

Discipleship 101

6 lessons in basic Christianity (Part I)



Including in-class discussion and materials for personal study

Grace Evangelical Free Church
Know Jesus Louisville, KY
2012

Grow in Jesus

Go with Jesus

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This material was written by Darin Anderson (Darin@gracelouisville.org) and is available for adaptation and/or duplication for the purposes of Christian ministry or individual spiritual growth, but is not for sale or profit. Other curriculum and resources are available for free download at gracefusion.weebly.com/resources.html

Lesson 1 – It's All About Jesus

Big Idea: *Our ultimate purpose is to magnify the supremacy of Christ:* a.k.a. It's not about me.

Objectives: as a result of this lesson, students will...

- Know – God is most glorified when we most enjoy Him
- Feel – motivated to find their joy in God alone
- Choose – to make a sacrifice showing that Jesus comes first

Introduction: What is the meaning of life?

Everyone wrestles with this question, and there is no simple, easy answer. Trying to find meaning and purpose in the short years we have on earth has puzzled philosophers and the common man for millennia.

➤ **What are some common explanations for the meaning of life?**

Explanation	Worldview
Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die	Hedonism
There is no point	Fatalism
This life is all there is	Materialism
Let's make the world a better place	Utilitarianism
The physical realm is evil, so live for the spiritual	Gnosticism
Your actions affect you now and in your next life	Hinduism (Karma)
Do good things to earn salvation	Religion-ism

➤ **How would you express the Christian view of the meaning of life?**

Discussion: What is the meaning of worship?

In the 1640s, following the Reformation, the Westminster Catechism was written, stating: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." Not a bad statement of the meaning of life. John Piper adapted that to, "The chief end of man is to glorify God **by** enjoying him forever."

- **Why did Piper make that change?** Why does our enjoyment of God glorify him more than anything else?
- **Explain this quote: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."**

What is the best way to honor or praise someone? Words? Sacrificial gifts? Music? Public declarations? Isn't the best way to honor someone much more relational? Sure, when a war hero comes home he appreciates the band, the flowers, the big celebration... But what he really wants is time with his family, the love and attention of his wife and children. And nobody wants empty devotion – words without heart, praise without delight. No wife wants a gift or a note just because "I have to." There is a sort of honor in dutiful obligation, but it is not the highest kind. The highest form of worship is delight: enjoyment, pleasure, satisfaction.

- **What do people delight in today?** What brings people the greatest joy and satisfaction in life?
- **Would you say that seeking enjoyment in these things can become a form of worship? How?**

Ultimately life comes down to a simple choice: to live for myself or to live for God. I can make it seem like I'm living for other people by pursuing a "helping profession" or being a family man, but the truth is that I am seeking my own greatest happiness and satisfaction – and work and family appear to be the best means to that end. Whatever I give myself to, however I seek satisfaction and fulfillment, that is my form of worship.

Bible Focus: Psalm 63

Read the Psalm. Circle in your Bible or write on this page the verbs David uses to describe his pursuit of God (e.g. v. 1 – "I seek you; my soul thirsts for you...").

- **How would you feel if your spouse / boyfriend used those words directed at you?** "I seek you, thirst for you, think of you, praise you, remember you, rejoice in you..."
- **What is the context of this psalm?** When was David writing this? During a happy, prosperous time in his reign as king?

At one of the lowest points of his life, David wrote this poem to express his heart's desire to rejoice in the LORD. He wanted to find his delight and satisfaction in God alone, recognizing that what the world offers is a barren wasteland of treachery and suffering. On the other hand, he did dabble in the pleasures of this world – and his son, Solomon, plunged headlong into everything his eyes could see to desire. But he found it all empty – like chasing after the wind (Eccl. 2:10-11).

God made it very clear in the Law what He wanted from his people: love (Deut. 6:4-6). And He was very specific about what love meant: an inward devotion that led to outward obedience. The external acts – like sacrifices, fasting and ritual worship – were worthless in God's sight when they did not flow from the delight of the heart (Zech. 7:5-6,12). And Jesus reiterated that the Law of Love remains the Greatest Command (Matt. 22:37-38).

So what is the meaning of life? It's all about Jesus! It's all about worshipping God, glorifying Him BY enjoying him, loving him, delighting in him with all of our hearts.

DEFINITION of Worship: to magnify the supremacy of Christ.

This is our ultimate purpose: to magnify the supremacy of Christ. Our devotion to God and delight in Him does not add to his glory – and it is in no way something he needs. All we can do is to magnify the truth of God's majesty and goodness: to make His glory a larger reality in our own hearts and thereby make it more visible to those around us. And what we are drawing attention to is the supremacy of Christ – the fact that He is supreme over everything else in this universe (Col. 1:15-20).

Jesus Christ, as the full expression of God, embodies all the glory, wonder, beauty and wisdom of the Godhead. And we have the unbelievable privilege of having a personal relationship with this very Jesus! We do not need to make an appointment or sit on hold with a secretary – He, himself, is waiting to spend time with us!

Application: How can we magnify the supremacy of Christ this week?

- **What are ways we tend to demonstrate the supremacy (in our hearts and minds) of things other than Christ?**
- **How can you show your heart's desire to delight in the LORD this week?**

- **What is one thing that you would normally do that you could give up this week to show that Jesus is the chief delight of your heart?**
- **Pray for one another to be captured by a vision of the glory of the LORD!**

Scripture Memory Challenge - Psalm 63:1-5

This week, read over this Psalm a few times. Meditate on the truth of these words, let them sink deep into your heart and become your personal prayer. Then try to memorize some or all of the Psalm (e.g. vv. 1-5). Memorizing God's Word helps us better understand key passages and apply them to our hearts and lives. Throughout this course there will be opportunities to memorize key verses and passages related to significant principles and learning points for growing disciples.

Personal Study 1 – It's All About Jesus

All kinds of things crowd into our lives, crying for our attention and devotion: people, education, work, hobbies, sports, recreation, health and fitness, etc. All of these examples are good things, that can become idols in our hearts if they become the main thing we are committed to. There are also bad things – temptations and sins that become addictions and strongholds that can consume even believers for years and years. It is one thing to know that the meaning of life is to glorify God – that it's all about Jesus. It is quite another thing to honestly and fully give Him supremacy in your heart and life. And the reality is that it's a lifelong process and a daily choice to bow, submitting my desires to the One I call my King.

The book of Deuteronomy was called "the little law," because it summarized so well all the laws of Israel. It is some or all of Moses' final speech to the nation of Israel, reminding them of all God had done for them and exhorting them to follow the LORD faithfully in the future. So there is no better place to look to understand the heart of the covenant relationship God wanted with His people (and still wants today).

Read It! Deuteronomy 4:32-40

Study It!

- **What is the point God is making here, through Moses?**

- **What had God done for the people of Israel to this point?**

- **Which of the things that God did, listed in this passage, is most impressive to you? Why?**

Apply It!

- **What are the application points in verses 39-40?**

- **Since the time of Moses, what else has God done to show how totally unique He is compared to all other "gods"?**

- **Write out three things that amaze you about God:**

- **How will you magnify the supremacy of Christ today?**

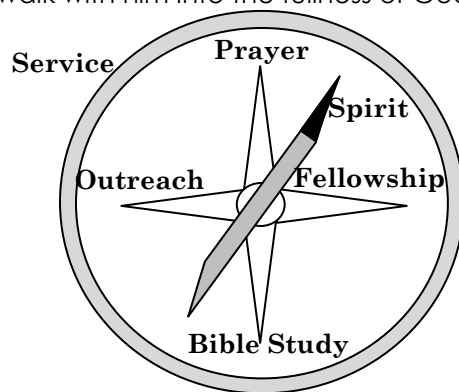
Personal Study 2 – It's All About Jesus

The first step in the discipleship journey is to yield to Jesus as Lord – to recognize Him as your Supreme Ruler. This single decision carries lifelong implications, for my life is no longer my own. Think about Peter and Andrew when Jesus called them to become “fishers of men.” Leaving their boats and nets was their first step of submitting to Jesus as their Rabbi, but for the next couple of years they did not go back to that old way of life because their new job was to follow Jesus!

Let's be clear about something right up front: salvation is a free gift from God that we receive by faith (Eph. 2:8-9). We cannot possibly earn this gift of grace. But trusting in Christ as Savior also means committing to Him as Lord – the two cannot be separated. Jesus is like a lifeboat, and you can only be saved by “getting on board,” and acknowledging Him as the new captain of your life. True saving faith will result in a changed life. Jesus said we would be able to know his disciples by the fruit of their lives (Matt. 7:20). The 5 habits that we will develop through this course are like the habits of a farmer in his fields. He cannot make the crops grow any more than we can save ourselves. But the wise farmer still plows the field, plants the seed, waters the crops and harvests in season. In the same way, these habits cultivate a growing relationship with Christ and help us produce the fruit He desires in our lives.

The 5 Habits

After settling in your heart and life that Jesus has first place, there are five habits every follower of Christ should develop: prayer, Bible Study, fellowship, outreach and service. Think of the first four as the points on a compass: (N) Prayer, how we talk to God; (S) Bible Study, how God talks to us; (E) Fellowship, caring for one another and; (W) Outreach, sharing the love of Christ with the lost. The fifth habit, service, is like the casing of the compass – it should become the defining characteristic of our lives, even as Paul called himself a “servant of Christ Jesus.” The needle of the compass, then, is the Spirit of Christ within us, guiding us as we walk with him into the fullness of God's will for our lives.



Read It! Deuteronomy 5:1-11

Study It!

- **What are the first three commandments about?** How would you sum each of them up?
- **What reason does God give for the second command about making idols?**
- **What does it mean that God is jealous?** What kinds of things make God jealous? Why?

- **What was God's desire for the hearts of his people (see v. 29)?**
-
- **Why did God want the peoples' devotion and obedience (see v. 9 and 29)? For His benefit or their benefit?**

Apply It!

- **What in your life might God be jealous of in terms of the time and attention you give to it?**
- **Pray and ask God to incline your heart to fear Him and keep His commands.**
- **Review Psalm 63 and keep working to memorize it!**

Personal Study 3 – It's All About Jesus!

Fear and jealousy may seem to be negative things to us. No one likes to be scared, and jealousy is usually the mark of an insecure teenager in "love." Why does the Bible so often associate these emotions with our relationship to God? Fear is a very broad concept that could mean the humble respect you would feel before the school principal or a local politician (assuming you supported him). It can also mean the sheer terror, the adrenaline-surgingly, blood-pumping rush when you nearly have a car accident or think a baby is going to fall from a height. The whole range of attitudes, from simple respect to outright terror are appropriate when we consider who God is.

The Bible teaches that no one can see God and live – the experience would overwhelm us and literally kill us (Ex. 33:20). Even the symbolic presence of God in thunderclouds and lightning was too much for the Israelites to handle (Deut. 5:25). A healthy fear of the Almighty Creator of the universe is a very healthy thing.

Jealousy in a human is not usually an acceptable emotion, because it demands what is not deserved: total devotion. Only God deserves total devotion, and so only God is just in feeling jealous when our hearts are divided. We can understand this in a marriage relationship – giving attention to one other than my spouse should certainly raise jealous feelings in my spouse who deserves, by covenant, to be my all satisfying love. How much more does God long to be the all satisfying treasure of my soul?

Read It! Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Study It!

- **What is the central command of this passage?**
- **What does God promise His people if they obey His commands (vv. 2-3)?**
- **Are the people to merely obey God's Laws externally?** How much of me does God want (v. 5)? What kind of heart-attitude does God desire (v. 6)?

Apply It!

- **How much should my love for God affect my life (vv. 7-9)?**
- **When during the day should my thoughts and feelings turn to God?**
- **How much should my love for God get into my conversations?**
- **Review the 5 Habits and the Compass.** Which of the habits is the Holy Spirit directing you to work on this week?
- **Review Psalm 63 and meditate on the supremacy of Christ.**

Go Deeper!

- For further study, read Deuteronomy 4-6 (and beyond if you want). Underline and make notes on this key passage, right at the heart of God's law. Listen for the passionate heart of God – His longings for the response of His people!

Lesson 2 – Transformed

Big Idea: *by receiving Jesus I have been totally changed!*

Objectives: as a result of this lesson, learners will...

- Know – the truth of what happened when they trusted in Jesus
- Feel – the joy and security of their new life in Christ
- Choose – to study Ephesians 2 on their own, discovering and applying the truth to their lives

Discussion Starter:

- How did your life change after you trusted Christ for salvation? What was different after Jesus came into your life – or, better yet, after you came into Jesus' life?

Discussion: What we WERE, before Jesus

- **How does the Bible describe people who have not trusted in Jesus for salvation?**
 - Ephesians 2:1
 - Ephesians 4:17-18
 - Romans 3:9-18
 - Titus 3:3
- **What does the Bible say people in this condition need?**
 - Ezekiel 11:19-20
 - John 3:3-4

Bible Study: What happens when you receive Jesus?

Read Titus 3:3-7

- Make 3 columns on a piece of paper or whiteboard. In the left column, write the descriptions of a person "Before Christ" (v. 3). In the middle, write "What God did." On the right, write "After Christ"

Before Christ (v. 3)	What God did (vv. 4-6)	After Christ (v. 7)

- What are people like before trusting in Jesus? (v. 3)
- Why did God save us and change us completely? Was it because we were so great and wonderful (see v. 5)?
- What is different about someone after they have received Jesus as Savior?

The amazing thing about this passage is that it shows that salvation is completely a gift from God – it is all about what God has done for us! Look at all of the verbs in the “What God did” column! “He saved us,” “washing of rebirth and renewal,” “he poured out [the Holy Spirit],” “justified,” made us “heirs.” Some of the verbs are in the passive voice – “we might become heirs” – which again shows that salvation is not something that we can actively gain for ourselves, it is something that God must give to us. Just like a tadpole and the caterpillar can’t make themselves change, so nobody can make themselves into a good person. That would be like a caterpillar trying to put on makeup and attach fake wings on his back!

Read John 8: 31-32

- What sets people free?
- What results in knowing the truth?

Read John 8:33-38

- What condition are people in, apart from Jesus?
- How does someone get free from this slavery?
- What is their new condition after being set free?

Read Galatians 3:26-4:7

- How are people presented apart from Christ?
- For those who are “in Christ” we go from being slaves to being S_____ / D_____.

Application: How do you feel Today?

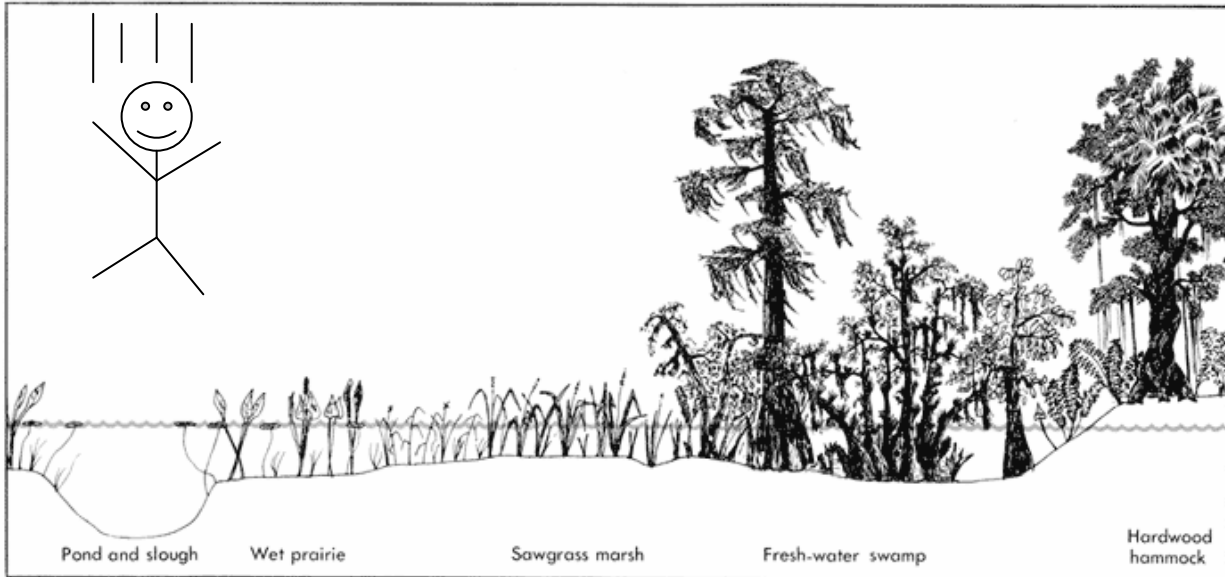
- Have you been totally transformed? How do you know?
- When did you ask Jesus to forgive your sins and be your Savior?
- What happened when you did that – when you trusted in Jesus?
- Do you always feel like you’re forgiven and free, a beloved child of God? What does the Bible say happened to you – whether you feel like it today or not?
- How should this truth affect us each day?

Pray!

Spend some time as a group thanking God for what He did for you!

Personal Study 1 – Dead or Alive

The everglades are a gigantic wetland habitat in Florida that in the rainy season stretches 60 miles wide and 100 miles long! Rich in wildlife, from alligators to snakes and all sorts of fish and birds. Imagine you were suddenly dropped right into the middle of the Florida Everglades, without a boat. How would you feel? What would you do?



In many ways, this is exactly what life is like for people who do not know Jesus personally. They are stuck in a scary, dangerous place from which they cannot escape. Look at what the Bible says about what life was like before you became a believer:

Read It! Ephesians 2:1-6

Study It!

- **How does Paul describe people apart from Christ?** "You were _____ in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live" (v. 1).
- **Whom or what do non-Christians follow by living in sin?**
 - "the ways of this _____" (v. 2)
 - "the ways of... the ruler of the kingdom of the air" Who is that? _____
 - "gratifying the cravings of our _____" (v. 3)
- **What is the result of following these three things?**
 - "we were by nature _____ of _____." (v. 3)
 - Whose wrath?
 - So what does it mean to be "dead in sin" (v. 1 and also Rom. 6:23)? Does it mean physically dead or spiritually dead because you're under God's wrath?
- **What did God do for us while we were trapped in this deadly swamp?**
 - "God... made us _____ with Christ" (v. 5)
 - "God _____ us up with Christ" (v. 6)
 - "God... _____ us with him in the heavenly realms" (v. 6)
- **Why did God do this for us? (v. 4)**
 - Because we were so great and wonderful OR Because He is rich in _____

Apply It!

- **Where are you right now? Are you still stuck in the swamp of your own sin, or has God lifted you out of that and made you alive with Christ? How do you know?**

- **Whom or what do you tend to follow? The world, your old sinful nature, the devil OR the Holy Spirit who now lives in your heart? What helps you tune in more to the Holy Spirit and less to the other things?**

- **Write out a prayer thanking God for what He did for you:**

"Dear Lord, thank you for..."

- **Memorize Ephesians 2:8-10**

Personal Study 2 – In Christ or in...

The bottom line for people is that there are only two places they can be: in Christ or in trouble. Non-Christians don't always feel like they are stuck in the swamp of sin or that they are "dead in their transgressions," but before God that is their reality. The only way to be forgiven and set free from the trap of sin and death is to take hold of the lifeline that Jesus offers you. It's like he has thrown you a rope and receiving him as your Savior is like grabbing onto that rope and saying, "Yes, Lord, rescue me from my sin!"



Read It! Ephesians 1:1-7, 11-13

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace...

¹¹In him we were also chosen... ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit...

Study It!

- Circle every place where you see the words, "in Christ," "in him," or "through him."
- Write down everything that is true of you because you are "in Christ" (these are examples of the spiritual blessings we have in him!):

In Christ, I am... faithful (v. 1), blessed (v. 2)...

DEFINITIONS - check out what some of these words mean:

- Blessing: something good, both spiritually and physically
- Holy: set apart for God's special use
- Predestined: God's kingly decision to choose some people for Himself
- Adopted: legally becoming someone's son or daughter and heir
- Grace: undeserved favor and kindness
- Redemption: being bought out of slavery
- Forgiveness: the removal or release of sin's punishment

- **When did God choose us to be in Christ?**
 - “He chose us in him before the _____ of the _____.” (v. 4)
- **What did God predestine (choose beforehand) us to be?**
 - “In love he predestined us to be _____ as his _____” (v. 5)
- **How did God choose us?**
 - “He predestined us... in accordance with his _____ and _____.” (v. 5)
- **Why did God choose us?**
 - “In him we were also chosen... in order that we... might be for the _____ of his _____.” (v. 12)
- **How was God able to accept us as his children?**
 - “He predestined us to be adopted as his sons _____ Jesus Christ” (v. 5)
 - “In him we have redemption through _____” (v. 7)
- **What did you have to do to be saved?**
 - “And you also were included in Christ when you _____ the word of truth, the _____ of your salvation. Having _____ you were marked in him with a seal, the promised _____.” (v. 13)
- **Was your salvation the result of any good works you did? (see Eph. 2:8-9)**
 - “For it is by grace you have been saved through _____ - and this not from _____, it is the _____ of God – not by _____ so that no one can boast.” (Eph 2:8-9)

Apply It!

- **Write out, in your own words, what is true of you now that you are in Christ:**

In Christ, I am...

- **What did you deserve from God?**
- **What did God give you in Jesus?**
- **Write out a short prayer thanking God for these amazing blessings in Christ.**

Personal Study 3 – A New Identity

Super heroes always have a secret identity that lets them blend in with the normal population. After all, “who wants the pressure of being super all the time?” They have a powerful ability that allows them to fight crime and make the world a better place. But much of the time they hide this super power to protect their families from bad guys or just keep the photographers away.

Every believer in Jesus Christ also has a super power – the Holy Spirit Himself lives in each one of us! This is my true identity, as a follower of Jesus, and it is my calling to show people His love and help rescue them from their sin. Sometimes we can hide our true identity in order to blend in with the people around us. We may feel embarrassed if our friends or neighbors don't believe in Jesus like we do. But God has called us to stand up for the truth of who we are, living out of the power of the Holy Spirit every day, and giving ourselves to the mission of rescuing the lost and hurting people around us!



Read It! Ephesians 2:8-10

Study It!

- **How have you been saved?**
 - “For it is by _____ you have been saved, through _____.” (v. 8)
- **Whose grace is it?** (Remember, grace is undeserved, unearned favor and kindness.)
- **What is faith?** (see Hebrews 11:1; John 20:29)
 - “Now faith is being _____ of what we hope for and _____ of what we do not see.” (Heb. 11:1)
 - After Jesus rose from the dead, Thomas touched his scars and only then did he finally see Jesus as “My Lord and my God!” “Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not _____ and yet have _____.’” (John 20:29).
- **What do you need to believe?** (Romans 10:9-10)
 - “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is _____,’ and believe in your heart that God _____ him from the _____ you will be saved. For it is with your _____ that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” (Rom. 10:9-10).
- **Where does salvation come from?** (Eph. 2:8-9)
 - “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is _____ from yourselves, it is the _____ of God – not by _____, so that no one can boast.”
- **Why did God make us and save us?**
 - “For we are God’s _____, created in Christ Jesus to do _____ _____, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Eph. 2:10)

Apply It!

- **What does the Bible say is your true identity?**

- **Do you sometimes try to hide that true identity? Why?**

- **How does Eph. 2:8-10 encourage you? (Have you memorized it yet?)**

- **What are some good works you could do today to live out your true “super” identity?**

Go Further!

Check out these other passages and write down what they teach about your identity in Christ:

In Christ, I am...

- Romans 5:1 _____
- Romans 6:3-6 _____
- Romans 8:1 _____
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 _____
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 _____
- Galatians 2:20 _____
- Colossians 1:14 _____
- Colossians 3:1-4 _____
- Titus 3:5 _____

REVIEW: The 5 Habits



How are you doing at developing the 5 habits of prayer (talking to God) Bible study (listening to God), outreach, fellowship and service? Are you tuning in more and more to the voice of the Holy Spirit as you practice these habits every day? Are you noticing that your heart is becoming more sensitive to other people and you are more naturally serving and loving them? Keep on practicing the habits every day, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and help you!

Lesson 3 - Spiritual Life Cycles

Big Idea: a follower of Jesus grows best by pursuing the three purposes of knowing Jesus, growing in Jesus and going with Jesus

Objectives: learners will...

- Know – the cyclical nature of the spiral of life and the whirlpool of death
- Feel – motivated to grow closer to Jesus through faithful obedience
- Do – choose one area to focus on this week

Discussion Starter: improving in a skill: learn, practice, compete – an upward moving cycle of improvement. What skill have you worked on consistently to improve?

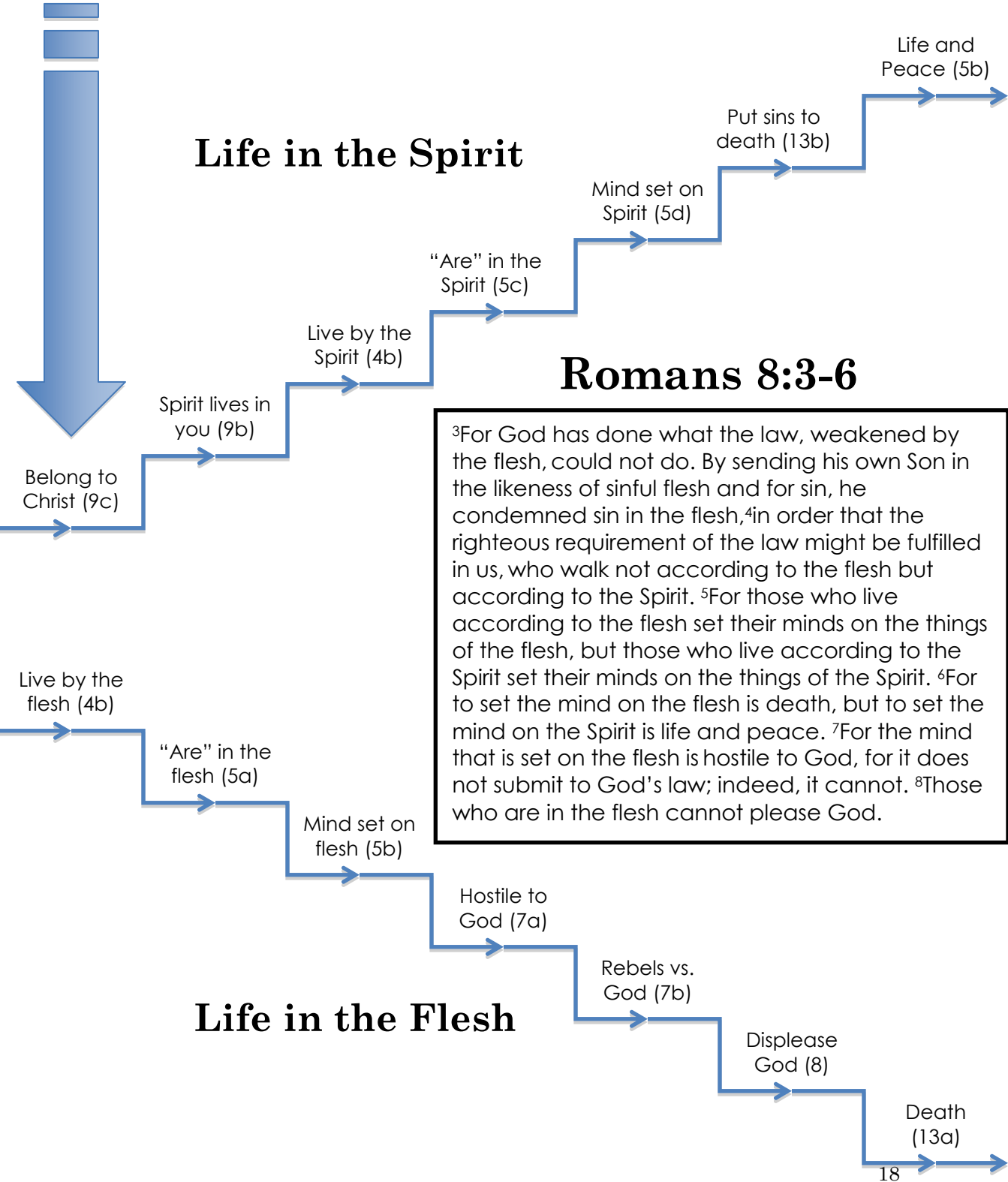
Proverbs: The 2 Ways

Source	Perspective	Lifestyle	Results
<u>WISDOM</u> (1:7a; 9:10) fear the LORD (1:8) humble teachable (3:5-6) trust, dependence, submission (4:23) heart-set on God	<u>UNDERSTANDING</u> (1:23) respond to teaching and discipline (2:5-6) knowledge (4:1) understanding (4:25) focus (6:22-23) guidance, light (7:25) resistant to temptation (8:5) prudence (8:9) discernment	<u>RIGHTEOUSNESS</u> (2:7-8) blameless, upright, just (2:16) purity (2:20-21) good ways (3:3) love, faithfulness (3:9, 27) generosity (6:6-8) discipline, diligence (8:20) righteous way	<u>BLESSINGS</u> (1:33) safety, ease (2:7) success (2:8) protection (2:21) life (3:2) prosperity (3:4) reputation (3:8) health (3:16) wealth, honor (3:17) peace
<u>FOOLISHNESS</u> (1:7b) proud (1:22) self-reliant (1:24-25) hard-hearted (9:13) folly	<u>CONFUSION</u> (2:13) wayward (4:16) restless (4:19) darkness, confusion (5:12-13) reject counsel and discipline (7:7) no sense, open to influence	<u>WICKEDNESS</u> (1:16) violence, cruelty (1:32) wayward, complacent (2:12-15) evil ways, perverse words, delight in wrong (5:22) slavery to sin (5:23) no discipline (6:9) sloth (6:17,19) deceit (9:7-8) mockery, abuse, hatred	<u>CURSES</u> (1:19; 9:18) death (1:26-27) disaster (1:28) separation from God (2:18-19) spiritual death (3:33) cursed (3:35) shame (6:11) poverty (9:12) suffering

Romans 8 – The Spiral of Life, the Whirlpool of Death

Salvation: Romans 8:1-4

- No condemnation in Christ (1)
- Freedom in the Spirit (from the Law) (2)
- Sin condemned in the flesh of Jesus (3)
- Requirements of the law fully met in us (4)



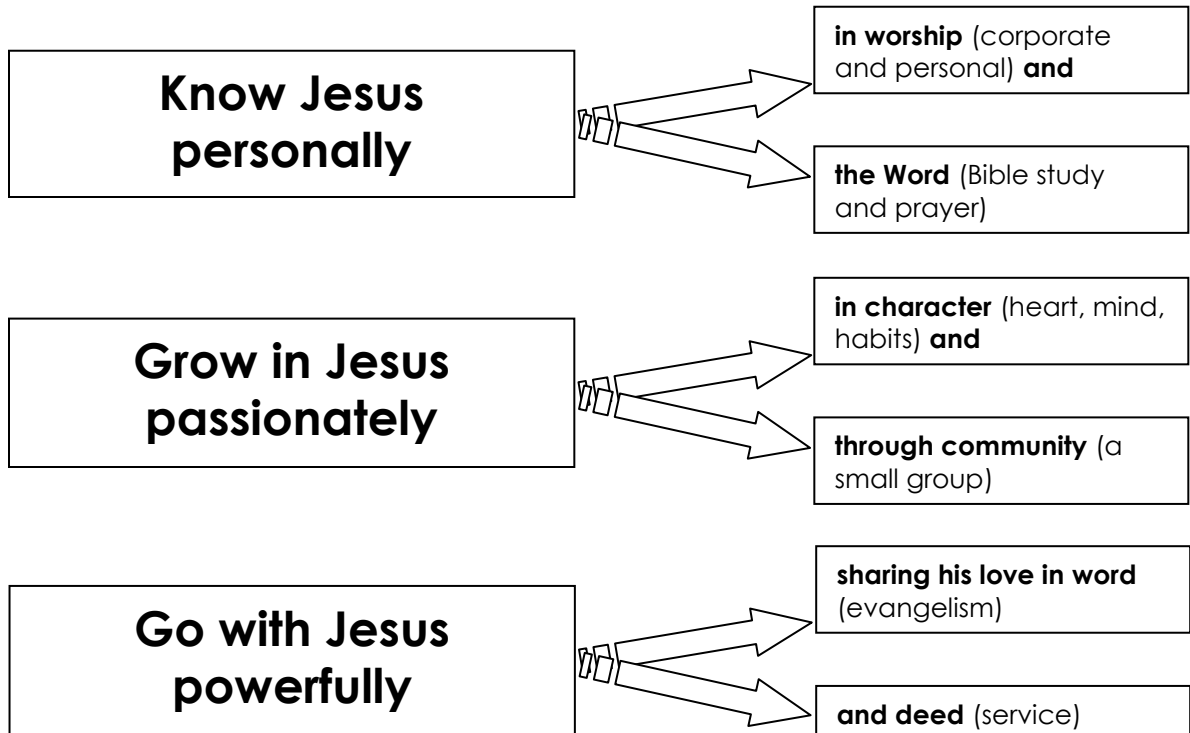
The Discipleship Cycle

“Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Mark 1:17

- What is the greatest commandment in the Law? (Matt. 22:36-38)
- What is the Great Commission? (Matt. 28:18-20)



You can sum up the life of a disciple of Jesus in three simple phrases: Love God, love others, make disciples. At Grace, we have defined **our purpose as a church: to make disciples who know Jesus, grow in Jesus and go with Jesus**. Knowing Jesus involves worshiping him and developing a personal relationship with him. Growing in Jesus means thinking like him, valuing the things he values and doing what he wants you to do. And we believe Christian growth is most effective in the context of community. Going with Jesus moves us into redemptive relationships with those around us, seeking to share the love of Jesus with them in both words and actions. Here's a snapshot of the discipleship process at Grace:



- How do these three dynamics of a disciple interact with each other? How does knowing Jesus personally help you grow in him?
- How does growth in your Christian walk affect your desire and ability to share your faith with others? How does faithful ministry and evangelism affect your knowing Jesus?

The spiritual life is naturally cyclical. Positive movement results in more positive movement. Growth leads to health and health leads to growth. The opposite is also true: sinful choices and behaviors lead to more sinful thinking and deeper immorality. I think this is why Jesus kept his message very simple: "Come, follow me." He didn't get into deep theological discussions, but preferred to keep the matter of discipleship very personal: will you, or will you not, follow me? If you do, it will change the whole direction of your life! You'll have to stop whatever you have been doing and recognize that you have a new master. If you refuse to follow me and insist on doing your own thing, you can't hide behind theological platitudes or pious excuses.

Jesus' calling was simple and direct: "Come, follow me." This was a life-changing invitation to come into a personal relationship with Him – the creator and sustainer of the universe! It was an invitation to know him and be known by him – to belong to him! And the relationship was immediately defined as that between a rabbi and his student – a master and his pupil. There could be no illusion that one was coming to Jesus on equal footing with him, to hang out as peers. This was precisely why the Jewish leaders resented and resisted Jesus – they were threatened by his authority! To come to Jesus is to come as a learner who wants to grow and change. After all, it is not the healthy who need a doctor. Knowing Jesus naturally results in growing to be more and more like him. Coming along with Jesus meant watching him, listening to him and increasingly doing what he did. This was the essence of discipleship, or followership.

The third component of Jesus' invitation was, "and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus does not bring us to himself and help us grow so we can sit around, stewing in our own juices. He sends his disciples out to continue the work he started – of seeking and saving the lost.

Application:

- **Evaluate yourself as a disciple of Jesus:** what grade would you get for the three dynamics of a disciple – knowing Jesus, growing in Jesus and going with Jesus? Consider the 6 elements: worship, the word, character, community, evangelism and service...
- **What is one area you want to work on this week?** Simply ask your rabbi and Lord to help you grow in that area – like the disciples did when they said, "Lord, teach us to pray..."
- **Spend some time reflecting on the 2 ways of Proverbs and the 2 cycles in Romans 8.** What pitfalls do you find yourself straying into sometimes? What protections can you put in place to build up and keep some positive momentum in your spiritual life cycle?

Personal Study 1 – “Come and see!”

My family was invited recently to the premier for Narnia's *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. On the way there, we learned that Georgie Henley (Queen Lucy) and Skandar Keynes (King Edmund) would be available for pictures and autographs. Naturally, we were all excited to see them – not really expecting to get close at all. But when we arrived, we were able to get to both of them – to our astonishment and delight.

If we get excited about meeting a 15 and 19 year old movie star, how much more amazed and honored should we be to have an open invitation to spend time with our Lord and Savior, our King and Creator?



Read It! John 1:35-51.

Study It!

- Who initiated Andrew's contact with Jesus? (vv. 35-36)
- What did Andrew know about Jesus when they first met? (v. 36)
- What do you think Andrew learned and experienced when he spent the day with Jesus (v. 39)?
- What did Andrew do right after his encounter with Jesus? (v. 41)
- Who initiated Philip's contact with Jesus? (v. 43)
- What did Philip do after Jesus called him? (v. 45)
- What did Andrew, Philip and Nathanael conclude about Jesus? (vv. 41, 45, 49)
- How did they come to know these things about Jesus?
- How were their lives different after knowing Jesus personally?

Apply It!

- When Jesus invites you to “Come and see where he is staying” what do you usually say?
- When you do agree to spend some time (maybe even a whole day sometimes!) with Jesus, how does it help you to know him better?
- How does knowing the truth about who Jesus is encourage you in your daily life?
- Spend some time right now quietly resting in the presence of your Lord and rabbi.

Personal Study 2 – “Follow me...”

Who has most influenced you in life? More than likely it's a parent or very close friend you have known for years. Their example has helped you to not only understand what is most important in life, but has shown you how to live out the values you now hold dear. All human beings are followers. Our problem is that we follow the wrong people. We want to be thin movie stars or wealthy CEOs; we want to be published and praised; we want the trappings of happiness... The question we must honestly ask ourselves is: am I really, truly, following **Jesus?**

Read It! Mark 1:14-20

Study It!

- Based on your previous study in John 1, what did Peter and Andrew already know about Jesus? To what extent did they already know him? How does this help you understand their response in Mark 1?
- What was Jesus' message when he started his public ministry? (v. 15) What do you think this meant to his first disciples? What did they expect of him when he mentioned “the kingdom”? (see, for example, Isaiah 9:6-7.)
- Over the next three years, how did the disciples grow in their understanding of Jesus' mission and their role in “his kingdom”? (see, for example Mk. 8:31-38.)
- How did Peter and Andrew's lives change when they chose to follow Jesus? (v. 18)
- How do you think they felt that Jesus included both of them, as brothers, and their fishing partners? How did that relational community become a place of growth for all of the disciples?

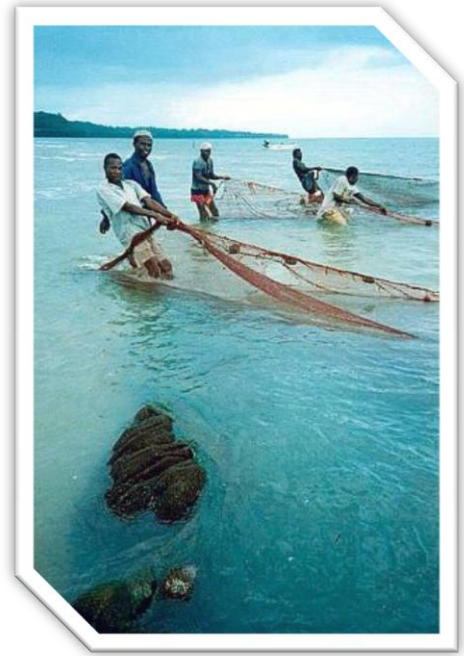
Apply It!

- What is an area of your life that Jesus is calling you to follow his example in today?
- How might someone in your small group or another Christian friend encourage and support you as you strive to grow in this area?
- Write out your commitment to the Lord:

Personal Study 3 – “I will make you fishers of men.”

I am a lousy fisherman. In my life I have caught a small handful of fish – most of them very small. Recently I have tried to teach my boys how to fish, only to fail miserably. From what I understand, much of a fisherman's success depends on the time and place he fishes and the bait and tackle he uses. Once, when I was in high school, a couple of friends took me to a pond right at dusk. A cold stream was pouring into the pond, and they had caught many fish here a week before. Four of us put worms on our hooks and tossed them in. And every other cast we reeled in a fish. It was the most fun I've ever had fishing! (And it has never happened again.)

I think many of us get discouraged when our first few attempts at evangelism don't bring anyone into the kingdom. And we can be very tempted to hang up our pocket NTs and gospel tracts. But I believe Jesus calls us to look closely at *how* we are fishing for people, to see if there might be an ideal time and place – and particular resources to get the attention of certain people he has placed in our lives.



Read It! Luke 10:1-12

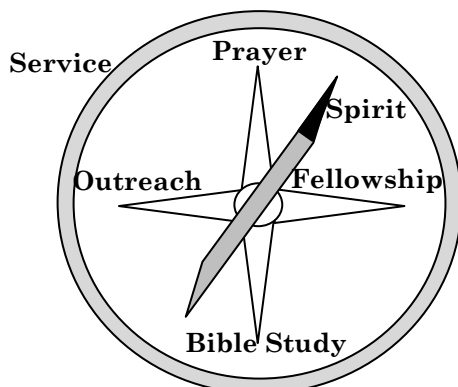
Study It!

- On whose authority were the 72 sent out? (v. 1, 3)
- According to Jesus, what was needed for the harvest? (v. 2) And what was the way to get those needed workers?
- What reasons can you think of for the instructions in v. 4?
- Where did the resources for the mission come from? (vv. 4, 7)
- What was the process the missionaries were to follow? (vv. 5-9)
- What kind of reception did the evangelists expect? (vv. 3, 10)
- How do evangelistic missions impact God's judgment on people and places? (v. 12)

Apply It!

- On whose authority are we sent out to “fish” for lost people? (Matt. 28:18)
- How should the search for a “person of peace” influence our evangelism and church planting efforts? (vv. 5-7)
- Who is God calling you to pray for? How can you cultivate a relationship with these people, being sensitive to opportunities to plant seeds of the gospel...?

REVIEW: The 5 Habits



How are you doing at developing the 5 habits of prayer (talking to God) Bible study (listening to God), outreach, fellowship and service? Are you tuning in more and more to the voice of the Holy Spirit as you practice these habits every day? Are you noticing that your heart is becoming more sensitive to other people and you are more naturally serving and loving them? Keep on practicing the habits every day, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you and help you!

Lesson 4 – Bible Study

Big Idea: God's complete revelation of Himself and His will is available to us in His Word – but we must train ourselves to accurately study it!

Objectives: learners will...

- Know – how to study a passage inductively in its historical, grammatical context
- Feel – motivated to let God speak to them personally through His Word
- Do – practice outlining a passage to discover its central message

Discussion Starter: What's wrong with this picture?

- I am leading a conference on missions and really want to share a verse that's all about courage in the face of danger. Daniel was in danger – I'm going to study **Daniel 6** and look for how Daniel was a great example of courage in the lion's den!
- I am really bummed out today, so as I come to the passage in my Bible reading plan, I am going to look for a word of encouragement. My passage is **Hebrews 6**. I am going to just meditate on v. 7 and let the "rain of God's grace" bless my heart.
- I am curious about what is going to happen next in the end times sequence of events. So I am going to study **Matt. 24, 1 Thes. 4, 2 Thes. 2 and Rev. 19-20** and make up a chart that shows the order of when the antichrist will come and what will happen before, during and after the tribulation.
- I remember **Isaiah 40** is a really inspiring passage – I am going to read the last few verses, because they talk about eagles, and email them to my non-Christian friend about how God wants to lift her up today.

WARNING!

All of these are examples of Eisogesis – reading something INTO a passage of Scripture. Whenever we come to the text with an agenda or a pre-set idea, warning bells should go off and caution flags should start waving in our heads. It is very easy to let our theological system, our current feelings, our pressing questions, our ministry agendas, or any number of other things to influence how we understand a passage of Scripture. Now, don't get me wrong: God wants to answer our questions, he wants to address our feelings and help us be effective in ministry. And often it is our questions, feelings and needs that drive us into His word to look for answers and guidance. But **we must discipline ourselves to let God's Word speak, so that we are hearing from GOD** and not twisting his word to say what we want it to say!

So I want to practice a Bible Study method you are probably familiar with called Inductive Bible Study. The goal of inductive study is to draw out the meaning of the passage before us through rigorous interrogation – coming at the text with question after question to discern **what was said, when it was said, to whom it was said**. Only AFTER we have listened carefully to God's Word in its original context should we move to apply it to our lives and ministries. This is also called hermeneutics – the discipline of interpreting Scripture according to its historical and grammatical context.

Let's take Daniel 6 as an example. And we'll see, in the end, if it's really a lesson about courage, or if God really has something much more personal and profound to say.

DANIEL 6 – Inductive Bible Study

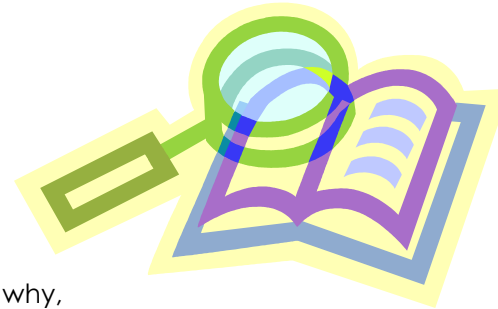
Bible study should always move through three stages: Observation, Interpretation and Application. Long before we make application to our lives (what does this mean to ME) we must discover, through diligent observation, what it MEANT when God original spoke and acted. After we have made careful study of what it meant, we can then interpret the overall purpose and

message of the passage, drawing out timeless principles. Then, and only then, we are ready to explore the personal application of the passage to our own lives.

1. Observation → **What** does it say?
2. Interpretation → **So What** does it mean?
3. Application → **Now What** do I do?

1. OBSERVATION: WHAT does it say?

The Observation stage has two components: exploring the historical context and analyzing the grammatical presentation of the text.



A. The Historical Context – What is going on?

Let's start with the basic journalistic questions: who, what, when, where, why, how? This will help us discover **the Historical context**, or setting of the book.

- Who? Who wrote the book? Who is it about?
- What is going on in the book? What is it about?
- What is going on in this passage?
- When did this take place? What is the historical context, or setting of the book?
- Where is this happening?
- Why is this passage included in this book? What is the purpose of this chapter?
- How does the text convey its message? What kind of literature is this (history, law, prophecy, epistle, etc.)?

All of these questions (and any others that occur to you) are helping us to LISTEN effectively to the passage, without letting our own thoughts, feelings and questions influence what we hear. The more we understand WHEN it was said, TO WHOM it was said (the historical context) the more we will understand WHAT was said (the grammatical content) and why (the purpose). As we discover these critical elements, God's Word will take on the full depth of meaning and power God Himself intended it to have – and we will hear His clear, resounding voice speaking to us across the ages!

- How would you describe the Historical Context of the book of Daniel?

- Within the story of the whole book of Daniel, how does chapter 6 fit in? (i.e. what is happening in chapter 5? What is happening in chapter 7?)

B. The Grammatical Content – What does it say?

Now we are ready to study the actual words of our passage – understanding that it is an integral part of the whole book of Daniel, set during the Jewish exile into Babylon. This approach to Bible study – analyzing the way the author actually put the words together – is a key step in faithfully interpreting God's Word.

- Read all of chapter 6.
 - **Sum it up! What is this passage about?** How would you sketch out the story? What kind of literature is this?

- **Document the details!** Go through each verse and make a list of the details supplied by the text, making special note of the ones that appear very significant. (But include every detail! The Bible is sparing in the details it supplies, so each one is in there for a reason.)
- **Break it down.** Identify the different sections of the narrative – where are the breaks or progressions in the story?

Verses	Section Heading	Principles	Application Points
1-5	The Background – Daniel excels toward promotion through godliness, provoking the jealousy of the other 120 rulers		
6-9	The Decree – The rulers (deceptively) convince the King to make a law that people can worship only him for 30 days		
10-13	The Verdict – Daniel defies the law by praying to the LORD, as usual, and gets caught		
14-18	The Punishment - The King tries to rescue Daniel, but must enforce his own law; but in his distress he offers a “prayer” to Daniel's God		
19-23	The Deliverance – the King finds Daniel unharmed, having been saved by His God due to his innocence and faith		
24	The Vindication – the King threw the conniving rulers into the lion's den, where they (and their families) were instantly devoured		
25-28	The Message – the King wrote to the nations, exalting Daniel's God who rules in power over the whole world		

- **Draft headings.** Write a summary statement over each section you have defined. Feel free to adjust the way you have broken up the verses as you gather more information and gain a better feel for the text.
- **What's the Big Idea?** Take a shot at articulating what you think the central message of this passage is. [Since the LORD is the one true God, we can trust Him to save us no matter what dangers or persecutions we face.]
- **Analyze and Evaluate.** Go back through the details you noted, the sections you defined along with their headings, and see if it all fits together. Maybe you missed something, or one verse doesn't quite fit. Let any questions you have drive you deeper into the text, to discover what the central message really is.



An exegetical note: Bible Study is exegesis – drawing truth and meaning OUT FROM a passage of God's Word. Always keep in mind that what you are studying is a **translation** from the original language. So if you run into a question or confusing elements in the words of your translation, compare it to another version (or several others) to enhance your understanding of what was actually said in the original. Translations like the NASB and the ESV can be very helpful in this process, since their approach is to follow more closely (than, say, the NIV) the grammatical construction of the original languages.

If you have questions... it is perfectly normal! Studying the Bible is challenging and time consuming work, and sometimes leaves us wondering if we have come to an accurate understanding of the passage. Always feel free to contact your class teacher, small group leader or your pastor – any of them would be delighted to discuss what you are learning in this study.

Is there one right answer? You may be wondering, as you study different passages of God's Word, if there is just one correct interpretation. History has shown that, when it comes to a specific section of Scripture, godly, wise Bible scholars have frequently disagreed about what it means and how to apply it. So the way you break a passage into pieces or sum up a section may sound somewhat different from how your teacher or a classmate does. But you are likely to find common themes and ideas, since you are studying the very same words and are trying to understand the passage in its original context.

2. INTERPRETATION: SO WHAT does it mean?

After you have broken down a passage into its various parts, and have started putting it back together, you are ready to really grapple with its essential meaning. At this stage of study, you are trying to uncover the timeless, universal principles that the passage conveys. Again, be very careful that you do not make any assumptions or read back into the text what you have always expected to find in this story. Let the words of the text continue to speak for themselves.

Go back through each section you have defined and draw out the principles that section presents. For example, what principle emerges from the first few verses about why Daniel was being promoted ahead of the other rulers? As you do this reflective work, you may need to adjust how you have defined the sections and the headings and summaries you have sketched out. This is part of the process! Don't let anything – including your own study – gain control over the meaning of the text. The passage itself must be in charge. LISTEN! Let God speak to you through His Word!

3. APPLICATION: NOW WHAT do I do?

Based on the work you have done of listening to the text, drawing out its meaning – now you can consider how this applies to your life. The study of God's Word must never become an exercise in simply gaining knowledge. The goal should always be to know God better in order to love and obey Him more fully. **Start with the Big Idea you have defined, and be sure it includes a point of application.** It is often effective to phrase your big idea with a theological truth that leads to a practical application: "Since God is... we should..."



Each principle you have discovered should have an application to life. It is at this point that you may strongly sense the Holy Spirit identifying one issue in particular. But again, be careful! Don't let anything gain influence over the text itself! You may have guilt (whether true or false) leading you to focus on one thing over another. You may be tempted to quickly gloss over one area because you simply prefer not to deal with a certain struggle or sin. So first define all of the possible applications. And then consider the ones most relevant to you.

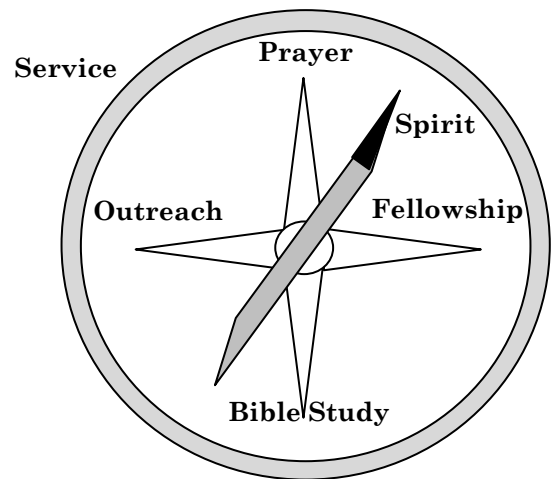
A word of caution to teachers: those of us in teaching roles can often fall into **the trap of defining all of the applications a passage has for OTHER PEOPLE.** When we do this, we lose out on the

privilege and joy of God speaking directly to US! In our desire to see God speak to others, we can actually close our own ears to His voice. May this never be!

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER!

The goal of Bible Study is to grow in your relationship with God. We want to know Him more personally – and active, attentive listening is at the heart of any relationship. God has made Himself fully known through His Word – and He is always available if we will simply make the time to come to Him!

Take a look again at the 5 Habits on the compass: Prayer, Bible Study, Outreach, Fellowship and Service. As we seek to Know Jesus, Grow in Jesus and Go with Jesus, these habits will help keep us on track. As we listen to God through His Word, seek Him in prayer, love one another in the church, reach out to the lost and live a life of service, the Holy Spirit will guide our every step. There is never really any question about what God wants us, as His people, to do. We know from His Word that these are habits He has called us to develop, in the context of a loving relationship with Him. But as we grow in these disciplines, he will direct us into new adventures and opportunities every day!



In the personal studies that follow, you are invited to do your own inductive Bible studies in four other genres of the Bible – other types of literature we find in Scripture. Learning to identify and accurately interpret God's Word as it was written requires an understanding of the different genres the Bible includes. Since this passage in Daniel, like many in the Bible, is a narrative (story), we will first look at a section of the Law in Leviticus. Then we will consider passages in the prophets and the poets of the Old Testament. Finally we will study a New Testament letter. Each genre is unique and requires a somewhat different approach for interpretation. But if you come with an open heart and a desire to let the Holy Spirit speak to you through His Word, He will make the meaning plain as you faithfully study each text.

Personal Study 1 – Law

When you first crack open the Bible, there are many stories to read and digest – including the very creation of the universe. But even Genesis, with all of its fascinating narratives, is part of the Jewish Torah – the Law of God. The first five books of the Bible make up the Law and defined the heart of the nation of Israel, its purpose and the details for how it should operate as the holy people of God. When reading and studying a passage in the Torah, it is essential to remember the context of the giving of the Law through Moses on Mount Sinai. As an additional study project, read Exodus 19 and reflect on the instructions God gives to Moses, the significance and foreshadowing of Moses as the intermediary between God and his people (then see. Deut. 18:15), and the powerful manifestations of God's presence – plus the commands that immediately follow in chapter 20.

Read It! Leviticus 19

Study It!

- **OBSERVATION – What does it say?**
 - a. What is the historical context? What is going on? Who is writing this? What kind of literature is this?

 - b. What is the grammatical context? What is the message of this text? How does the passage make its point? Note the details. Analyze the structure. Break the passage into logical sections and summarize the message of each one.

- **INTERPRETATION – So what does it mean?** What are the universal principles that emerge from this passage? What lessons can we learn from this text?

- Summarize the central message of Leviticus 19:

Apply It!

- **APPLICATION – Now what do I do?** Which principles seem especially relevant to my life right now? What do I sense God calling me to do as a result of this study?

Personal Study 2 – Poetry

After the Law and the historical section, we come upon the “the writings,”: the inspirational poetry the Hebrews used for worship and corporate edification. Most of our Bible reading is personal and individual, but the Jewish culture was predominantly communal and relational. So the reading of the Law, the history and the poetry God inspired David and others to write most often happened in the context of the community gathered for worship and prayer – whether centrally in the temple area, or in countless synagogues scattered around the Mediterranean and Middle east.

Read It! Psalm 31

Study It!

- **OBSERVATION – What does it say?**

- a. What is the historical context? What is going on? Who is writing this? What kind of literature is this?

- b. What is the grammatical context? What is the message of this text? How does the passage make its point? Note the details. Analyze the structure. Break the passage into logical sections and summarize the message of each one. (Note in particular the turning point verse of the psalm...)

- **INTERPRETATION – So what does it mean?** What are the universal principles that emerge from this passage? What lessons can we learn from this text?

- Summarize the central message of Psalm 31:

Apply It!

- **APPLICATION – Now what do I do?** Which principles seem especially relevant to my life right now? What do I sense God calling me to do as a result of this study?

Personal Study 3 – Prophets

The prophets of Israel were God's spokesmen, declaring the Word of the Lord to His people. They confronted sin, instructed in obedience to God's Law, and exhorted to faith and faithfulness even in the face of peril and persecution. Before God's people had a complete record of His written word, they had access to His voice and His will through these dedicated and sacrificial servants. Isaiah, preaching around 700 years before Jesus was born, is perhaps the quintessential prophet. His book is often referred to as the fifth gospel because of the clarity of vision God gave him regarding the Messiah, the Servant who would give himself up to save not only Israel, but all of the nations (49:6). If you can, read Isaiah 40-66 all in one sitting, taking in the entirety of this second part of Isaiah's sweeping and majestic word from the Lord. (If not, cut to the chase and read chapter 40, the section below and then 65.)

Read It! Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Study It!

- **OBSERVATION – What does it say?**
 - a. What is the historical context? What is going on? Who is writing this? What kind of literature is this?

 - b. What is the grammatical context? What is the message of this text? How does the passage make its point? Note the details. Analyze the structure. Break the passage into logical sections and summarize the message of each one.

- **INTERPRETATION – So what does it mean?** What are the universal principles that emerge from this passage? What lessons can we learn from this text?

- Summarize the central message of Isaiah 53:

Apply It!

- **APPLICATION – Now what do I do?** Which principles seem especially relevant to my life right now? What do I sense God calling me to do as a result of this study?

Personal Study 4 – New Testament Epistle

Turning now to the New Testament, we first encounter the four gospels – written between AD 50 (Mark) and 90 (John) by four different authors, some focusing on a Jewish audience (Matthew) and others on a Gentile audience (Luke – who added a sequel for his patron, called the Acts of the Apostles). Beyond these foundational records of the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus, plus the testimony and ministry of the apostles and the early church – we find a collection of letters, called epistles. The first set were written by Paul – the famous persecutor of the church turned preacher of the gospel. The canon of God's word is rounded out by Hebrews (from an anonymous author), letters from Peter, John and Jude and the stirring conclusion in John's Revelation (greek: apocalypsis).

Read It! Ephesians 4-6

Study It!

- **OBSERVATION – What does it say?**

- a. What is the historical context? What is going on? Who is writing this? What kind of literature is this?

- b. What is the grammatical context? What is the message of this text? How does the passage make its point? Note the details. Analyze the structure. Break the passage into logical sections and summarize the message of each one. (Note the symmetry of this book: 3 chapters lay the foundation of what is true of believers as loved, alive and united in Christ; the next 3 chapters apply these truths in practical exhortations. 5 times Paul writes, “therefore/then... live/walk...” arguing that based on what is true of us in Christ, we should live in certain ways.)

- **INTERPRETATION – So what does it mean?** What are the universal principles that emerge from this passage? What lessons can we learn from this text?

- Summarize the central message of Ephesians 4-6:

Apply It!

- **APPLICATION – Now what do I do?** Which principles seem especially relevant to my life right now? What do I sense God calling me to do as a result of this study?

Lesson 5 - Prayer

Big Idea: Listening to God and talking with Him is the heart of your relationship!

Objectives: as a result of this lesson, learners will...

- Know - a simple pattern for prayer, based on Jesus' model
- Feel - motivated to make God their top priority relationship
- Choose - to set time aside this week to hang out with God

Discussion Starter:

- **Describe a good friend of yours. What makes him or her a good friend?**
How did you become friends? What kinds of things have grown your relationship?
- **How is your relationship with God like that friendship you just described?**
How is it different? What can make it hard to feel close to God sometimes?
- **What is the main thing that God wants from us?** (See Matt. 22:36-40 – the Great Commandment)

Prayer is all about RELATIONSHIP!

Focus: The Lord's Prayer

Read Matthew 6:5-15

- **What principles for prayer does Jesus provide before he gets to the prayer itself?**
(see. vv. 5-8)
- When Jesus taught this prayer, do you think he intended his disciples to only use these words, every time they prayed?

“When I give thanks, my thoughts still circle about myself to some extent. But in praise my soul ascends to self-forgetting adoration, seeing and praising only the majesty and power of God, His grace and redemption.”

Ole Hallesby
in Foster's *Prayer*, p. 84

It's obviously good to use these exact words sometimes, but Jesus gave this prayer as a **MODEL** for how we should approach God (notice he says this is “how” you should pray not “what” you should pray).

How would you categorize the different parts of the prayer? In other words, what is the progression Jesus teaches when we come to God in prayer? [Go to the Father directly; start with worship – “hallowed be your name” means may your name be honored as holy; followed by submission to His reign (kingdom) and will; then asking (for needs, not wants!), especially forgiveness (our primary need) but also for help in temptation and protection from the enemy.]

- **Be creative and try to come up with a fun way to remember the structure of the Lord's Prayer** – sort of like the ACTS acronym (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) but based on this prayer. It could be an

acrostic like ACTS, or a rhyme or a visual, whatever expresses the stages of the prayer and helps you remember it.

The Lord's Prayer – Matthew 6:9-13

Scripture Phrase	Caption Heading	Notes
Our Father in heaven		
Hallowed be your name		
Your kingdom come		
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven		
Gives us today our daily bread		
Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors		
And lead us not into temptation		
But deliver us from the evil one.*		

* A note on textual criticism: the epilogue to the Lord's Prayer – “for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen” – was clearly added to certain manuscripts long after the original writing. The oldest and best manuscripts do not contain this phrase, so the printing as recorded in the NIV has an “A” rating for certainty (on a scale from A to D) in the UBS Greek NT (Aland, Metzger, et al). So this phrase should carry the same weight and value we assign to any ancient hymn or writing from a church father such as Clement of Rome or Augustine – but it should not be viewed as inspired Scripture.

PRACTICE TIME!

One tool I have found helpful came from Richard Foster and *The Celebration of Discipline*. He describes a discipline called **centering down** where you hold out the palms of your hands facing down in an attitude of release. First close your fists really tightly and imagine that all of your worries, concerns, and even your sins and temptations are enclosed in your hands – you are clinging to all of them. Then open your hands and see what it feels like to release all of that junk to the Lord. **RELEASE.** As the writer to the Hebrews said, “Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles us... fixing our eyes on Jesus” (Heb. 12:1-2). This is a great way to connect your body and mind in prayer – by physically releasing your worries and sins to the Lord.

“Our Adversary majors in three things: noise, hurry and crowds. If he can keep us engaged in ‘muchness’ and ‘manyness’ he will rest satisfied... ‘Hurry is not of the Devil; it is the Devil.’” Richard Foster – *A Celebration of Discipline*, p. 15

Then turn your hands over, with your palms open and now facing up, resting on your legs in an attitude of receiving. Pause and quietly **RECEIVE** from the Lord. “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble... Be still, and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:1,10). In your quiet prayer time you might rest in God's presence this way for one minute or for 20 minutes. The time doesn't matter, it's the attitude of your heart that matters. But sometimes a small adjustment to our posture, a little movement of our hands can help focus our hearts and minds on the God who loves us.

- **Why do you think Jesus includes the teaching on forgiving others (vv. 14-15) right after this teaching on prayer?** What does forgiving someone else reveal about the forgiver? What does it show if someone is NOT willing to forgive? (See Matt. 18:21-35, the parable of the unmerciful servant.)

Practicing Prayer

The only way to become skillful in prayer is to pray. The only way for the conscious movement into God's presence to become natural for you is to practice it intentionally, over and over again. We can fool ourselves into thinking, “I'm praying all the time,” when in reality we have never really learned to quiet our own thoughts long enough to tune into the holy, loving, almighty God of the universe.

“The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us... to pray is to change... to think God's thoughts after him: to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills.” Richard Foster – *A Celebration of Discipline*, p. 7, 33

Take 3 minutes right now to just quietly pray. If you want to move off to a corner of the room, or even into another room, go ahead. We'll set a timer and call you back after five minutes. Practice the progression we talked about and just spend 5 minutes alone with God.

- **How did it go? Was it easy or hard?** Did it feel like a long time or a short time? Was it helpful to follow a model prayer, like the Lord's prayer? How so?
- I'll challenge you to set aside a little longer amount of time later today or tomorrow. Try spending 10 whole minutes in quiet prayer. Then 11 or 15. It's like doing push-ups – you can't just drop and do 100. You have to

gradually train your body; and as with push-ups it is often your mind that makes you stop before your body does.

Let's take another 5 minutes and pray together. There is no difference between praying by yourself and praying with one or twenty other people. It's just including God in a conversation. Let's follow the same progression – starting with worship, approaching God directly, moving through submission into our requests for what we need, especially forgiveness and protection from temptation and the devil. Pray short prayers – just one or two sentences. Feel free to build on what someone else has prayed, just like in a normal conversation. And by all means pray again – don't feel like you can only pray one time and you have to get it all in at once. Again, we'll set a timer. And don't worry if it's quiet for a few seconds – just use that time to focus on the Lord and center your heart on him.

- **How did you feel praying with the group?** What makes it intimidating sometimes to pray out loud? Isn't it encouraging and uplifting when others agree with and affirm your prayers and desires?

Make a Plan!

Our best intentions have no value if they don't change our habits. We all have the general sense that "I should pray more."

How many times have you heard an old person say, "I need to eat less and exercise more?" **What difference do those intentions make in that person's life?**

Four frogs were sitting on a log and one decided to jump off. How many frogs are on the log? [4. He didn't jump, he just decided to.]

- **What time and place works best for you to have a quiet time with God?**
- Have you found any devotional books or a Bible reading plan that has helped you be consistent in your time with God?

Basically, prayer is the life-blood of a relationship with God – just as communication is the life-blood of any relationship. What happens to a friendship when you don't spend time together and you don't ever talk? Eventually you grow apart and you're not really good friends any more. Friendship needs communication, interaction, TIME.

"The call asks, do you really accept the message that God is head over heels in love with you? I believe that this question is at the core of our ability to mature and grow spiritually. If in our hearts we really don't believe that God loves us as we are, if we are still tainted by the lie that we can do something to make God love us more, we are rejecting the message of the cross"

Brennan Manning – *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, p.165

"If we truly love people, we will desire for them far more than it is within our power to give them, and this will lead us to pray."

Richard Foster – *Prayer*, p. 191

- Fill out a 3x5 card, or slip of paper and **write down your plan for hanging out with God this week.** When, where, what you'll read, how you'll pray.

Personal Study 1 - Listening Prayer

“When I started praying I thought prayer was talking. But the more I prayed the more I realized that true prayer is listening” (Soren Kierkegaard, quoted in *A Celebration of Discipline*). In order to pray effectively for ourselves and others, we must first tune our hearts to God's heart – we must learn to quiet the noise in our minds in order to hear the still, small voice of the Spirit within us. I will readily admit that this is very difficult for me, and I am sure it does not come naturally for most modern Americans. But two things help me quiet my own thoughts and fears: meditating on Scripture and “centering down,” using the palms down, palms up method described above. Practice this approach now, in a quiet place where you won't be interrupted for at least 15-20 minutes. As the prayer and worship book for God's people, the Psalms are a great place to go for this kind of exercise. The one I selected is a personal favorite – and it's relatively short and always inspiring.

Read It! Psalm 103

Reflect on It!

- The goal for today is not to analytically study the passage, but to simply quiet your own thoughts in order to hear God's voice clearly in your heart. As you slowly and carefully read the passage, over and over, what do you hear God saying to you? What verse or verses is God using to speak to you?

- Now that you have some of God's thoughts percolating in your mind, open your hands – palms down – in your lap, in an attitude of surrender. Consider any worries, concerns or issues that are weighing on your mind – and one by one, **RELEASE** them to your loving Father. Ask God to search your heart and reveal any sins you have been holding on to. Renounce them, repent and turn from them, releasing your sins as well to your forgiving Savior. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us,” (Ps. 103:12) “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).
- Then turn your hands over, and **RECEIVE** from God. Let Him speak to your heart, and simply let His loving presence wash over you.

Journal It!

- Another exercise that helps me in my prayer life is a dedicated prayer journal. After spending some time quietly before God, take a few more minutes to write down how God spoke to you – what you heard, what you felt, how you were moved. In future months and years you will find great encouragement from going back over your prayer journals to see how God blessed you, prepared you, comforted you and challenged you at different stages in your journey.

Personal Study 2 – Intercessory Prayer

Once we hear from God, the natural response is a greater concern for those around us, especially those that belong to Him. And what more significant way have we been given to bless others than to pray for them? This is Jesus' primary role right now, and has been for nearly 2,000 years (Heb. 7:25) – has he been wasting his time? One of the last things Jesus did on this earth was to pray for his disciples, including us!

Read It! John 17

Reflect on It!

- Identify just two or three parts of this profoundly significant prayer that you feel God would have you focus on in your time of intercession today. As you think about and pray for the people God has placed in your life, what do you feel God desires for them? What grieves God's heart? What does our Lord want to see happen?

Pray It!

- Sketch out a prayer list of people close to you that you feel God is calling you to pray regularly for. Probably family members, friends in your small group, others in your church, church leaders and pastors, friends, neighbors, co-workers...
- Spend some time praying for these people. If your list is long, break it up so you can cover the people in a week or a month, with a few to focus on each day.

Journal It!

- Maybe during your prayer time God brought your attention to someone in particular. Spend a few extra minutes praying for that person – it may be the most important thing you do all day! Write down how God directed your prayer time today, including any impressions you had of people and needs He may have made you aware of.
- Be sure to contact the people God led you to pray for – He may be leading you into an opportunity to serve them!

Personal Study 3 - Evangelistic Prayer

Often our prayers focus on physical matters – like the health and safety of people we care about. There is nothing wrong with this, but God has made it clear that we are not to worry about this life (Matt. 6:25) but to focus instead on His kingdom (Matt. 6:33). After all, we can't know (for sure) if it is God's will to heal someone physically, or change their material circumstances. But we can always pray for the salvation and spiritual growth of others and know, without a doubt, that we are praying according to God's will. A very helpful book called, *Pray & Watch*, came out recently that teaches a short prayer to use all the time: "Father, send your Holy Spirit to work in the heart of _____, draw him to yourself and turn him into a kingdom laborer."

Read It! Psalm 103

Reflect on It!

- The goal for today is not to analytically study the passage, but to simply quiet your own thoughts in order to hear God's voice clearly in your heart. As you slowly and carefully read the passage, over and over, what do you hear God saying to you? What verse or verses is God using to speak to you?

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Lesson 6 - Holiness

Big Idea: God calls us to live out each day the reality of our righteousness in Christ

Objectives: as a result of this lesson, learners will...

- Know – the truth that in Christ, they are holy, forgiven and free
- Feel – inspired to live a life of constant worship and devotion to God
- Choose – to take specific steps to grow in an area of weakness

Discussion Starter:

- **When you hear the word, “holy” or “holiness,” what comes to mind?**
- **Do you typically think of other believers as holy?** Why or why not?
- **Do you naturally apply the word holy to yourself?** Why or why not?

The truth, according to God’s word, is that every believer IS holy – a “saint.”

More than 50 times in the New Testament the word, “saint” or “holy one” is used to describe believers. We know from the letters that contain these designations that the people in these churches were not “saintly” in a practical, lived-out sense – but that they were being described based on the theological truth of who they were in Christ. Check out Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 15:25; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Php. 1:1; Col. 1:2...

Focus: Truth and Action

Read Romans 12:1-2

- **What is the “therefore” there for?**
- **What is the central exhortation of v. 1?**
- How do you react to this word picture? Why?
- **Paul says this surrender of ourselves is our “spiritual act of worship” – how does this command fulfill God’s desire for worship in the OT (with animal sacrifices, etc.)?**
- **According to v. 2, how are we to continually be transformed?**

“No person can consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with the way he perceives himself.”
Neil Anderson,
Victory over the Darkness, p. 43

- See also Col. 3:1-2 – ‘set your minds on things above...’ What contributes to having a consistently renewed mind?

One thing to set our minds on is the truth of what God has done for us in Christ – as in the first 11 chapters of Romans! Let’s take a quick spin through Romans to see this truth:

- 1:16-17 – “The gospel... is the _____ of God for the salvation of everyone who believes... For in the gospel a _____ from God is revealed... that is by faith from first to last.”
- 1:18 – “The _____ of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men...”
- 2:1 – “_____, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else...”
- 3:9 – “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under _____.”
- 3:23-24 – “For _____ have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are _____ freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”
- 5:1 – “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith we have _____ with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 5:9 – “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be _____ from God’s wrath through him!”
- 5:19 – “Just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made _____.”
- 6:2 – “We _____ to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”
- 6:6 – “For we know that our _____ was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”
- 6:18 – “You have been set free from sin and have become _____ to righteousness.”
- 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is _____ in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- 7:25 – “I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s _____, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.”
- 8:1 – “Therefore there is now no _____ for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- 8:3-4 – “For what the law was powerless to do... God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be _____ met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the _____.”
- 8:9 – “You, however, are _____ not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit if the Spirit of God lives in you.”
- 8:11 – “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give _____ to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”
- 8:14 – “Those who are led by the Spirit are _____ of God.”

“Satan will try to convince you that you are an unworthy, unacceptable, sin-sick person who will never amount to anything in God’s eyes... Believing Satan’s lie will lock you into a defeated, fruitless life. But believing God’s truth about your identity will set you free.”

Neil Anderson,
Victory over the Darkness, p. 57

- 8:17 – “And if we are children, then we are _____ - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”
- 8:30 – “And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also _____.”
- 8:37 – “No, in all these things we are more than _____ through him who loved us.”
- 10:9-10 – “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your _____ that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Think about this: what the good news about Jesus reveals is that **“a righteousness from God,”** is now available to all who would believe! The righteousness, or justice, or holiness, of God Himself has been offered to you, if you would receive Jesus by faith! The law (i.e. the 10 commandments, etc.) could only set an external standard, presenting a picture of the righteousness of God. It could not grant people that righteousness, but could only show them how far they fell short of God's standard of perfection. But now, through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, the law-fulfilling righteousness of Christ Himself can be credited to those who trust in him – confessing him as Lord and believing in him in their hearts.

So if you have trusted in Jesus for salvation, then God has declared you righteous – not because of anything you have done, but entirely because of what Jesus did through his death and resurrection! This is the fundamental difference between the evangelical gospel and every other religion – the gospel calls people to trust in what Christ has **DONE**, while religion relies on what people can **DO** to find God or peace or whatever. Our growth in the faith is no different – we do not get saved by faith and then become holy by works. This was the great error of the Galatian church. No, having begun by faith – full reliance on the finished work of Christ – we must continue on, trusting in him to finish the work he started! To do otherwise, would be like trying to carry a sailboat!



This does not, however, mean that we have no part to play. Far from it! God Himself will provide the wind to guide and empower us, but we are responsible to set the sails of our heart, mind and body – keeping them in line with Him. This is where the spiritual habits we have been working on – of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, evangelism and service – when combined with the power of the Holy Spirit, produce real, ongoing change in our lives!

We have also seen, in looking at the spiritual cycles the Bible describes, that it is possible for believers to live after the flesh (their pre-Christian ways of thinking and acting) instead of

following the promptings of the Spirit (Romans 8:1-15).

So, Paul writes, we have an obligation to:

- “Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body... do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness” (Rom. 6:11-13);

- “Put to death the misdeeds of the body” (Rom. 8:13);
- “Live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature” (Gal. 5:16);
- “Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Eph. 4:22-24)
- “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature... Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” Col. 3:5,9-10

In a theological sense, the believer has ALREADY been covered with the righteousness of Christ – “All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

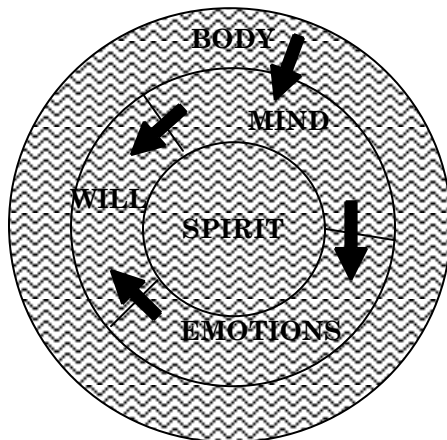
- Your **POSITION** = **declared righteous** in Christ, holy

But in a practical sense, the believer must CONSTANTLY choose to live out this truth, rather than going back to his old, sinful ways. (The diagram below is adapted from *Victory Over the Darkness*)

“Sanctification... is the process of becoming in your behavior what you already are in your identity.”
Neil Anderson,
Victory over the Darkness, p. 85

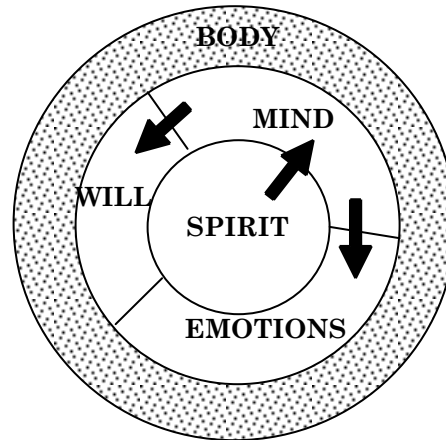
- Your **PRACTICE** = **becoming righteous** by the Spirit; putting off old, sinful ways of thinking and acting and putting on new, Christ-like ways of thinking and acting

Non-Christian
Life “in the flesh”



Apart from Christ, all people are “dead in their sins” (Eph. 2:1) – their spirit’s under God’s wrath, their minds driven by the sinful inclinations of their sensual nature, which results in emotional distress, a confused will and many physical problems as well.

Christian
Life “in the Spirit”



At conversion, a believer’s inner spirit is transformed and immersed with the Holy Spirit. By walking in the Spirit, tuning one’s mind to His leadings through prayer and Bible study, the emotions and will can be brought in line with the truth, and the habits of the body will follow.

Personal Study 1 – Righteous Saints

Paul wrote to the church in Colosse – a gathering of believers he had never met, but rather heard about through one of his colleagues in ministry, Epaphras (Col. 1:7-8). Paul's letter to this congregation, like its sister letter he likely wrote around the same time (Ephesians), is rich in both theological truth and practical application. He first addresses the believers as "the holy and faithful brothers in Christ," (1:2) – establishing right away the basis for his exhortation later to holy living (3:12). Essentially his message is that **Christ has made you holy already, now live that way!** Chapter one contains what many believe is an early Christian creed – establishing the truth of Jesus' person and work. Study this passage today and reflect on the powerful implications of its truth.

Read It! Colossians 1:15-23

Study It!

This is a structural outline for this passage – a grammatical breakdown of the verses, highlighting primary clauses and subordinate phrases (that modify or depend on the primary clauses). The purpose of such an outline is to break a passage down into its smallest parts and then put them back together with a greater awareness of what the central message is. As you read through the passage, make notes and observations about what you find. After this study, you'll have a chance to draw some conclusions and applications below.

<p>¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NOTES:</p> <p>Jesus is God in the flesh, God made visible Jesus is the "first" or highest in creation</p>
<p>¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.</p>	<p>Jesus is the creator of everything Jesus is the purpose of creation...</p>
<p>¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.</p>	
<p>¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.</p>	
<p>¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,</p>	
<p>²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.</p>	
<p>²¹ Once you were alienated from God</p>	

and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.	
²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—	
²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.	

- In vv. 15-19, what truths about Jesus does Paul establish? These describe the PERSON of Jesus – he is:
- After establishing the person of Jesus, Paul goes on to the WORK of Jesus in v. 20. What is the work Jesus accomplished?
- How did this work of Jesus apply to the believers in Collose (vv. 21-22)?
- The purpose or goal of Jesus' reconciling work was "to present you _____ in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation" (v. 22)
- What was the condition for appearing before Christ in this unstained condition (v. 23)?

Apply It!

- How did this study of Jesus person and work encourage you and speak to your heart?
- Why is it essential to have a clear understanding of the gospel before you "just try to be good"?
- Based on this passage, what is true of **YOU** right now?

Personal Study 2 – Rooted and Raised Up

Paul conveyed the clarity and beauty of the gospel – the good news of Jesus' person (God in a body) and work (reconciling sinful people to a holy God through his sacrificial death) – admitting that it is a mind-blowing mystery: “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). The heart of Paul's ministry was the proclamation of Christ – “admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ” (Col. 1:28). This shows again the two sided nature of our holiness, or sanctification: God has done the work of cleansing us from sin and making us holy (1:22), but we must continue to labor with wisdom and diligence, “struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me” (1:29). Today study and reflect on the truth of Colossians 2 to gain a deeper understanding of what is already yours in Christ!

Read It! Colossians 2:6-15

Study It!

- Make up your own structural outline of this passage so you can better see the primary and secondary clauses – analyze the way Paul builds his argument and makes his point.
- What is the primary command of this passage? (Hint: it's the main verb in v. 6 and it rhymes with “give bin shim.”)
- How many times does Paul use the phrase “in Christ,” “in him” or “with him”? What is the significance of this repetition?
- What is Paul's concern for the Colossians? (v. 8, see vv. 16-23)
- What is Paul's answer to the false teachings that were out there? (vv. 9-12) What makes this message about Christ so much better news than what some there were teaching?
- What truths about believers does Paul establish in this passage (vv. 9-15)?
- What significance do you see in “circumcision” (remember, this was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham – so that all the males of God's people

would be physically marked as His own, a process that involved some blood...)?
(vv. 11-12)

- What victories did Christ accomplish for us through his death and resurrection?
(vv. 13-15)

Apply It!

- Based on the truth of Jesus' person Paul described (ch. 1), and how he applied that to believers who are "in Christ" (ch. 2), what is true of you as one who is "in Christ"?
 - V. 6 – "Just as I received him as Lord, I need to continue to _____ in him."
 - V. 7 – "I need to be _____ and _____ in him, strengthened in the faith."
 - v. 10 "I have been given _____ in Christ."
 - V. 11 "In him I was also _____, in the putting off of the sinful nature."
 - V. 12 "having been _____ with him in baptism and _____ with him through my faith in the power of God."
 - V. 13 "When I was dead in my sins... God made me _____ with Christ."
 - V. 13 "God forgave me _____ my sins."
- Which of these truths is hardest for you to believe or accept? Why?
- In your struggle with sin, how does it make you feel to know that you have already been given "fullness in Christ," and that he has taken away from you the sinful nature, marking you as his own through spiritual "circumcision"?
- Write out a prayer of praise, celebrating what God has done for you in Christ:

Personal Study 3 – Put off, Put on!

Building on the truth of who Christ is and who we are in him, Paul now exhorts believers to live out the truth of our identity. He reviews the facts ("you have been raised... for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God... you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self...") then moves seamlessly into a call to holy living: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion..." Paul apparently has no problem with saying, almost in the same breath, "You are holy! Now, be holy!" This is the message of the gospel – you have been forgiven, set free, made righteous, sanctified, so live as God's chosen, precious, holy ones!

Read It! Colossians 3:1-17

Study It!

- Make another structural outline of this passage; make sure to highlight the key assertions (you are...) and imperatives or commands (you must...).
- According to vv. 1-2, what should be focused, or set on things above?

- What are the reasons for this focused pursuit (v. 1, 3-4)?

- What must be put off - put to death and gotten rid of (vv. 5-9)? Why (vv. 6-7,9)?

- Paul says "you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self" (vv. 9-10) – what is the significance of the tense of these verbs (i.e. are they past, present or future)?

- How is the new self "being renewed"? (v. 10)

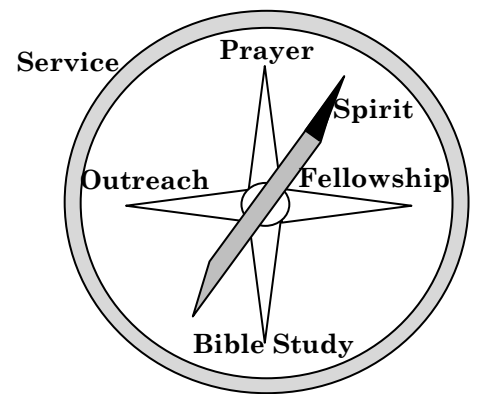
- What are believers to put on, or clothe themselves with (vv. 12-14)?

- How can believers put on all of these virtues? (vv. 15-16)

- What is the role of the church, the Christian community, in helping one another grow in these virtues? (v. 16)
- What is the purpose or goal of all of this? (v. 17)

Apply It!

- Do a little self-evaluation: on a scale from 1-10, how would you say you are doing at putting off the sinful nature? At putting on the love and righteousness of Christ?
- What are your primary means of setting your heart and mind on things above? (Review the 5 habits on the Compass, and ask for the Spirit's guidance!)



- What is an area you could use some help in "putting off" an ongoing sin or temptation? What steps will you take today to surrender that area to the Lordship of Christ?