“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** (the consummate quality and characteristic).*

*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. 1:2-8

**LOVE** is the Greek word “**agape**”. It is a word unique to Christianity. What does it mean? A mature Christian has “put on” **LOVE** and it means to live for others, not yourself.

*“We know **love** by this, that He (Christ) laid down His life for us; and **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.**”* 1 John 3:11

“Agape” love is living your life in self-denial for others. Mature Christians live their lives **for others**. The extent to which they do this determines their “Christlikeness” (Phil. 2:3-5). The extent to which they have this attitude in themselves determines their usefulness in the work of the age. (2 Pet. 1:8) The extent to which they live for others rather than themselves determines how much they please the Lord and therefore their rewards at the Bema (Col. 1:9-10). The extent to which we live for others in self-denial determines our maturity as Christians (Lk. 6:27-35). It is to live like our God lives by His power working in us and through us.

Notice what Paul says to the immature Christians in Corinth. They were very gifted, very committed, and very enthusiastic – but they did what they did for themselves, not others.

*“If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, **I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.***

*And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, **I am nothing.***

*And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, **it profits me nothing.**”* 1 Cor. 13:1-3

In contrast to these self-oriented Christians, a mature Christian can be defined as...

**“A Christian Who Lives For Others In Self-Denial, Like His Savior And Lord.”**

*“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me (i.e. be My disciple), **let him deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”* Matt. 16:24

*“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

To what extent do you live for others and not yourself? To what extent does selfless love of others describe you? Loving others in the midst of what is coming is the answer to our questions about how to respond to what lies ahead. So, let us examine biblical LOVE a bit further.

# 1. WHY IS “AGAPE” LOVE THE MEASURE OF A CHRISTIAN’S MATURITY?

## 1) Because AGAPE (or Selfless) Love Describes The Essential Nature Of God.

*God is love.*”

-1 John 4:8

In the Greek language, the presence of the definite article before a noun (*the* temple vs. *a* temple) identifies. The emphasis is upon uniqueness and individuality and identity. The absence of the article (*a* temple vs. *the* temple) qualifies and characterizes. The emphasis in this verse is upon the character and the nature of God. “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8) would be better translated “*God as to His nature is characterized by love*” because the definite article is omitted. He has a nature that is characterized by agape love. God considers others more important than Him

*“By this the (“selfless love of others”) love of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world (to die) so that we might live through Him .”*

1 John 4:9

Agape love is known only by its actions. God’s acts of love for sinners reveals His true nature. This word (agape) is never used to describe the nature of animals. Starfish are amazing and beautiful creatures, but they are actually some of the most vicious creatures on the planet. After engulfing a stationary mussel or clam and forcing it open slightly, the starfish has the ability to push its stomach into the shell. Then it digests the poor clam or mussel alive. Soon nothing is left and the starfish proceeds to another meal. Starfish are not loving. They do not consider others more important than themselves. Rather, they violate the whole law of God naturally, just like every fallen creature, including man. Including us.

*“For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.”*

Gal. 5:14-15

## 2) Because Selfless Love Describes God’s Attitude Toward You.

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

John 3:16

*“He poured out Himself to death... bore the sin of many... and interceded for the transgressors.”*

Isa.

53:12

This is what selfless love is like. That is God’s disposition towards you!



### 3) Because Selfless Love Describes What God Has Done For Fallen Man.

*“In this is **love**, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins  
1 John 4:10*

*“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”  
Rom. 5:8*

### 4) Because Selfless Love Of Others Describes What God Wants US To Do.

In one sense, this is all you really need to know about the Christian life. There are 613 Old Testament commands. Jesus said these are all summed up in loving God and others rather than living for yourself.

*“And He said to him, **“You shall love the LORD your God with ALL your heart, and with ALL your soul, and with ALL your mind.”** This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, **‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’**” *“On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”  
Matt. 22:37-40**

*“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

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

***Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”** 1 John 4:7-11*

*“Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.**”  
John 15:9-13*

So, in whatever we face in life in the future, in whatever hardships and circumstances we may face in the months and years ahead – how does our God want us to live? He wants us to live for others. Who are these others? God is clear about this and the answer is the subject of Study Units 5-9.

## **UNIT 2 STUDY SESSION #1:**

In preparation for the group study of Selfless Love Of Others, read and study the preceding material and then complete the following self - evaluation.

### **Evaluating My Selfless Love Of Others**

1. I am living my life for God...  
\_\_\_\_\_ Completely. For me to live is Christ. I am and will do whatever He asks.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am a good Christian, above average in self-denial for Him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am a lukewarm Christian. God has me, as long as it does not cost too much.
2. I am living for my family: \_\_\_yes,\_\_\_ doing well \_\_\_ok\_\_\_ no. The issues and variables \_\_\_\_\_
3. I am living for my church family: \_\_\_yes, I love them\_\_\_ not much\_\_\_ I should be doing more\_\_\_ other things have a greater priority that my church.
4. I am living for some who are lost: \_\_\_yes\_\_\_ consistently \_\_\_some\_\_\_ no.
5. I am living for my enemies: \_\_\_no\_\_\_ a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I love them.

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. How hard is it to love others like this, living for them and not yourself?
2. Who, in your life, has been the best example of living for others in self-denial?
3. Living for others as described in the study is a life long battle. Why is this so? Can you describe your battles? What are the “keys” to success?
4. Two different words were used by Peter and Jesus after the resurrection (see John 21:15-17) and translated “love”. What is being revealed here for us?
5. How do I know who to give my life for?
6. What is the “balance” between patiently enduring suffering or wrongs for a season, and confronting sin. Are both “loving”?

### **Prayer Together**

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

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

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

1. Identify the WEAKEST area in your life regarding who you are living for (of the 5 addressed in the evaluation) and ask the Lord to show you what to do to give more of your life to them this week. (see Phil. 2:3-5) Start a journal.
2. Set aside time this week to pray for 1 hour a day for:
  1. Your family
  2. Your church family
  3. All the saints in the world (Eph. 6:18)
  4. Some of the lost souls in your spheres of life
  5. Your enemies, past and present (Lk. 6:27-28)

Keep a journal of who and what.

3. Write 7 letters (or make 7 calls) this week to thank and bless those who have given much of their life to you.
4. Consider the following story and commit to apply it, as you are led, regarding your worst “enemies”.

“I know a mature, others oriented man of God who had been opposed by a brother who had done him much harm. I was with him one day when he was asked to share his feelings about this brother by someone who had heard what he had done.

His wonderful response was: ‘Well, he (the one who had wronged him), he has no idea what a blessing he has been to me.’ That was all he said, smiling.”

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #2**

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

### **Prayer Together**

## STUDY UNIT 3

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

### THE BLESSINGS OF BEING BUFFETED

I wonder if, when some of Paul's friends were able to visit him in that last Roman prison, treating some of his wounds, encouraging him in his suffering, and they offered to pray for him and ask God to deliver him from all that he was suffering, that he would have said, ***"Oh please NO!! Don't ask for that! All of this is good. I am thankful to God for it. I count it all joy to be here in this cell, chained to these guards, expecting my death. Please don't ask God to heal my wounds and get me out of here! Please no, don't do that!"***

How could we even think this is a possibility? Well, because of 1) what Paul himself said about why we suffer as Christians, and 2) because of what he said about his own suffering. One of his **first letters** that we have in the New Testament was written 14 years after he was afflicted with some physical problem, which, it seems, God never removed. Notice his attitude toward it after 14 years.

*"...Fourteen years ago...to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.*

*And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for (My) power is perfected in (your) weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore **I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.**"*  
2 Cor. 12:2-10

We also have his **last letter** which was written to Timothy in his last imprisonment, just prior to his execution, exhorting Timothy to follow his example as he served Christ:

*"Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but **join with me in suffering for the gospel** according to the power of God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His power....*

*For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."*  
2 Tim. 1:8-12

## WHY IS SUFFERING A BLESSING FOR A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?

### 1. Because Christ said it is

*"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me."* Matt. 5:10-12

*"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."* Luke 14:27

### 2. Because those who respond to it well, in a way that pleases God, will receive a reward

*"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

### 3. Because without trials and suffering we do not go on to maturity in Christ which requires that we learn to deny our own self-interests and even our life—for others

*"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

*"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*

**4. Because without experiencing “offenses and hurts” and responding to them correctly, we cannot help others through their hard things in life.**

*“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*

**5. Because without learning to suffer for others as Christ did, in self-denial, even for our enemies, we are not the light that God wants us to be in this dark, selfish world.**

*"Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; and you shall even be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.*

*But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved....*

*What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell....*

*Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword....And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”*  
*Matt. 10:16-38*

*“Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*

*And not only this, **but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because **the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*****  
*Rom. 5:1-5*

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house.*

*"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Matt. 5:14-16

## IS ALL SUFFERING THEN GOOD?

No. God is clear about this. We are to avoid suffering for doing what He considers wrong, while offering ourselves to Him to suffer for doing what He considers right.

*"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....*

*...Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."* 1 Pet. 4:15-19

## WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES IF OUR RESPONSES TO SUFFERING ARE POOR?

### 1. The danger of becoming a "spiritual coward."

When Timothy began to face opposition and its associated suffering while serving Christ, it appears that Paul was concerned that **he was in danger of becoming a "spiritual coward."** He begins his letter with the following, and the exhortation to accept suffering rather than avoid it continued through the letter.

*"For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God."* 2 Tim. 1:7-8

### 2. Bitterness toward God and others is common.

*"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

Giving someone who has hurt or wronged us what they deserve is the natural way of life for men. Seeking to see that this happens is what we naturally want and seek. But giving us the OPPOSITE of what we deserve is what God through Christ has given us. Now He wants us to do the same.

*"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."***  
*Luke 6:27-35*

Suffering at the hands of another person(s), is an OPPORTUNITY to respond this way. When we reject this opportunity, or are unable to use it because we are not availing ourselves of God's grace to do so, we resent the offense(s) and anger and bitterness dominates our soul.

## **HOW DOES SUFFERING AS A CHRISTIAN RELATE TO BEING REWARDED BY GOD ?**

*"**Blessed are you** when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, **for your reward in heaven is great.**"*  
*Matt. 5:11-12*

*"But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but **whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,** and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*  
*Matt. 20:25-28*

*"But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but **the greatest of these is love.**"*  
*1 Cor. 13:13*



## **UNIT 3 STUDY SESSION #1:**

### **Evaluating My Responses To Suffering**

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

1. I am willing to suffer in the service of my Lord. \_\_\_\_ Yes, willingly \_\_\_\_ It depends
2. Contentment in the Lord, where I am and in what I face, describes me:  
\_\_\_\_ Well \_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_ No
3. I am fighting the good fight, fulfilling my ministry, finishing my course as it gets harder and harder: \_\_\_\_ Better and Better \_\_\_\_ OK \_\_\_\_ Poorly
4. I have been wounded. It has made me \_\_\_\_ Stronger \_\_\_\_ Weaker \_\_\_\_ I Quit
5. Joy, when I encounter various trials, and thankfulness as I endure them, describes me:  
\_\_\_\_ Well \_\_\_\_ Somewhat \_\_\_\_ Not at all

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. This study emphasized the idea that suffering in life, as a Christian, can be a blessing to us. It contends that maturity for a Christian requires suffering. What are your thoughts and questions about this?
2. If you have faced hard things since becoming a Christian, how have they been used of God in your life and others? What have you learned? What have you seen and learned from others?
3. God never gave Job an answer as to why all the things he suffered occurred. What is there to learn from this?
4. How do I understand the verses that promise me prosperity if I do what pleases God, and the contrasting declarations of Scripture in this study that I will suffer tribulation if I serve Christ? (e.g. Prov. 21:21 and 22:4 vs. 1 Thess. 1:6 and 2:14)
5. 1 Cor. 10:13 states that God will not allow us to be tested beyond what we are able. How does this work? Does this mean that every Christian will always pass all of his tests? Does it mean that our tests will lessen or stop at some point?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 3 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Think through your life and list the major offenses and wrongs others have committed against you, physical and relational things you have suffered, and other bad things that have occurred. Then ask God to show you which of the following He allowed these for:
  - 1) Your own growth in wisdom and character
  - 2) Your need to stop living in your own strength for yourself and for others by His grace
  - 3) Your experience in what others face, so you can “comfort” them.
2. Study 1 Peter this week and summarize Peter’s main points regarding suffering.
3. Study the book of Jonah this week and identify how NOT to respond to suffering. Remember the context. Jonah was being sent to the Ninevites, who had treated Jonah’s people like Hamas treated some on Oct. 6. Or worse.
4. Study 2 Timothy this week and identify what Paul said were the good results of enduring the hard things of being a leader for Christ.
5. Study Psalm 44 this week and note David’s personal responses to suffering as he served God. Identify the principles and apply them as you can.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you have been able to pursue one of the application projects can you share with us about it?

### **Prayer Together**



## STUDY UNIT 4

Heb. 12:1-2 / Rom. 8:28 / John 15:16

### THE PERSPECTIVES WE ALWAYS NEED

If Christianity is not true, then we of all people are to be most pitied (I Cor. 15:19) for we have wasted our short life here expecting better things to come. Rather than sacrifice and live for God and others in self-denial we should be seeking and choosing what is best for us in life.

Praise the Lord that His word is true, and our faith is not vain. Yet, the danger of living like it isn't—living for our own self-interest—is pervasive. So, unless we constantly take every thought captive to the hope that we have in Christ, the cost of living for Christ here, according to His commands, will sidetrack and defeat us.

*“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. **See to it** that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.” Col. 2:6-8*

Let us therefore review the primary truths that God has given us regarding His plans and promises that we must continually impose on our minds and our earthly circumstances.

### THE MAJOR BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES WE ALWAYS NEED

#### 1. The Reason We Are Still Here

If I have trusted in Christ and am saved, why am I still here and not in heaven with my Lord? The bottom-line reason is this: God loves you! **He wants to share His life and saving work with you, along with the glory and rewards that go with it.** Notice how this is stated for us.

*“Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for **your reward in heaven is great**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Matt. 5:11-12*

*“Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body (which is the church) in **filling up that which is lacking in Christ's afflictions.**” Col. 1:24*

Christ is building His church, but He is doing it through us!

*“I will build **My** church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.”*

*Matt 16:18*

But....

*“**The whole body**, being fitted and held together **by that which every joint supplies**, according to the proper working of each individual part, (that includes YOU!) causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*

*Eph 4:15-16*

Furthermore, we are exhorted...

*“**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 through Jesus Christ**, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen*

*1 Pet. 4:10-11*

Jesus declared that He was the light of the world while He was on the earth (John 9:5), but now...

*“**You** are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. **Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**”*

*Matt. 5:14-16*

Why are you still here? To be used of God, who does not need you, but wants to share His saving work of others with you because He loves you. (See also 1 Cor. 15:58, Gal.6:9, Heb. 12:3)

## **2. The Reasons That We Suffer**

There are a number of these that we must remember. We suffer as disciples of Christ because of

- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1) Where We Live         | Gen. 3:17ff   |
| 2) Our Father’s Training | Heb. 12:8     |
| 3) Our Savior’s Work     | Phil. 1:27-30 |
| 4) Our Savior’s Glory    | Phil. 2:1-15  |

These are all important.

But there is another reason that is often not recognized by us until we are a good way down the road to spiritual maturity. Paul clarifies this as he describes his own suffering as an apostle:

*“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*** 2 Cor 1:3-6

A Pastor was devastated by the sudden loss of his wife of 40 years. But, after a few months, he said that, surprisingly, it had enhanced his ministry to others in a way nothing else in his many years of serving Christ had. His sensitivity toward others in their suffering, and his ability to help them, was greater now than it had ever been. He said, holding back tears, that without the loss of his dear wife he would not be as useful as he is now. This is the perspective that Paul is describing above for himself. The affliction he suffered and the comfort he received in it from God was allowed to benefit others!

**So, let us remember** – why do I suffer as I serve Christ? For others. For others. For others. Thank you, Lord, for these hard things.

### **3. The Enabling Grace That We Must Have to Do What God Asks of Us**

The following verses, and many others, remind us that serving God as a disciple of Christ as He has commanded us is not hard...it is impossible in our own strength!

*“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for **every good work.**”* 2 Cor. 9:8

*“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

*“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

*“I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**”* Phil. 4:12-13

**So let us remember** – by God’s enabling grace I can do all that He has prepared for me to do.

#### **4. The Enemies That We Face Every Day – And Must Resist**

We face 4 primary enemies in our work for Christ here, in this fallen world, awaiting His return. They are:

##### **1) Our Adversary, Satan and the fallen angels**

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to **stand firm against the schemes of the devil**. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”* Eph. 6:10-13

##### **2) Our Own Flesh, Our Fallen Nature**

*“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

##### **3) Our Fallen World, With Its Material, Sensual, And Relational Temptations**

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

##### **4) False Teachers and False Brethren in The Church**

*“There will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words.”* 2 Pet. 2:1-3

But....

*“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you **contend earnestly for the faith** which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, ungodly persons... who turn the grace of God into licentiousness.”* Jude 3-4

**So let us remember** – to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ, put to death the deeds of our flesh, contend earnestly for the faith, and to flee from the temptations of the world.

## 5. God's Providential Rule and Overrule

*“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.”* Rom. 8:28

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

God never moves without purpose or plan  
When trying His servant and molding a man  
Give thanks to the Lord though your testing seems long  
In darkness He giveth a song

O Rejoice in the Lord  
He makes no mistake  
He knoweth the end of each path that I take  
For when I am tried  
And purified  
I shall come forth as gold

I could not see through the shadows ahead  
So I looked at the cross of my Savior instead  
I bowed to the will of the Master that day  
Then peace came and tears fled away

Now I can see testing comes from above  
God strengthens His children and purges in love  
My Father knows best, and I trust in His care  
Through purging more fruit I will bear

Ron Hamilton

**So let us remember** – that God takes the grievous things that come as we serve Him and turns them by His power into glory for Himself and those He loves. You.

## 6. Our Future Rewards and Exaltation

All Christians will stand at the Judgement Seat or Bema of Christ to give an account of their works for their Lord. (Eph. 2:10) This judgement is not to determine whether a person goes to heaven or hell. It is to reward them (or not) for their life as Christ's disciple. Christians are equally secure in Christ and have eternal life. The rewards given out at the Bema are only for those who already have eternal life. Some Christians will be rewarded at the Bema Seat for loving and serving their Savior well, some will suffer loss. This study clarifies why.



These rewards are described in Scripture as **crowns**, and five types of them are noted that will be given to various ones of the saints for their faithful service to our Lord.

### 1. The VICTOR'S CROWN

*“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable **crown**, but we **an imperishable one**. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim.”* 1 Cor. 9:24-27

This crown is to be given to those believers who have **lived a life of diligent self-control and perseverance** in serving Christ.

### 2. The CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

*“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me **the crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”* 2 Tim. 4:7-8

This crown is to be awarded to those who have **looked fervently for our Lord's coming** and have lived a life of perseverance in faithful service to Him.

### 3. The CROWN OF LIFE

*“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive **the crown of life**, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”* James 1:12

This crown is for those who **have suffered persecution for our Lord and triumphed over it, and for the many who have been martyred for their faith.**

### 4. The CROWN OF LIVING FOR AND REJOICING ABOUT OTHERS

*“But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while— in person, not in spirit— were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. For we wanted to come to you— I, Paul, more than once— and yet Satan thwarted us.*

*For who is our hope or joy or **crown of exultation**? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.”* 1 Thess. 2:17-20

This crown will be given to those who have **pursued and led others to Christ and disciplined others to maturity.** (See also Col. 2:1-2, Phil. 1:8, 23-27, 4:1)

## 5. The CROWN OF GLORY

*“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.” 1 Pet. 5:1-4*

This crown is for **faithful Christian leaders, Pastors, teachers, and elders.**

**So, let us remember** – the promises of what is to come when our work for the Lord is finished.

### **MY ALWAYS NEEDED PERSPECTIVES SUMMARY**

1. Why am I still here? **God is sharing His life and work with me.**
2. Why do I suffer serving my Lord? **Others. My suffering is controlled by God and is designed to help me die to self and live for others.**
3. Can I live the Christian life in my own strength? No, but...**God gives me enabling grace for all He asks.**
4. I face invisible enemies. **Resisting, contending, avoiding, and abiding, in my walk, by the Word, and in the Spirit are necessary.**
5. God turns every grievous thing into glory for Himself and those He loves.
6. Is there hope for better things? O yes. **It is called Heaven. Come quickly Lord Jesus.**

## UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group discussion, read and study the preceding material and then complete the following self evaluation.

### Evaluating My Need Of God's Perspective

1. When I face an issue in life or have to make a decision, I seek God's opinion in the matter, using His Word or the principles He has given in His Word:  
 Usually  
 Always  
 Not Very Much  
 Hardly Ever
2. There are 6 reasons given in the study as to why God allows or brings suffering to a Christian. As I compare my **responses** to my own hurts and trials, I would give myself an overall grade of:  
 Good Job – well done in the past year  
 OK, but not great  
 Sometimes good, sometimes not so good  
 Not so good yet
3. The Christian life is a **relationship** with the indwelling Holy Spirit, who I cannot see, but who I am told works God's will for me, in me, and through me. I would rate my **DEPENDENCE** on the Holy Spirit in living my life as:  
 Intimate  
 Good Sometimes  
 Not much when the going gets tough  
 Distant  
 Not relevant
4. I am aware that Satan's common method of attack is to bring a thought to my mind that is a lie, deceptively disguised as a good thought. I would rate my "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" as:  
 Good  
 Ok  
 Poor
5. When I face something that is wrong, very hurtful, and even shocking that God would allow it to happen, I remember Romans 8:28 and thank Him that He will use it for my good:  
 Always  
 Eventually  
 Weakly  
 I don't, I am bitter

## **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. If the method of living the Christian life is “getting God’s perspective on a matter and imposing it on your soul and your circumstances”, how do we 1) go about getting God’s perspective? And how do we 2) then “impose” it on ourselves and our circumstances?
2. Now abide faith, hope, and love. (1 Cor. 13:13) What is our “hope” and how does it help us live for Christ?
3. What happens to a Christian who lives without seeking and heeding God’s perspectives?
4. What responsibilities do I have to help other Christians see God’s perspectives? Who am I responsible for in this regard? Practically, how can I help another person in this regard?
5. If a Christian forgets (or never really learns) why he or she is still here, facing their struggles in life, what will be the results? Has this happened to you?

## **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 4 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Go to the “My Always Needed Perspectives Summary” (page 33) at the end of this unit and choose one of the 5 Perspectives. Apply it every day this week to what you face. Be prepared to share what happened.
2. The Hymn in the section on “God’s Providential Rule and Overrule” was written by Ron Hamilton. He lost an eye as a young man and suffered physically in his last years. Find the music for this Hymn and sing it twice a day this study week. Apply it to yourself and praise the Lord. Memorize it if you can.
3. Pick one of the 4 Enemies mentioned, study the commands regarding how to respond to them, and being conscious of this battle all week, keep a journal of what you did.
4. Consider the following story and prepare your mind and heart to apply it regarding your worst “enemies.” Apply it.

“I know a mature, others oriented man of God who had been opposed by a Christian brother who had done him much harm. I was with him one day when he was asked to share his feelings about this brother by someone who had heard what had happened. His wonderful response was: “**Well he** (*the one who had wronged him*), **he has no idea what a blessing he has been to me.**” That was all he said, smiling.

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #2**

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

### **Prayer Together**

## STUDY UNIT 5

Mt. 16:24 / Rom. 12:1-2 / Rom. 6:13-20 / John 12:24-26

### THE FIRST AND FOREMOST COMMANDMENT

Why do we live for others as Christians? Why do we live our lives, not for ourselves, but for others in self-denial? Because God has commanded us to do this.

*“This commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.”*  
*1 John 4:21*

But, unless we are choosing to live our life for God, we will not be choosing to give our precious life to others. Unless we are choosing to love our God with all of our heart, we will not be choosing to do what He asks of us. This is why Jesus spoke of the greatest commandment from God – and then the second:

*“And one of the scribes came and...asked Him, ‘What commandment is the foremost of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘**The foremost is, ...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.**’*  
*“The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*      *Mark 12:28-31*

The OTHERS we are to love, the ones that God has chosen for us to give our life to (John 15:16), are the subject of the study units that follow (6 thru 10). But before we address these, let us ask...

### HOW DO WE PRACTICALLY LOVE GOD?

with all of our heart, and with all of our soul,  
and with all of our mind, and with all of our strength?

Fallen men cannot do this—they live for themselves. Christians can do this—but they need to “put to death” the desires of their “old man” nature on an ongoing basis and then, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, they can. We can do all the things God asks of us through Him who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

No Christian does this 100% of the time, and many Christians remain as “babies” in Christ. Like most of the Corinthian church, they are not “spiritual” in their walk. They mostly or often “walk in the flesh” like an unsaved man does and not “in the Spirit” when the going gets tough.

So, even though we may correctly understand the theology of these truths, how do we **PRACTICALLY** keep this foremost commandment to love God? What are we instructed to do?

There are **three things we must do, three things that self-denying love for God will do.**

# 1. WE MUST UNCONDITIONALLY SURRENDER OUR LIFE AND WILL TO GOD

Christ is our perfect example of this, in His coming, His life, and His death:

*"For **I have come** down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 6:38

*"**I can do nothing on My own initiative.** As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."* John 5:30

*"And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "**My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.**"* Matt. 26:39

After Our Lord perfectly illustrated all that man should be and do, we find that this total surrender of life and will is what He called us to do:

*"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. 16:24-25

*"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and consecrated sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service of worship.**"* Rom. 12:1

The surrender of our life and will to God is an **ongoing, growing, and tested** aspect of our relationship with Him. As a Christian begins to learn God's opinions and instructions, he is regularly faced with changing the way he lives. Enemies are to be forgiven and loved. Wedding vows are to be honored. Others are to become increasingly more important than ourselves, which is the primary focus of these studies. Observe the ongoing nature of surrendering our will to God in the following statements and commands:

*"For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."* Eph. 5:8-10

*"If we (who are saved) confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9

*"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

## Why Is Unconditional Surrender of Our Life to God Essential?

- It is the prerequisite to receiving God's plans for your life. (see James 1:5-8)
- Without it we are conformed to the world and grow useless. (see Heb. 12:1-16)
- It is required for the spiritual power to do what God asks of us. (see 2 Cor. 12:7-10)
- Without it we will not proceed onward to give our lives to others, because this is what God asks of those who surrender their lives to Him. (see 1 John 4:20-21)

Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid?  
Your heart does the Spirit control?  
You can only be blest,  
And have peace and sweet rest,  
As you yield Him your body and soul.

Would you walk with the Lord,  
In the light of His word,  
And have peace and contentment alway?  
You must do His sweet will,  
To be free from all ill,  
On the altar your all you must lay.

Oh, we never can know  
What the Lord will bestow  
Of the blessings for which we have prayed,  
Till our body and soul  
He doth fully control,  
And our all on the altar is laid.

Elisha Hoffman

## 2. WE MUST LEARN TO THINK AND LIVE BIBLICALLY

Biblical thinking is to view life from God's perspective (Col. 2:6-8). It is to know what God thinks about a subject, an issue, or a decision we face (2 Tim. 2:15). It changes the decisions we make in life (1 Cor. 5:1-7), and determines our usefulness, effectiveness, and fruitfulness for the Lord (2 Tim. 2:21, Heb. 12:1, John 15:7-8).

*"The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but **whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.** By this we know that we are in Him."* 1 John 2:4-5



## Why Is It Essential for a Christian to Think and Live Biblically?

- **Only biblical thinking and living enables us to love God.** We cannot worship God in spirit and in truth unless we have learned the truths of His word.

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father."*  
John 14:21

- **Only biblical thinking and living enables us to grow spiritually.**

*"Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."*  
1 Pet. 2:2

- **Only biblical thinking transforms us.** Making the principles of His Word absolute transforms our decisions, our relationships, our circumstances, and our soul.

*"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

- **Only biblical thinking and living makes us useful to God.**

*"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth...Therefore, **if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.**"*  
2 Tim. 2:15-21

- **Only applying biblical truths** accomplishes these things. We must be willing to change our associations, our activities, and overcome our laziness and indifference. If you love God you will...

See to it! (Col. 2:8)

Guard! (2 Tim. 1:14)

Set your mind! (Col. 3:2)

Persevere! (1 Tim. 4:16)

Be steadfast and immovable! (1 Cor. 15:58)

Press on! (Phil. 3:12-14)

Run with endurance! (Heb. 12:1)

### 3. WE MUST ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS AND GIVE OUR LIFE TO THEM

The third thing that self-denying love for God will do, because He has commanded this of us, is to Assume Responsibility for Others—those that God has prepared for us to give our life to. Christ Himself is our example of course. The Father gave Him a detailed list of those He wanted Him to assume responsibility for and He fulfilled this task, giving His life to them, because He loved the Father.

*"I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.*

*I manifested Thy name **to the men whom Thou gavest Me** out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word... "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and **I guarded them**, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled... And the glory which Thou hast given Me **I have given to them**; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, **that they may be perfected in unity**, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me." John 17:4-23*

#### What Are the Primary Aspects of Assuming Responsibility for Others?

- God wants us to ACCEPT OTHERS – just as He has accepted us.

*"Wherefore, **accept one another**, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God."*  
Rom. 15:7

*"Now **accept the one who is weak in faith.**"* Rom. 14:1

One of the wonderful examples of this is when Barnabas was sent to assume responsibility for the spiritual growth of the pagan Gentiles in Antioch.

*"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...he... 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.*

*And then he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers."* Acts 11:22-26

- God wants us to SERVE OTHERS – giving our life to them.

*“But now, I am going to Jerusalem **serv**ing the saints.” Rom. 15:25*

Meeting practical, physical needs is the emphasis of serving. The noun form of this word is translated “deacon”, one who serves the needs of the church in a practical, often physical way. The first deacons assumed responsibility for organizing, preparing, and serving the meals for thousands of new believers remaining in Jerusalem after Pentecost (see Acts 6:2-3). Serving takes many forms, but it has as its motivating force the assumption of responsibility for tasks that meet needs **for others**.

- God wants us to ADMONISH OTHERS – for their good.

*“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus.... Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock.... Therefore be on the alert, **remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.**” Acts 20:24-31*

The Greek word we translate “admonish” means “to bring to mind” or “to cause someone to be mindful of something.” Consider the following story:

“Periodically I go to the local grocery or variety store where I often observe all manner of inappropriate behavior, dress, and speech. Almost always I do NOT take the time to admonish these folks about these things they have chosen to do. However, if I should happen to see one of my children or church members so engaged, I would surely speak to them privately, or if they were a child or a woman I would probably speak to their parents or ask my wife how to address the matter. However I would do it, I would be motivated to encourage them to love God and please Him in all that they do.”

Why would I do this for some and not for others? I have assumed responsibility for some and not for others. We have a heart for those we have a sense of responsibility for. Otherwise, we do not make the effort.

- God wants us to BUILD UP OTHERS – blessing them.

*“I **commend** to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea; that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well.” Rom. 16:1-2*

These verses begin an entire chapter where Paul mentions by name 29 individuals and groups. He is verbalizing his delight in them, their good work for others, and their value to himself and to God. The very act of commendation establishes that they are special, important, and loved. We all need to know we are loved and accepted and valued, that our efforts are pleasing to God, and that our lives matter. Paul assumed responsibility to express these very things to his spiritual children. Who is going to verbally commend, build up, and bless your children today? Your husband or wife? Your friend? Your brother or sister at church? Whose responsibility is it?

## **Review And Summary**

So, how do we practically keep this foremost commandment to love God? What are we instructed to do? The three things we must do, the three things that self-denying love for God will do are:

- 1. WE MUST UNCONDITIONALLY SURRENDER OUR LIFE AND WILL TO GOD**
- 2. WE MUST LEARN TO THINK AND LIVE BIBLICALLY**
- 3. WE MUST ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHERS AND LIVE FOR THEM**

## **UNIT 5 STUDY SESSION #1:**

In preparation for the group study, read and study the above and then complete the following self – evaluation.

### **Evaluating How Well I Am Loving God**

#### **1. The Surrender of My Life and Will to God**

- I begin each day by surrendering my will to God’s will for my life.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No
- During communion I surrender any area the Lord has revealed concerning His will. I confess my willful sins and ask God for His forgiveness.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ Communion does not mean this to me.
- The battle for me regarding surrendering to God’s will is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I purpose to yield this area. \_\_\_\_\_ Not now      (see 2 Chron. 16:9)

#### **2. How Well I Have Built My Life Around the Principles of His Word**

- I always seek to understand what the Bible says on an issue.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ Except when I want to do it my way
- I have daily times in God’s Word.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ Often      \_\_\_\_\_ Only really when I need help
- The last extended time I had with God, focused on His mind and will was:  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. The Extent to Which I Am Assuming Responsibility for Others

- I believe that the following people are my personal responsibility and I am giving my life to them in self-denial. I am living for them, it is the Lord's will and direction.  
\_\_\_\_\_ my spouse \_\_\_\_\_ my children \_\_\_\_\_ the members of my church  
\_\_\_\_\_ I pray regularly for the following unsaved people \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- I am currently investing myself in discipling the following people:  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. The study proposed that there are three practical "to dos" involved in loving God in self-denial. What are these three? Do you agree that this is what God wants us to do?
2. Which of these three aspects of living life for God do you find the most challenging. Why?
3. What has loving God cost you so far?
4. Who assumed some responsibility for you spiritually?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 5 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Begin each day this week by reading the hymn in the study (Is Your All on The Altar) and then:  
Commit yourself anew to the Lord, then  
Thank Him for the hard things you face, then  
Pray for those He wants you to love and brings to mind, then  
Ask Him to show you what He wants from you today
2. 22 passages of God's Word are quoted in this study. Identify those in your weakest area of the study and, beginning there, memorize as many of these passages as you can this week.
3. God has a plan for your life and work for Him – regarding others (John 15:16, Eph. 2:10, 2 Pet. 1:4-10). Have a planning session with the Lord and:
  - 1) identify the people He is leading you to assume responsibility for in some regard (or continue to), and
  - 2) clarify and write out a plan to begin accomplishing this for the next few months.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you were able to pursue one of the projects can you share how it went?

### **Prayer Together**

## Introduction To Study Units 6,7, and 8

We have covered in the first 5 studies the opposition and persecution that is coming for committed Christians, the cost that this may entail, and the response from mature Christians that God expects—selfless love of others. Our next 3 Studies address these “others” and how we are to love them in Christ’s name.

God has called us to be part of **His church** and help build it; He has placed us in **families** of His choosing; and He has called us to give our lives in proclaiming the gospel in word and deed to **a lost world**, some of whom may become our **enemies**. We are called to love some in each group.

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

## STUDY UNIT 6

John 13:34 / 1 John 2:7-8, 3:2-3 / 1 Pet. 4:10

### LOVING MY CHURCH FAMILY

Do you love the members of your church? Are you living your life for them rather than for yourself? Unless you are, you are not obeying your Lord and are not pleasing Him.

*“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 shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have **love for one another**.”*  
John 13:34-35

- **The PRIORITY of this command to love your church family in self-denial**

Many seemingly mature Christians are self-oriented when it comes to church activities. They come, in some degree, to get. They are living, to some degree, for themselves, and not for their church family. Or, they may be standing against the humanism of our day and immaturity or compromises in the church, but not as much for the other members. They may love the Lord and His Word, but have little for the other members.

To dwell above with saints we love,  
Oh that will be glory.  
But to live below with saints we know,  
Well, that’s another story

So, Church “hoppers” are not really rare. They come and stay, and often participate and help, but when they aren’t getting what they want and feel they need, they leave for better pastures. Their “I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine” ways were addressed by our Lord.

*“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.”*  
Luke 6:32-33

Let us take note that the FIRST SUBJECT addressed in Romans 12-16, the application section of the epistle, involves **our membership in the church** God is building and our thinking about it. It is the first thing God addresses to us regarding what He wants us to do for Him.



*“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship... For through the grace given to me **I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think**; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.*

*For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so **we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**”* Rom. 12:1-5

In other words, think of yourself as a dependent and needed member of the church that God is building. This FIRST PRIORITY is an exhortation to think of ourselves AS A MEMBER, and not just as being an individual Christian serving Christ. Without this understanding and commitment to it, without being a solid member, we miss our greatest usefulness and our own necessary help in serving Christ that comes from the other members in the church.

*“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. **And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."**”* 1 Cor. 12:18-21

- **The PRINCIPLES of being a self-denying, others oriented, member**

The following principles are all found in the New Testament instructions for us regarding being a useful and mature member. Only one passage is quoted, but there are other commands and illustrations that can be found for each.

1. Accepting the church God desires you to be in with a “whole heart”.

*“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”* 1 Cor 12:18

2. Having right attitudes and responses to the church leadership.

*“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

3. Employing your God given gift to serve the other members and church leaders.

*“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

4. Not forsaking your assembling together to fellowship and worship.

*“Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.”* Heb 10:24-25

5. Growing in the faith to make you useful as a member.

*“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

6. Assuming responsibility for those “others” that God has chosen for you.

*“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

- **The BATTLES we face together, as members, “in the midst”**

1. **There is a unity to be preserved, a working together that is necessary for building Christ’s church.**

*“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to **walk in a manner worthy** of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, **being diligent to preserve the unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*  
Eph 4:1-3

How can there be unity with such different viewpoints, personalities, gifts, maturity, backgrounds, experiences, opinions, life struggles, languages, and status? We are incapable of producing this unity that is essential to the life of the church. But notice the “of the Spirit” in the above verse. Only the Spirit of God can do this. But we are given the responsibility, by His enabling grace, to preserve and maintain it by our self-denying love of the brethren.

*“The whole body, **being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies**, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”*  
Eph 4:16

*“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to **excel still more.**”*  
1 Thess 4:9-10

**2. There is a gospel to be contended for, together.**

*“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you (plural) that you are standing firm in one spirit, **with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel**; in no way alarmed by your opponents.”*  
Phil 1:27-28

**3. There are many “one anothers” to be attained, by the Spirit’s work in us and through us.**

Actually, there are 248 occurrences of “one another” in Scripture. Here are only a few:

*“Be kind to **one another**, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”*  
Eph 4:32

*“Be devoted to **one another**.”*  
Rom 12:10

*“Accept **one another**, just as Christ also accepted us.”*  
Rom 15:7

*“So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of **one another**.”*  
Rom 14:19

And 244 more.

**4. There are challenges that require that we “take up our cross” and follow our Lord’s calling to love some that are almost always in our church. Enabling grace is required—and given, to respond in love to these challenging people.**

1. To love weak, immature members by His grace.

*“Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.... But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.... Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way.... So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”*

Rom. 14:1-19

2. To love poor church leaders by His grace.

*“But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”*  
1 Thess 5:12-13

## The CONSEQUENCES of not being a mature self-denying member

### 1. We become “an eye without hands”.

*“But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;* *1 Cor 12:20-22*

### 2. We lack adequate protection from our Adversary.

*“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*

### 3. The church we should be helping is weakened by our inaction or absence.

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

### 4. We are rather useless and unfruitful, blind and shortsighted.

*“Add to your faith...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.”* *2 Pet 1:7-9*

*“You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before men **in such a way** (especially as a mature, self-denying member) that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”* *Matt 5:14-16*

## UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #1:

In preparation for the group meeting read and study the preceding material and then complete the following self - evaluation.

### Evaluating My Selfless Love For My Church Family

1. Living My Life for the Members of My Church Is My Highest Priority in Serving God

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes  
\_\_\_\_\_ No  
\_\_\_\_\_ My Family Comes First

2. I focus a lot on maintaining the unity amongst us at church. I work hard at it.

\_\_\_\_\_ Certainly. I lead in this matter.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am not a problem, but trying to fix damaged relationships is not what I do.  
\_\_\_\_\_ I am a cause of disunity in some manner.

3. In looking at the section on the principles of being a self-denying, others oriented member, I would say regarding my maturity in the principles identified is:

\_\_\_\_\_ Good  
\_\_\_\_\_ Could be better  
\_\_\_\_\_ Could be much better  
\_\_\_\_\_ Poor

4. Considering the 4 CONSEQUENCES identified when we are not mature as a self-denying member, I would rate myself or my church in this area as:

	#1.	#2.	#3.	#4.
Not a problem:	_____	_____	_____	_____
A minor problem:	_____	_____	_____	_____
A growing issue:	_____	_____	_____	_____
A major problem:	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. When I face something that is wrong, very hurtful, and even shocking that God would allow it to happen, I remember Romans 8:28 and thank Him that He will use it for my good:

\_\_\_\_\_ Always  
\_\_\_\_\_ Eventually  
\_\_\_\_\_ Weakly  
\_\_\_\_\_ I don't, I am bitter

## **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. How do Ephesians 2:10 and John 15:16 help me answer the question of how I know WHO to invest my life in at my church. What else helps?
2. How much of my time and life does God expect me to give to my church family? I work and have family responsibilities. What is expected? How can I know?
3. There seems to be a lot of “ups and downs” to church fellowship and unity, with the “downs” being significant both in occurrences and extent. Is this normal for “good” churches? How does this square with “I will build My church and the gates of hell will not prevail over it.”
4. Acts 2:42 says that the early church did 4 things. They continued 1) in the apostles doctrine, 2) in fellowship, 3) communion (breaking of bread), and 4) prayer. Fellowship is the greek word koinonia and it means “sharers in common experiences together.” They shared life with one another, far beyond just going to a church service at the same time. Do we, as a church, really do this? Do I?
5. New folks to town, or new Christians who have a lot to learn, and people with a lot of needs relationally, emotionally, and maturity wise – if they come to church, they will be more of a drain of time and energy than we will get back as a church. Some of them will cause energy and time-consuming problems because of their immaturity and lack of love for others. Why would we want these people?

## **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 6 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Apply the four “alls” in Ephesians 6:18 to the “saints” at your church this week. Be sure to get enough sleep.
2. Initiate getting together this week for “fellowship” with at least one other church member (or couple, or family) who is not part of this study group.
3. Read Ray Stedman’s book, *Body Life*.
4. Calculate and compare the hours you invest in the people at your church with the hours you watch media or television every day. Then, increase your hours loving the brethren to exceed the other this week.
5. Perhaps you are worn out trying to live life without much help from the body. Nobody is really giving much to you. Apply the principle below, asking God to demonstrate Himself strong to you, and see what happens.

*"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 6:38

### **Discussion Questions**

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

### **Prayer Together**

## STUDY UNIT 7

Eph. 5:22-6:9 / Col. 3:18-25

### LOVING MY FAMILY

If anything exposes the state of the church in America it is the divorce rate among professing Christians. The numbers are the same as for the population in general. 50% of those who get married get divorced. It is even worse than that, given that another 15% or more just live together, not bothering with marriage commitments. The family, as God designed it, has been rejected just as He has. Children are also perceived to interfere with life, so the birth rate is nearly a fourth of what it was not so long ago. Officially, we have aborted 85 million.

The complexities of living for Christ without a solid family to support us are many and hard. Add to this the weaknesses and problems in our compromised churches and we find many of us rebuilding more than building, alone instead of supported.

To what extent are you living for yourself and not for the family God has given you or that He wants you to have and live your life for?

#### The Biblical Principles of Selfless Love of Others Applied to Family

##### 1. Loving My Spouse

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”*

*“Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord....” Eph. 5:22-33*

Of all the wonders of God’s creation, we find the marriage relationship between a man and a woman to take center stage in His revelation to us.

*“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...and God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them....For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” Gen. 1:26-27, 2:24*

Marriage between a man and a woman was designed to be a relationship of perfect love in which the parties lived for one another. Like God.

*“I... ask... that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; ...And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one.” John 17:20-22*



*"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."*  
John 6:38

*"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever, that is the Holy Spirit."*

*"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him."*  
John 14:16-21

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

## **2. Loving My Children**

*"And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth."*  
Gen. 1:28

*"Behold, children are a gift of the LORD; The fruit of the womb is a reward.... How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."*  
Psalm 127:3-4

*"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."*  
Eph. 6:4

*"Train up a child in the way he should go. Even when he is old he will not depart from it."*  
Prov. 22:6

We are to give our lives to the children that God gives us. Doing this as God wants will take much of it. But if we love them as God wants, He will be very pleased.

## **3. Loving My Family and Others in My Singleness**

Paul is very clear that, in regard to how much of our life we can give to influencing others for Christ, singleness is superior to marriage. If marriage is not what God has planned for you, you are free to give your life to others in ways that married people cannot and should not.

*"But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.... One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband.*

*And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord."*  
1 Cor. 7:8, 32-35

#### 4. Loving in a Wounded, Broken, or Failed Family

Chances are this is what you face, because biblically solid, Christ focused, loving families are rare today. Oftentimes it is those in our family that hurt us the most, both by being there and not being there. Responding to them with love is life's greatest challenge for many Christians.

*"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."* Luke 6:27-33

How can we turn the hardest things that God has allowed to come into our life into glory for Him? Its "easy" to be a member of a strong Christian family. The battles there are like child's play when compared to the devastation that comes to many. We live in a fallen world that loves itself and could care less about loving others.

*"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom **every family** in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and **that you, being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you **may be filled up to all the fulness of God.**"* Eph 3:14-19

#### 5. Loving My Parents

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth."* Eph 6:1-3

*"Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way...Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy truth, and do not sell it, Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.*

*The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise son will be glad in him. Let your father and your mother be glad, and let her rejoice who gave birth to you. Give me your heart, my son, and let your eyes delight in my ways."* Prov 23:19-26

If we give our heart and life to the Lord to use as He will, He will direct us in the path that He desires regarding loving our parents.

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

## **False Teaching in the Church about Family that has Ruined Many**

Of the many false teachings that are common today in our churches regarding marriage and the family, these three are among the most damaging.

### **False Teaching #1. Family is First and Church is...Optional**

It is all too common for committed Christian families to put their family's interests first and their church family a distant second. They attend church to get, not to give. They are self centered, living for themselves instead of their church family. If the church meets their needs they may go there. If it is not what they want they have no hesitation to leave.

Study Unit 6 (Loving My Church in Self Denial) is placed in order before this Unit because that is the order and priority we find in the New Testament.

### **False Teaching #2. Divorce is Permissible for Really any Cause**

God hates divorce. (Mal. 3:16) Many Christian vows are really "as long as my love for you shall last." Many churches just ignore the issue among their members. Thankfully Jesus doesn't divorce us when we cease being likeable. For better or for worse.

### **False Teaching #3. It Is Ok to Send Your Children to the Humanists for Their Education**

Our educational institutions have put God out and led the way in the collapse of our culture and country. Many Christian parents have said, "I can't afford to take my children out of these schools." Actually, they can't afford not to. Few of even our Christian schools, at all levels, have stood well against the culture and the compromises of the church.

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

## **UNIT 7 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 Love For My Family**

Overall I think God would say: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

As a spouse: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

As a parent: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

In my singleness: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

With the hard things: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

With my parents: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

With the false teaching: \_\_\_ Well done \_\_\_ Needs some work \_\_\_ Not good

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

Family relationships are a complex and life long part of life. Do you have questions or comments on the first section regarding:

1. Loving your spouse and your children?
2. Loving family as a single person?
3. Living in a wounded, broken, or failed family?
4. Loving your parents?

Do you have questions or comments on the second section regarding false teaching:

1. Family vs. church?
2. Divorce and remarriage?
3. Schooling our children?

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 7 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Read *Strengthening Your Marriage* by Dr. Wayne Mack on marriage – or another recommended book on marriage.
2. Read *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp – or another recommended book on raising children for the Lord.
3. If you are a Dad, have devotions every morning and evening with your family.
4. If you are single, make a full list of all of your extended family members and pray for them each day. Send a note or call those you are prompted to.
5. Contact and get counsel from someone at church or a church leader regarding a significant issue of “family” you are facing.
6. If you have an older member of your family that is frail or alone, contact and visit him or her.
7. If you know someone at church that is estranged or separated from their spouse or family, contact and encourage them.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you pursued one of the projects can you share with us about it?

### **Prayer Together**

## STUDY UNIT 8

Matt. 28:18-20 / Lk. 6:27-38 / 1 Pet. 4:1-5:10

### LOVING THE LOST AND OUR ENEMIES

We have already climbed the steep and narrow path of giving our lives to one another. But up higher yet, and only reached by the few, is the top of the mountain of selfless love.

Standing there are the unsaved and your enemies, some who deserve to be punished for what they have done, even to you and yours. We are to carry our cross of self denial up to where they stand, along with gifts for them and even our jewels. We are to speak blessings to them in the sincerity of our heart and live our life for them.

*"And He said to them, **Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.**"*  
Mark 16:15

*"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."*  
Luke 6:27

Jesus loved those who did not love Him. He loved the lost. He loved His enemies. He gave His life in self denial for them. Now He asks us to do the same thing, in His name, for His glory, that the light of His selfless love might shine brightly through us.

*"You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."* Matt. 5:14-16

#### I. Living For the Lost in Self-Denial

*"For the Son of Man has come **to save that which was lost**. It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish"*  
Matt. 18:11

*"Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*  
Matt. 20:26-28

## How Can We Give Our Lives for Those Who Are Lost?

- We could leave everything and go be a missionary to the lost somewhere in the world. That would mean giving up much of our life for others.
- We could provide for the financial support of those who are giving themselves to reach the lost.
- We could diligently pray for the lost in every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

To what extent are we doing this?

## Does Our Church Give of Itself to Reach the Lost?

- Do we have ministries to reach and disciple unsaved people? Are you involved?
- Do we organize mission trips and train church members to go? Have you gone?
- Do we give much financially to reach the lost at home and abroad? How does this compare to what we spend on our own interests and desires?

## II. Living For My Enemies in Self-Denial

*“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them....*

***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.”*** Luke 6:27-35

“In 1567 the King of Spain was a bitter enemy of the Protestant Reformation. His rule is called the Reign of Terror, and his governing council the Bloody Council because it ordered the slaughter of so many Christians. One man was sentenced to die for his biblical faith but managed to escape from prison in the dead of winter.

As he was being pursued by a lone soldier, the man came to a lake whose ice was thin and cracking. Somehow he managed to get safely across, but as soon as he reached the other side he heard his pursuer screaming. The soldier had fallen through the ice and was about to drown. Although he faced recapture, torture, and death – or drowning himself – this man went back across the lake and rescued his enemy. He gave his life for him. He knew he had no other choice if he was to be faithful to His Lord.” (Cyclopedia of Illustrations, 1877, pg. 296)

A recent edition of The Voice of the Martyrs magazine tells this story: “Can you imagine living openly as a Christian in a radical Muslim country and culture today? Here is the story of one Christian who is. God allowed him to hear the gospel and be saved there, where he grew in his faith, hope, and love. He began to live his life for his fellow Christians and Muslims.

And then opposition and persecution began. Not surprisingly, the cost became great. Many hard things happened, but he did not grow timid and stop sharing his faith. But then, he was ambushed and shot multiple times, and was left paralyzed from the waist down.

Who should he live for now – with what is left of his life? Well, he is back in Iraq, having decided to give his life away. He is willing, and expecting, to die. Many are hearing and responding to the gospel because he is. His wheelchair speaks volumes.”

*"But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*

*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' **But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.**"* *Matt. 5:39-45*

### III. Clarifying Some Related and Confusing Truths and Issues

#### 1. Loving an enemy does not mean ignoring or accepting sin.

How we do this is not simple or easy, but we are to both love sinners and hate sin. God is doing this for us. He hates sin, but He loves us. And He wants us to do this for Him, by His power, for others.

Agape love for an enemy, who has sinned against us and hurt us, both forgives him and also declares that his sin is awful and grievously wrong. Only the grace of God enables us to take up our cross and follow Christ in loving sinners – like He does for us.

Our God is characterized by BOTH love and holiness. He defines righteousness (what is right) and unrighteousness (what is wrong). When He told Adam and Eve what was right in the garden and the consequences for doing what He considered wrong (sin), He also told them how serious it was to violate His holiness. They would die spiritually, physically, and eternally. Hell will be filled eternally with unrepentant sinners who are facing the wrath of our God.

However, our God is also characterized by self denying love. So **both** a hatred of sin and a love for sinners are part of His nature. His hatred of sin and the wrath that it evokes shall never wane, but His selfless love sent His Son to die as a substitute for sinful man that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ—and live eternally, being free of His wrath.

*"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."* *John 3:16-17*

#### 2. Do we give our life to just anybody and everybody?

No. God chooses who. God chooses how. God chooses when.

*"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*

*"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and **was led about by the Spirit.**"* *Luke 4:1*



Asking God who to love, how to love them, and how much of our life to give to them is important. We are not able to give our life to everyone. God already has a plan.

*“And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God.... And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.... And departing, they began going about among the villages, preaching the gospel.”*  
Luke 9:2-6

#### **IV. God’s Strategy for Times of Apostasy in the Church and Persecution from the World**

The verse below is among the many instructions and examples found in Scripture that guide us in our responses to the tests and sacrifices that come in such a day as we are facing and the love that is required to be pleasing to God in them. What are we to do in selfless love for the lost and our enemies?

*“I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but **join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God.**”* 2 Tim. 1:6-8

Paul had already taught Timothy over some time about what he had faced well as a disciple. But now he was about to face something new, something he had never really had to deal with. He had done a good job so far – but the things ahead would try his faith and test him beyond anything he had faced. He was becoming timid in sharing His faith in the fear of what it would cost him. He was afraid of sharing the gospel in a culture that hated God.

Where was Paul when he wrote these final words which we have from him? He was in a Roman prison, awaiting his execution. “The time of my departure has come.” (2 Tim 4:6-8)

“I have fulfilled my ministry” You do so as well my son.

“I have finished my course” You finish yours as well my son.

“I have fought the good fight” You go fight your battles well also my son.

“There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord will award to me on that day”

Paul ends this letter to his spiritual child by mentioning two men. Both had been with him for some time, and had come with him to this awful place where the costs of being a committed Christian had increased dramatically. Now, as the going had gotten tough, and with the full possibility that they could also be executed, one of them had taken a different path.

Luke was still there with him, giving his life to serve him and the gospel, even given what this might mean for him, being associated with Paul. But Demas, who had been with him until now, had deserted him, “having loved this present world.” (2 Tim. 4:10-11)

Which one will we be like, as the going gets tough?

## **UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #1:**

In preparation for the group study, read and study the material on loving the lost and our enemies and then complete the following self-evaluation.

### **Evaluating My Own Self Denying Love for the Lost and My Enemies, and the Maturity of My Church Regarding this**

1. My concern for the unsaved and getting the gospel to them is:  
 A dominate focus of my life  
 Important, but is not high on my goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of my time and thoughts  
 Is not what I consider to be my responsibility
  
2. The concern of my church for the unsaved and getting the gospel to them is:  
 A dominate focus of our church life  
 Important, but is not high on our goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of our time and thoughts  
 Is not what we consider to be our responsibility
  
3. My concern for those I consider to be my current enemies is:  
 I really don't have any  
 I have not sought revenge  
 I have given my enemies the opposite of what they deserve \_\_\_Some\_\_\_No  
 I am committed to loving those who persecute me as a Christian in the future
  
4. The concern of my church for our enemies, current and future is:  
 A dominate focus of our church life  
 We have plans on how to respond together  
 Important, but is not high on our goals or to do list  
 Takes up very little of our time and thoughts

### **Discussion Questions For Study Session #1**

1. Perhaps we can discuss the study material section by section.
  - Do you have questions or comments on Section I: Living for the Lost?
  - On Section II: Living for our Enemies?
  - On Section III: Confusing Truths and Issues
  - On Section IV: God's Strategy for Tough Times
  
2. How accurate is the following statement regarding immature Christians:  
"Immature Christians love what they should hate and hate what they should love."

### **Prayer Together**

## **UNIT 8 STUDY SESSION #2:**

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

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

1. Read *Walking His Trail* by Steve Saint, with its many amazing stories of the far-reaching effects of his father's death trying to reach a lost tribe in the jungles of South America.
2. Get some past copies of *The Voice of the Martyrs* magazine and read them.
3. Give one hour a day this week to pray for the lost.
4. Witness to at least three people this week.
5. Write out a list of those who have rejected you in some way for being a Christian and ask the Lord how you can bless them.

### **Discussion Questions**

If you were able to pursue one of the projects this week, can you share with us about it?

### **Prayer Together**