

Essentials of the Faith

Important Basic Truths From The Bible

**A Prison Prevention Ministries Publication
Using Studies Prepared by
Creative Living International**

Sponsored by the ministry of:

Foreword

Welcome to this life-enriching seminar for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

The seminar is sponsored and led by:

This material is provided through the kind generosity of Creative Living International, a Christian organization designed to help individuals find practical biblical principles for today's living.

This booklet
belongs to: _____

Seminar
Leaders: _____

Essentials of the Faith

Important Basic Truths

From The Bible

1	The Bible	
	The Certainty of God's Word	4
2	Knowing God (I)	
	Seeing God as He Really Is	12
3	Knowing God (II)	
	Jonah Finds God's Grace	19
4	Knowing God (III)	
	Hallowed Be Thy Name	30
5	Jesus	
	The Picture of God We Need	37
6	The Holy Spirit	
	Power for Christian Living	48
7	Forgiveness	
	The Freedom of Forgiveness	58
8	Fully Known and Fully Loved	
	Sure Foundations for Self Worth	72
9	The Fulfillment of Prayer	82
10	The Fruit of the Spirit is...Love	94
11	Man's Predicament	
	Worship and Wholeness	105
12	Joy in the Midst of Difficulty	113
	Bibliography	120

Lesson 1

REASON TO CELEBRATE: THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S WORD

One of the celebration themes of the Psalms is that God has given us clear answers to life's hardest questions in His Word, the Bible. While He did not have to make Himself known to His creatures, God has chosen to reveal to us who He is and what our relationship with Him can be. The Scriptures also give us concrete wisdom about life's choices. Amid a world of uncertainty and changing philosophies, the Bible is the sure guide for life we all need. Through His Word, God provides us with principles which enable us to experience fulfillment here and now and in the life hereafter. These aspects of God's revelation alone can provide for all our deepest needs.

The Bible, written by human authors whose words and thoughts were inspired by God (2 Peter 1:20-21), has stood the test of time like no other publication. Its 66 books were written by some 40 authors over a 1,500-year period in three languages on three continents. These authors for the most part did not know one another, and they varied greatly in occupation (i.e., Luke, a physician; Amos, a farmer; David, a king) and education (Peter, a fisherman probably with little education, and Moses, schooled in Egypt's finest institutions of learning). Even with these enormous variables, the Bible unfolds in an orderly fashion from beginning to end and exhibits one theme throughout: redemption.¹ God, who made us intellectual beings, has given us enough logic in these facts alone to trust the Scriptures as His words, not man's.

Handling life in all its complexity and change is difficult. Youth looks for a magic day when the difficulties of life are conquered while maturity recognizes that life never does become easy. We can take the hand of God to walk through life, and faith in Him can lift us above the circumstances. But our hand only reaches God's as we hear and embrace His words to us in the Bible. As we receive and trust God's Word, He leads us to the spiritual health and freedom that brings rest amid life's circumstances.

This is news worth celebrating! The psalmist wrote, "I rejoice in following

your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free" (Ps 119:16, 32). In this study on *Reasons to Celebrate*, we will look at the wonderful gift of God's Word.

1. What is the result of looking for understanding about God and life apart from the Bible?

2. Read Psalm 19:7-11. What adjectives or phrases describe God's Word (or laws) and the benefits of embracing godly principles?

3. How does Psalm 33:6-9 describe the power of God's Word?

4. a. John 1 describes Jesus Christ as the "Word" of God incarnate. What do these verses tell us about Jesus?

John 1:1, 3, 14

b. What does Colossians 1:16-17 add to this description of Christ?

5. According to Jesus' parable in Matthew 13:18-23 (cf. 13:3-8), what can keep God's Word from taking root in our lives?

6. a. How do the following verses describe the type of response to God's Word that brings the greatest blessing?

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Psalm 119:11, 97 (Deuteronomy 6:6-8)

b. What other decisions do the Scriptures encourage us to make regarding God's Word?

Psalm 119:36-37

Psalm 119:127-128

Psalm 130:5

7. What do these verses declare about God's Word?

Psalm 111:7-8

Psalm 119:89, 152, 160

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hebrews 4:12 (Psalm 119:96)

8. a. It is important to remember that God has spoken to us in His Word primarily to draw us to a loving relationship with Him. While knowledge of the Bible is valuable, it is no substitute for intimacy with the living Lord. The psalmist trusted God's Word because he knew God's character. List the attributes of God the psalmist mentions that encourage us to freely and frequently come to God as our very best friend.

Psalm 119:64a

Psalm 119:68a

Psalm 119:73a

Psalm 119:90

Psalm 119:114a

Psalm 119:132

Psalm 119:168b

b. The following verses capture the beauty of the psalmist's relationship with the Lord. How would you describe this relationship?

Psalm 119:145-149

9. The more we comprehend God's gracious character, the more certain we become that His Word is a gift to celebrate, a sure foundation upon which to

build our lives. Summarize the benefits we will experience as we submit to God's way from a heart of trust.

Psalm 119:9, 11

Psalm 119:29

Psalm 119:24, 105

Psalm 119:28, 50

Psalm 119:92-93

Psalm 119:32, 45

Psalm 119:165

SUMMARY

10. a. The Bible has been called God's love letter to us. What is the primary purpose of God's Word?

b. How does your perception of God's character affect your trust in His Word? How does God's character help you trust the Bible?

11. a. What decisions about God's Word do you want to make on a daily basis and why?

b. What obstacles to God's Word taking root in your life do you want to avoid?

12. What needs does God desire to meet in your life through His Word? Why is the certainty of His Word a reason to celebrate?

LESSON 1 NOTES

1 Redemption. "The concept of redemption can only be fully understood by glimpsing the biblical context of human beings held captive by the power of forces they cannot defeat. Only through intervention can that slavery be broken and freedom accomplished, often by paying a ransom. In the Old Testament, God intervened on behalf of Israel, taking the initiative in the great redemptive event from Egypt, the exodus (see Genesis 15:13-14; Exodus 1:11-14; 12:31-42; Psalm 105:23-39), where the goal was the enjoyment of life in the Promised Land. References in the Old Testament to redemption from sin point forward to the redemption from sin accomplished in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24; Colossians 1:13-14). Though in the human arena freedom can be purchased through money, no human being can break the bondage of another human being to sin. No person can redeem another human being. We are all slaves to sin. Christ, however, paid the ransom with His blood, His death (Exodus 12:12-13; Leviticus 11, 14; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:6). The goal of our redemption is to enjoy freedom from the guilt and power of sin and to live a life of service that reflects our new standing (Romans 3:24; 6:7, 22; Galatians 5:1, 13; 1 Peter 2:16). The goal will be fully achieved only at the resurrection on the last day (Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:14)." *The NIV Topical Study Bible*, pp. 137-138, 1391.

Lesson 2

SEEING GOD AS HE REALLY IS

History has proven that what a society believes about God has a profound impact on the direction that society takes toward good or evil. In the same way, what we believe as individuals about God has a profound impact on our character and overall life experience. In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer states: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. For this reason...the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like. We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."

Even though a true perception of God is so important, too few possess it. Psychologists have discovered that our images of God are derived largely in our primary years (ages 0-6) from the characteristics of significant authority figures, such as parents. Our beliefs about God can also be influenced by teachers at school, church leaders, or by society in general. Consequently, ill treatment or inaccurate teaching from parents, teachers, or religious leaders can combine with societal trends, such as denying the existence of any absolute truth, to create a very warped perception of God in our minds. As a result, we may view God as austere and harsh, passive and weak, human and temperamental, unknowable, or simply non-existent.

But an understanding of God is available to anyone who desires to know Him. God has revealed Himself to us through the wonders of creation, through the Scriptures, and most amazingly through His Son, Jesus Christ, who "became flesh and lived for a while among us" (John 1:14). The redemption² story in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ declares the infinite and humanly incomprehensible love of God toward us, His creatures.

We can undo distorted thinking of the past and grow in a true knowledge of

God, and that is a reason to celebrate. As we grow in an understanding of His greatness and goodness, we will discover God to be "easy to live with"³ and most worthy of our praise. We will summarize the true character of God revealed in the Psalms as we celebrate the gift of seeing God as He really is.

1. a. Give some reasons people do not possess a correct understanding of God?

b. What can be the results of not perceiving God accurately?

c. What does Romans 1:25, 28-32 suggest about the society that does not respond to God's revelation of Himself?

2. According to these Scriptures, how does God reveal Himself to us?

Romans 1:20 (Psalm 19:1)

Psalm 119:130

Hebrews 1:1-3a

John 1:14

John 14:21, 23

3. a. What do these psalms state about the Lord's **sovereignty and majesty**?

Psalms 47:2

Psalms 96:6-7

Psalms 113:4-6 (Psalms 89:5-8, 11-14)

Psalms 145:13a

b. His **unchanging and eternal** nature?

Numbers 23:19

Psalm 102:27

Psalm 135:13

Hebrews 13:8

4. a. How do these psalms describe the Lord as the **creator of the universe?**

Psalm 33:6-9

Psalm 104:24 (Psalm 104:5-23, 25-26)

Psalm 146:6

Psalm 147:4

b. As the **sustainer of all creation**?

Psalm 145:15-16

Psalm 147:8-9 (65:9-13)

5. a. What do the Scriptures declare about God's **power and wisdom**?

1 Chronicles 29:11-12

Luke 1:37

Job 42:2

Romans 11:33

b. About God's **love and compassion**?

Psalm 145:8-9

6. What was the psalmists' response to the true revelation of God?

Psalm 66:1-4

Psalm 95:6-7a

SUMMARY

7. a. Why is it important that you have an accurate perception of God?

b. What can hinder you from seeing God as He really is?

Note: If you can identify specific reasons your image of God or Jesus Christ has been damaged, perhaps you would like to take a moment to ask God to remove these obstacles to seeing Him as He really is.

c. What sources of God's revelation of Himself can you meditate upon in order to receive and maintain a true perception of God?

8. How would you summarize the truths about God you have studied in this lesson?

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961), pp. 9-13.

2 Reference: Note 1, *Redemption*, p. 11.

3 Reference: "God is Easy to Live With" on p.27.

Lesson 3

JONAH FINDS GOD'S GRACE

Jonah 1:17-2:10

While the sailors on the ship worshiped the Lord who had saved them, God took care of Jonah, now in the raging sea. Never intending to take Jonah's life, God provided a great fish to swallow and accommodate Jonah for three days and nights while the prophet thought things through.

Jonah sat in total darkness, breathing stale, humid air. "I'm in a fish," he must have marveled. "I can't believe I'm in . . . a fish." He must have wondered if the storm had calmed for the men who had followed his wild suggestion to throw him overboard. He knew it was true when he told them, "It's my fault this great storm has come upon you." God had told him clearly to go to the Assyrian city of Nineveh and preach repentance, but he had refused to be the means of God's grace to *those* people.

His situation was nightmarish, like being buried alive. But the Lord had saved him from drowning, and Jonah began to thank Him. In a prayer obviously recorded later, Jonah recounted how the fear of death had gripped him as he was tossed into the raging sea. But God graciously delivered him. In a matter of minutes, Jonah had gone from feeling banished by God because of his disobedience to being renewed in faith with confidence to cling to God's love and mercy.

As a faithful prophet, Jonah had vowed to obey God. He renewed that vow, because he had discovered anew and in a dramatic way that "salvation [i.e., deliverance] comes from the Lord" (2:9). With this, the Lord commanded the fish to expel Jonah onto dry ground.

Read Jonah 1:17-2:10.

1. What aspects of God's character do you see in Jonah 1:17?

Reference: *a great fish swallowed Jonah*, p. 28.

2. How did Jonah respond to the situation (2:1-2)?

3. How did Jonah's perspective of the future change inside the fish? At what did Jonah now marvel (2:3-4)?

Note: *holy temple* probably refers to the Temple in Jerusalem; vs. 7 refers to God's heavenly throne (cf. Psalm 11:4). In the Jewish mind, these were inseparably associated.

4. a. How did Jonah describe the traumatic experience he had just been through (2:5-6a)?

b. For what did Jonah now praise God (2:6b)?

5. In this prayer account, penned after Jonah's complete rescue, how did Jonah describe his experience in the great fish (2:7)?

6. What did this experience validate for Jonah (2:8)?

7. What was Jonah's promise and final declaration as he realized the sovereignty and goodness of the Lord (2:9)?

8. Describe Jonah's deliverance (2:10).

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Knowing God

No doubt Jonah was awed at what he had just been through. He had felt the water engulf him and push him toward the ocean floor, yet he was still alive and breathing. He discovered God had put him in a fish for a time out! Jonah was filled with awe, then thanks and praise.

The prophet had experienced the mercy of God. He had seen the Lord's patience firsthand with the idolatrous spiritual and political leaders of Israel. Greed, sexual perversion, temple and street prostitution, corruption in courts, bribery -- all were manifestations of rebellion toward God in the Northern Kingdom where Jonah was a prophet.

Over the previous 100 years of God's warnings through the prophets, Israel's decadence had only increased. Prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Amos warned that God would withdraw His protection and allow enemies to destroy Israel if the nation did not turn back to Him. Sometimes the leaders and people gave lip service to God, but after He rescued them, they went back to their old,

corrupt ways. The longer God was patient with them, the less the people of Israel took the threats seriously. Instead, they presumed on God's mercy and depended on their own resources and alliances with other nations for protection. Still God was patient because of His love for Israel.

Jonah had a firm grasp of the love and compassion of the Lord. But now, like Israel, his rebellion toward God had taken him down, down, down . . . into a living grave. He was still alive, but there was no hope for him if God didn't save him. In the dark belly of the fish, Jonah meditated on the amazing character of God.

The Book of Jonah wonderfully displays many attributes of God. The Lord is **sovereign** and **all-powerful**--He used storm, sea and fish, later plant, worm and wind, to help Jonah get back on track. The Lord is **present everywhere (omnipresent)**--He alone knew Jonah's whereabouts and was attentive to his prayer. The Lord is **just**--He held the prophet accountable for his sin. The Lord is **merciful**—He spared Jonah's life and helped him get back into His will. The Lord is **patient**—He let Jonah move through the process of making a change of heart. The Lord is **forgiving** and **gracious**. As Jonah declared, "Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the *grace* that could be theirs" (2:8). Finally, God is the only true **Savior**. "Salvation comes from the Lord" (2:9). Only God can give us true security and safety.

Jonah illustrates what is still true today. Both nations and individuals will stand or fall on what they believe about God and if they choose to revere Him. To face the strong evils of this world without Him on our side is to invite destruction. But He promises to protect those who know Him, trust Him, and respect His sovereignty.

As we continue our study, we will look at the attributes of God displayed in the Book of Jonah that encourage us to love, trust and obey the sovereign Lord.

1. The omnipresent (everywhere present) and omniscient (knows everything) nature of God is reflected in Jonah's experience. What do the following

passages tell us about the presence of God and His knowledge of us?

Psalm 139:1-4

Psalm 139:7-10

Proverbs 15:3

Jeremiah 23:24

2. a. Why are these truths about God uncomfortable for some?

b. Why is God's presence and knowledge comforting to others?

c. What must a person first grasp about God in order to want to be close to Him?

Psalm 103:8

Reference: A. W. Tozer excerpt, p. 27.

3. What do the following verses tell us about the mercy of God that is reflected in Jonah's experience?

Psalm 103:9-12

Psalm 103:13-14

4. Jonah was disciplined by God like a son. What is true of God's discipline, according to Hebrews 12:10-11?

Note: Holiness includes moral excellence, perfect righteousness, purity, and rectitude. It is being set apart from sin. God is holy.

5. God's personal care for His children is evident in Jonah's experience. What is His promise to us as we make Him Lord of our lives?

Psalm 32:8 (73:24)

Psalm 121:3, 8

Isaiah 33:6

6. The Book of Jonah displays the sovereignty of God. What do the following verses reveal about this attribute of God?

Isaiah 40:22-23 (12, 15, 17)

Psalms 33:6-9

Psalms 113:4-6

7. What do these verses reveal about the Lord's righteousness and justice?

Psalms 98:9b

Psalms 145:17

8. Jonah declared, "Salvation comes from the Lord" (2:9). According to the following passage, how can we receive His salvation?

Psalm 33:16-19

9. Jonah was filled with praise as he contemplated God's greatness. How does the psalmist encourage us to respond to the character of God in Psalm 100?

SUMMARY

10. What truths about God stand out to you from Jonah's experience thus far?

11. Do you ever feel alone? What do the verses in this lesson reveal, and how can they help you when you feel alone?

12. How does knowing God's attributes make a difference as we face fearful situations?

13. a. How did it help Jonah to praise the Lord in his situation?

b. How can acknowledging God's character and work (praise) help you in the difficult situations you facing today?

***"God is Easy to Live With"* by A. W. Tozer
(Excerpt)**

It is most important to our spiritual welfare that we hold in our minds always a right conception of God. If we think of Him as cold and exacting we shall find it impossible to love Him, and our lives will be ridden with servile fear. If, again, we hold Him to be kind and understanding our whole inner life will mirror that idea.

The truth is that God is the most winsome of all beings and His service one of unspeakable pleasure. He is all love, and those who trust Him need never know anything but that love. He is just, indeed, and He will not condone sin; but through the blood of the everlasting covenant He is able to act toward us exactly as if we had never sinned. Toward the trusting sons of men His mercy will always triumph over justice.

The fellowship of God is delightful beyond all telling. He communes with His redeemed ones in an easy, uninhibited fellowship that is restful and healing to the soul. He is not sensitive nor selfish nor temperamental. What He is today we shall find Him tomorrow and the next day and the next year. He is not hard to please, though He may be hard to satisfy. He expects of us only what He has Himself first supplied. He is quick to overlook imperfections when He knows we meant to do His will. He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than galaxies of new created worlds.

How good it would be if we could learn that God is easy to live with. He remembers our frame and knows that we are dust.

Some of us are religiously jumpy and self-conscious because we know that God sees our every thought and is acquainted with all our ways. We need not be. God is the sum of all patience and the essence of kindly good will. We please Him most, not by frantically trying to make ourselves good, but by throwing ourselves into His arms with all our imperfections, and believing that He understands everything and loves us still.

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 a great fish swallowed Jonah (1:17). “Critics scoff at the miracle of a great fish swallowing the prophet. But scholars have demonstrated the validity of such an event (e.g., A.J. Wilson, “Sign of the Prophet Jonah and Its Modern Confirmations,” *Princeton Theological Review* 25. October 1927, pp. 630-42; George F. Howe, “Jonah and the Great Fish,” *Biblical Research Monthly*. January 1973, pp. 6-8). The “great fish” was possibly a mammal, a sperm whale (*Catodon Macrocephalus*). Sperm whales are known to have swallowed unusually large objects including even a 15-foot shark (Frank T. Bullen, *Cruise of the Cachalot Round the World after Sperm Whales*. London: Smith, 1898). Others have written that whale sharks (the *Rhineodon Typicus*) have swallowed men who later were found alive in the sharks’ stomachs.

Several arguments support the historicity of the Book of Jonah: (1) Known cities are mentioned in the book, including Nineveh (1:2; 3:2-4, 6-7; 4:11), Tarshish (1:3; 4:2), and Joppa (1:3). (2) Jonah is viewed as a historical person, not a fictional character. He was said to be a prophet from Gath Hopher (2 Kings 14:25) who lived in the reign of a historical person, Jeroboam II. (3) Jesus recognized the historicity of Jonah (Matthew 12:41; Luke 11:29-30, 32). If the story of Jonah is nonliteral (i.e., fiction, allegory, or parable), such a literary form is highly unusual, different from all the other prophetic books.” Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, pp. 1463-1464.

“Many have tried to dismiss this miraculous event as fiction, but the Bible does not describe it as a dream or a legend. We should not explain away this miracle as if we could pick and choose which of the miracles in the Bible we believe and which ones we don’t. That kind of attitude would allow us to question any part of the Bible and cause us to lose our trust in the Bible as God’s true and reliable word. Jonah’s experience was used by Christ himself as an illustration of Christ’s death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39,40).” *The NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 1562.

If God created and sustains heaven and earth, the miracles of Jonah are well within His reach.

Lesson 4

KNOWING GOD

“Hallowed be your name.”

How easy it is for us to rush into God's presence with an urgent concern or list of concerns which we inform Him about (as though He doesn't know) and then instruct Him how to deal with.

But Jesus teaches us to begin prayer with, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name." Herein lies an important principle of a powerful and fulfilling prayer life. We should begin prayer by turning our focus on our heavenly Father, opening ourselves to His presence, putting ourselves under His sovereignty and remembering who He is. When we start there, our concerns may well diminish in size in light of the goodness and greatness of the Lord who bids us come to Him in prayer.

What does the phrase, "hallowed be your name," mean? We must go back in biblical history to understand. The name of God was so holy to the Jews of old that they refused to pronounce it. When they read the Scriptures aloud, they did not say the word, which consisted of four consonants, transliterated JHWH, which later became Jehovah or Yahweh. When they came upon the name, they substituted the word *Adonai*, which means Lord. The word LORD in the English Bible is usually the translation of JHWH.

But when we see "thy name" (KJV) or "your name" in the Bible, it does not just stand for Yahweh. The "name" of God biblically stands for the whole being of God. In other words, to know His name is to know His character, His personality, His temperament, His love, His mercy, His power. For example, when the Psalmist declares, "...those who know Your name put their trust in You" (Psalm 9:10), he is saying, "Those who truly know who and what You are put their trust in You."

In the same way, the psalmist who wrote, "Some boast of chariots, and some of horses; but we boast of the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7), was saying that Israel took pride and found her identity and strength in knowing God.

God has revealed Himself through the inspired Scriptures and through the experiences of people who walked with Him--individuals like Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets and the Apostles of the New Testament. Most powerfully, God has allowed us to know Him through the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is “the exact representation of His being” (Hebrews 1:3).¹ As we study the character of God revealed in these ways, and as we walk through life with Him, we grow in the knowledge of God that is the basis for truly hallowing His name.

To *hallow* the name of God, then, is to magnify, honor and revere who He is. We do this when we worship and praise Him, reminding ourselves of His glory and His lovingkindness seen throughout the Bible and experienced in our lives. In this lesson, we will make some observations about this very important first step in prayer.

1. a. What can easily be our focus when we come to God in prayer?

- b. What does God want us to do with our concerns? Philippians 4:6

2. a. What does it mean to "hallow" God's name before we make requests in prayer?

- b. Why do you think this is important?

3. The commentary stated that the *name* of God in the Bible stands for the whole

being of God. To know His name is to know His character, His personality, His temperament, His love, His mercy, His power. To better understand this concept, think of someone you know and love and describe that person.

To "hallow" this person's "name" is to respect and expound on all these qualities.

4. At this point in your spiritual journey, what do you understand to be true about God? How would you describe Him?

Reference: Note 1, *God has revealed Himself*, p. 35.

5. Psalm 145 is one of many passages of Scripture that hallows the name of God. What phrases describe the character and majesty of the One who bids us come to Him as a loving heavenly Father?

Psalm 145:1-7

Psalm 145:8-13a

Psalm 145:13b-16

Psalm 145:17-21

Reference: *Optional Study on the Attributes of God*, p. 35.

6. How do the following verses describe the essence of God revealed in Christ?
Colossians 1:15-17, 19

Reference: Note 2, *firstborn over all creation*, p. 36.

Philippians 2:5-11

Reference: Note 1, *Why did Christ have to die in my place?* p. 102.

Isaiah 9:6

7. a. It is powerful to pray in the “name,” or authority, of Jesus. When He is Lord of our lives, what does Jesus promise? John 15:7

Note: As with the Father, the *name* of Jesus sums up the Person. To pray in Jesus’ name is to pray in accordance with His character and is aimed at carrying forth God’s work as God wills.

b. What is the evidence of God’s character in us if we are abiding in Christ?
John 15:12

8. How does Psalm 100 reflect Jesus' teaching to begin prayer honoring God's name and will?

SUMMARY

9. a. What does the "name" of the Lord mean in the Scriptures?

b. What does it mean to "hallow" His name?

10. How can these build your ability to truly "hallow" the name of the Lord?

--Bible study.

--Praying about everything (Philippians 4:6).

--Allowing Jesus Christ to be Lord of your life (John 15:4-7).

11. What have you observed in this lesson about the phrase "hallowed be your name" in the Lord's Prayer?

Optional study on the attributes of God.

His Majesty: 1 Chronicles 29:12
Faithfulness: Psalm 36:5
Goodness: Nahum 1:7
Grace: Romans 3:23-24 (Titus 3:7)
God's Graciousness and Patience: Psalm 103:8
Greatness: Psalm 145:3
Holiness: (purity; separate from sin) Psalm 99:5 (Isaiah 5:16)
His Immutability (He does not change): Psalm 102:27 (Heb. 13:8)
Impartiality: Job 34:19 (Acts 10:34-35)
Justice: Psalm 33:5
Love: John 3:16
Mercy: Psalm 103:10-12 (Lamentations 3:22-23)
Omnipotence (all-powerful): Luke 1:37 (Job 42:2)
Omnipresence (everywhere present): Psalm 139:7-10
Omniscience (all-knowing): Hebrews 4:13 (Job 31:4)
Providence (care):
 Providing: Philippians 4:19
 Protecting: Psalm 91:4
 Guiding: Proverbs 2:8
Righteousness: Deuteronomy 32:4
Sovereignty: Daniel 2:20-22
His Ways and Laws: Psalm 18:30; Psalm 19:7-8,11
Understanding: Psalm 147:5 (1 Chronicles 28:9b)
Wisdom: Isaiah 28:29 (James 1:5)

For further study: The Knowledge of the Holy by A. W. Tozer; Knowing God by J. I. Packer; Your God Is Too Small by J. B. Phillips

LESSON 4 NOTES

1 God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures through the experiences of people who walked with Him. At 99 years of age, Abraham discovered Him to be *God Almighty* (El Shaddai) as He enabled Sarah (90) to give birth to Isaac, the long promised heir (Genesis 17:1). Later, in the dramatic story of Abraham being willing to give up his son in obedience to God, the patriarch discovered *the Lord*

our provider (Genesis 22:14) as the Lord Himself made provision for the sacrifice. Four hundred years later, God revealed himself to Moses from the burning bush as the one and only God, the eternal God, the “I AM,” the God of the unspeakable name JHWH. Then in the Exodus story as the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness, God revealed himself as *the Lord your healer* (Exodus 15:25-26) and as *the Lord our banner or victory* (Exodus 17:14-15).

Later in time, Gideon discovered the Lord as *our peace* (Judges 6:22-24). Isaiah foresaw a much different revelation of God to come as he prophesied: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . and His name will be called ‘*Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*’” (Isaiah 9:6). Seven hundred years later, the angel came to Joseph in his distress and told him, “. . . do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit . . . and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:20-21). Jesus means *Yahweh saves* or *Yahweh is salvation*. After the resurrection, Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, declared to thousands, “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is *no other name* under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Paul declared that God “exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the *name that is above every name*, that at the *name of Jesus* every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth . . .” (Philippians 2:9-10).

Through these and other revelations of Scripture, we read of who God is. As we walk with the Lord, we grow personally in the knowledge of Him as Almighty, Everlasting, Healer, Victory and Peace-giver, Provider, Savior. And above all is the name of Jesus. Everett Fullam on *Living the Lord’s Prayer*, pp. 34-40.

2 *firstborn over all creation* (Colossians 1:15). “Just as the firstborn son had certain privileges and rights in the Biblical world, so also Christ has certain rights in relation to all creation—priority, preeminence and sovereignty (vv. 16-18).” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1814.

Lesson 5

INTRODUCTION

More than any other New Testament writing, the Book of Hebrews draws the Old Testament together with the New. It presents the Lord Jesus Christ as our eternal advocate before God and proves Christianity to be God's plan of the ages to redeem mankind and draw people to Himself.

This great masterpiece of Scripture was written primarily to first century Jewish Christians who were suffering persecution for their faith. Many were tempted to renounce their new-found faith in Jesus Christ and return to the safety of the Jewish religious system established under Moses (10:38-39). The anonymous author of Hebrews exhorts these believers to hold fast to their faith and press on to spiritual maturity, basing his appeal on the supremacy of Christ and the Christian faith.

This is why the basic theme of Hebrews is found in the word "better," first describing the preeminence of Christ in His Person and work (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24), then describing the Christian faith. Christ is better than Moses; He created Moses. He is superior to Aaron and the priesthood; His sacrifice need never be repeated. Christ is better than the Mosaic Law; He mediates a better covenant of grace. The new covenant in Jesus Christ is shown to be the completion of Judaism, fulfilling the laws and prophecies of the Old Testament.

The author states that while other religions hold value, faith in Christ is superior because it is God's way to know Him personally. Through His new covenant, we are made right with God and enabled to come into His presence, not by struggling to keep rules and rituals, but rather by simply trusting in the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. No other religion, including Judaism with its grand Old Testament Scriptures, gives a person forgiveness, new life within, peace and an eternal personal relationship with God as His beloved child. This relationship fulfills our deepest needs, making Christianity a faith that works.

When difficult times come or in the daily challenges of life, it is easy to become

weariness and give up truly practicing a life of faith. Persecution, hardship, doubt or the difficulty of living for God may cause us to feel that we need to add something to the simplicity of trusting Jesus. In such times, we may be tempted to revert to just going through the motions of being a Christian. Or we may abandon faith in God altogether. Yet, the Book of Hebrews encourages us to persevere as we "fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:2). We will be refreshed in our walk of faith as we look at the greatness of the Son of God---His superiority and sufficiency for all who trust in Him.

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST

Hebrews 1

The Book of Hebrews was probably written around 64-68 A.D. before the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D. While the teachings of Hebrews sound like those of Paul, most scholars doubt the apostle wrote the book. Paul always identified himself in his letters, and the style and approach of the author are different from any other New Testament book. Clearly, the writer knew Paul well and had often listened to his preaching. Luke, Barnabas, Apollos and Priscilla have all been suggested, but only God knows the true author.

The scattered Jewish believers to whom this letter was written were probably going through terrible persecution from both Romans and Jews. Perhaps they had expected Christ to return immediately to set up His kingdom. When He had not, they needed to be reassured that Jesus was the Christ (Messiah) and that Christianity was the true worship of God. They needed to see the futility of returning to the old life that was inherently inferior to the new life found in Jesus Christ. They needed to see how Judaism's prophecies, laws and promises had all been fulfilled in the Son of God.

The writer proves to fellow Jewish Christians that Jesus Christ is superior to all those whom Jewish people had considered God's authorities—the prophets, angels, Moses and the priests.

Read Hebrews 1:1-3.

1. How has God communicated to mankind (1:1-2a)?

Note: *prophets* here refer to all Old Testament writers because their testimony prepared the way for Christ. *In these last days* signifies the Messianic (Christ) era inaugurated by the incarnation of Jesus.

2. What is true of God's Son (1:2b-3)?

Reference: Note 1, *exact representation*, p. 44.

Read Hebrews 1:4-14.

3. People revere angelic beings. What is their purpose according to Heb 1:14?

Reference: Note 2, *angels*, p. 44.

4. a. What name did Old Testament prophecies give the Messiah (Jesus) that proves Him superior to angels (1:4-5)?

b. The author quotes Psalm 45, a Messianic prophecy describing the reign of God's Son. What would make angels worship Jesus (Hebrews 1:6-9)?

c. What does the author add to this as he quotes the prophecy of Psalm 102 (Hebrews 1:10-12)?

5. What does the author show God (the Father) promised His Son as he quotes the Messianic prophecy of Psalm 110 (Hebrews 1:13)?

Reference: Note 3, *The Trinity*, p. 45.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Picture of God We Need

We only have to look into nature to see that God is a being far transcendent to human beings. We might be able to draw an ant, but we could not make one or give it life. We can learn about the human mind and create computers, but crafting a human mind is beyond us.

Creation—the expansive universe hurling about our tiny earth with its amazing animal, plant and sea worlds---so demonstrates the awesome nature of God that people of all cultures have feared Him. Around the world, religions have been established with one or more fearful gods to explain creation and human existence. Each religion has rituals and works required to appease their gods.

But in Christ God has done the unimaginable in order to reveal His true nature to mankind. The Son of God became one of us to communicate and demonstrate God's gracious and righteous nature and His great love for us. Hebrews echoes other New Testament passages that reveal that "the Son is the radiance of the Father's glory and the exact representation of His being" (1:3).

When life becomes difficult and we wonder if God is good, we need only to look at God's character in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus to be assured of God's love. In this lesson, we will take a brief look at some important aspects of God's character taught and demonstrated by Jesus, the exact image of God.

1. What did Jesus say about Himself?

John 14:9-11 (12:49-50)

*Verses in parenthesis () are always optional in **Building on the Basics** section.*

Matthew 28:18 (after His resurrection)

Reference: Note 3, *Trinity*, p. 45, and Note 4, *Claims of Jesus*, p. 45.

2. a. The teachings of Jesus reveal what God is like. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) contains many of Jesus' teachings.

What kind of person does God bless, according to the teaching of Matthew 5:3-10 (list only descriptions; i.e. "the peacemaker")?

b. What did this reveal about God?

c. What did Jesus both teach and model that shows us God's goodness?

Matthew 5:16

Matthew 5:43-45 (Matthew 7:12)

Matthew 6:19-21,24c

Mark 12:30-31

3. The miracles of Jesus demonstrated God's power and compassion as well as proved Jesus was from God. At least 24 miracles of healing and deliverance, three of raising the dead, and nine showing power over nature (ex: calming a storm; feeding 5,000) are recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These were only a few of the miracles of Jesus (cf. Luke 6:19; 9:11; Matthew 4:24; 9:36). What do these miracles tell us about the character of the Father as seen in His Son?

Mark 1:40-41

Mark 6:34, 38-44

Luke 7:11-16

4. Jesus told many parables to reveal God to us. What did He teach about the love of His heavenly Father in Luke 15:11-24?

5. Jesus fulfilled 300 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah who would come to save Israel. Isaiah's prophecy, written around 700 B.C., precisely describes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for man's sin.

Review Isaiah 53:4-6, 11-12. What did Jesus demonstrate about the heavenly Father through His death and resurrection?

Romans 8:31-32, 34-35a, 38-39

Reference: Note 5, *Why God gave His Son*, p. 46.

SUMMARY

6. Why is Jesus a higher authority than the prophets and angels whom people esteem?

7. As the exact representation of God's being, what does Jesus show us about the true nature of God?

8. a. Have any recent negative circumstances tempted you to doubt the goodness or love of God toward you?

b. Of what does fixing your eyes on Jesus assure you?

LESSON 5 NOTES

1 exact representation (1:3). "Not only is Jesus the exact representation of God, but He is God himself—the very God who spoke in Old Testament times. He is eternal; He worked with the Father in creating the world (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). He is the full revelation of God. You can have no clearer view of God than by looking at Christ. Jesus Christ is the complete expression of God in a human body." *The Life Application Bible*, p. 2219.

2 angels (22:43). Angels are spiritual beings, created by God early in creation. Though we know only three by name—Michael, Gabriel and Satan—the Bible refers to numerous ranks and divisions. Satan is the leader of the company of evil angels, while good angels are under the authority of God. The duties of God's angels include praising and worshiping God, taking messages from God to man, and providing for or protecting God's people. *NIV Topical Bible*, p. 1367.

Also, *Angels* (Psalm 34:7). According to the Bible, angels surround us

continually. They are created immortal beings who serve God and believers. An angel is physically powerful; for example, one angel effortlessly moved the huge stone from the tomb of Jesus, a stone three men would struggle to displace. An angel closed the mouth of the lion in Daniel 6:22. Angels are usually invisible to our eyes, but they can become visible (ex.: Genesis 16:7; Numbers 22:23; Luke 1:28). When angels do appear, they are usually glorious and stunningly beautiful so as to cause amazement in those who witness their presence (Luke 1:11; Matt 28:2-3; Daniel 10:6; Revelation 10:1). II Corinthians 11:14 states that Satan can make himself appear as an angel of God. "Whether visible or invisible, however, God causes his angels to go before us, to be with us, and to follow after us. All of this can be fully understood only by believers who know that angelic presences are in control of the battlefield about us, so that we may stand (Isaiah 26:3) with complete confidence in the midst of the fight." Billy Graham, *Angels, God's Secret Agents*, p. 45.

3 *The Trinity.* While "Trinity" as a word is not in the Bible, Christian doctrine historically has used this term to describe God as He has revealed Himself. The Bible explains that God is one God in three equal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Certain passages in the Old Testament hint of a plurality in God (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8). The Old Testament also speaks of someone coming from God who is God (i.e. Christ, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). The New Testament clearly portrays Jesus Christ as God (John 1:1; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:8) and the Holy Spirit as God (Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14). All three persons of the Trinity share the divine characteristics of holiness, power, goodness, omniscience, omnipotence, etc. While they all may be involved in an activity such as teaching, for instance, each is associated with certain specific works. The Father is associated with the work of creating, the Son with the work of redeeming, and the Holy Spirit with the work of sanctifying believers. In many New Testament passages, mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit occurs in the same sentence (Jude 20-21; Ephesians 4:4-6, I John 4:2; I Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-6; II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 4:4-6; Romans 5:5-6; John 15:26). See also Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 104.

4 *Claims of Jesus.* Jesus claimed to be God and the only way to reach God. Such claims, if not true, render him a liar or lunatic. The Christian believes these claims because of the supernatural essence of His life and resurrection as facts of

history. His life, teachings, miracles and resurrection as recorded by contemporaries in the gospels and secular historians support Jesus' claims about Himself.

Jesus also fulfilled 300 specific Old Testament prophecies regarding Messiah (Christ), connecting Him to the Jewish revelation of the One true God. Also, where the message of Christ has gone, individuals and societies have been changed for better. This would not make sense if Jesus had been a liar or a lunatic.

In *The Case for Christianity* C. S. Lewis wrote: "A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said wouldn't be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level with a man who says he's a poached egg, or else he would be the devil of hell; you must take your choice. Either this was and is the Son of God, or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But don't come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great moral teacher. He hasn't left that alternative open to us."

5 Why God gave His Son. The Bible tells us that we were made in God's image (Genesis 1:26), a spiritual creature able to relate to God personally. But Genesis records that in the beginning, man chose to go His own way and his relationship with God was broken (spiritual death, or separation, is the penalty for sin Genesis 2-3). But God has made a way to restore our relationship to Him. He came to earth in the Person of His Son to provide a way for forgiveness and reconciliation for those who would believe. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says God was in Christ reconciling the wayward world to Himself, not charging men's transgressions to their account. Through the death of His own dear Son, He proved His amazing love for us (Romans 5:8; John 3:16). The theme of the Bible is God making a way for us to be reconciled to Him through His Son Jesus Christ who took the penalty for our sin on the cross (Romans 3:23; 6:23). When we turn from going our own way apart from God, ask His forgiveness for the sins of our lives and place our faith in Jesus Christ, our relationship with the Father is re-established.

While many have never experienced a loving father, Jesus makes it possible to know the one true God as a loving heavenly Father. According to the Scriptures,

this relationship to God as a Father begins when we receive His Son. "Yet to all who received Him [Jesus], to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13). When we open our lives to Christ, God plants His Spirit in our hearts--His life placed within us. Jesus calls this being born again (John 3:3), coming alive spiritually to know and experience God as a loving heavenly Father. The Spirit in our hearts frees us from slavery to guilt and sin and gives us a spirit to shout, "Abba! [Daddy] Father!" The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God (1 Peter 2:9; Romans 8:14-16). See also, Note 1, *Why Did Jesus Have to Die in My Place?* p. 102.

Lesson 6

POWER FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

Romans 8:1-18

After depicting the struggling Christian who fails in his own strength to control his sinful nature (Romans 7), Paul now proclaims the super-natural power that God provides every believer for godly living.

Paul begins by stating that there is no condemnation for the believer because Christ took our condemnation on Himself on the cross. Because the believer has been identified with Christ in His death and resurrection, he has been forever set free from bondage to sin and death.

In the cross, the believer not only finds forgiveness for all his sins, but also receives God's power for overcoming sin on a daily basis. Paul explains that this power comes from the Holy Spirit, 1 who dwells in each person who puts faith in Jesus Christ.

The Christians Paul wrote to in Rome were familiar with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some had been present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem when Peter spoke with boldness and 3,000 people accepted Christ (Acts 2:5,10-12, 14-40, 41). That day, they had seen the Holy Spirit supernaturally enable people to hear the message of Christ in their own languages. Others in the church at Rome had seen and experienced the work of the Holy Spirit through Paul's ministry in Asia Minor and Greece. They recognized the supernatural power imparted by the Holy Spirit in a believer's life.

Paul goes on to explain other aspects of the Holy Spirit's work. The Spirit gives the Christian inward assurance of his adoption by God. As a dearly loved child, the believer can fearlessly and freely call God, "Abba, Father" meaning "Daddy." God's children are also heirs with God's Son, first to temporal suffering for righteousness in this world and then to immeasurable eternal glory with Christ.

The question left by Romans 7, "Is the Christian doomed to a life of defeat?" is answered in Romans 8 with a resounding "No!" Through the cross of Christ, God has provided everything we need to overcome sin and live for Him.

Helpful Definition:

Glorification: when the believer finally stands in God's presence "conformed to the likeness of His Son" (8:29) and with a new immortal body like His (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Read Romans 8:1-8.

1. a. What is the first assurance Paul gives the defeated and guilt-laden Christian described in Chapter 7 (8:1)?

b. Why is this true (8:2)?

Note: *law of the Spirit of life* means the controlling power of the Holy Spirit which sets us free to live a new life in Christ. See Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 104.

2. To what end did God place our condemnation on His Son (8:4)?

Reference: Note 2, *in the likeness of sinful man* (8:3), p. 57, and Note 3, *to be a sin offering* (8:3), p. 57.

3. How does Paul contrast the person controlled by his sinful nature with the Spirit-controlled believer (8:5-8)?

Controlled by sinful nature:

Controlled by the Holy Spirit:

Read Romans 8:9-11.

4. How is the Holy Spirit related to every true Christian (Romans 8:9)?

Note: *You...are controlled not by the sinful nature* literally means "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit" This refers to identification with Christ and new life in Him.

5. a. How does Romans 8:10 describe the believer's body and spirit?

Note: *your body is dead* refers to the body of sin (See 7:24) which will die physically because of sin. *your spirit is alive* refers to our new spirit in Christ which is righteous and will live forever.

b. What will the indwelling Spirit of God eventually bring (8:11)?

Note: *give life to your mortal bodies* refers to the new resurrection body we will be given by the indwelling Holy Spirit. See Helpful Definition: *Glorification*, p. 49.

c. How does 1 Corinthians 6:14 confirm or restate this promise?

Read Romans 8:12-17.

6. In light of God's blessings in Christ, how should the believer live (Romans 8:12-13)?

Note: *put to death the misdeeds of the body* (8:13) means to regard as dead the power of sin in your body (cf. 6:11; Galatians 5:24), and by the Holy Spirit's power put to death the sins of your former life (Eph 4:22-31; Col. 3:5-10).

References: Note 4, *sons of God*, p. 57.

7. a. What confidences does the indwelling Holy Spirit give to the believer (8:14-16)?

b. What will the believer experience as a co-heir with Christ (8:17)?

Reference: Note 5, *if indeed we share in His sufferings*, p. 57.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Following the Spirit

In Romans 7, Paul described the struggle and defeat of the Christian who battles his old sin nature in his own strength. Now in Romans 8, Paul shows the way to victory in this battle. He begins by emphatically stating that there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). This is because of the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6). This baptism into Christ performed by the Holy Spirit (6:3-4; 8:2) allows God to see the believer as "in Christ," whose death on the cross paid the penalty for every sin the believer will ever commit. Therefore, we will never again be eternally condemned when we fail in the battle against sin.

Then Paul focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. The word Christian means "Christ in one," and Jesus promised he would send the Holy Spirit, or Spirit of Christ, to indwell each believer's heart (John 14:16-17). It is the Holy Spirit who produces the life of Christ in us, enabling us to unselfishly and joyfully serve God and others. Romans 8:6,13 tell us that as we choose to let the Spirit control our minds, He empowers us to defeat, or "put to death, the misdeeds" of the old sin nature.

Because the Holy Spirit is the source of power in the Christian's life, it is important to know who He is. Throughout Scripture, the Holy Spirit is revealed along with the Father and the Son as a full and distinct person of the Godhead. As a divine Person, the Holy Spirit is eternal, everywhere present, almighty, perfectly wise, perfectly just and perfectly good (Hebrews 9:14, Psalm 139:7-10, 1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The Holy Spirit's distinct role is the Sanctifier who frees us to lead new lives in Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to spiritual rebirth, brings Christ's presence to us, keeps us in touch with God, makes us realize God's love, gives us power to witness and to live the Christian life, and gives us spiritual gifts with which to serve the body of Christ (Titus 3:5, John 14:16-18, Romans 8:26, Romans 5:5, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:5-9, 1 Corinthians 2:4-12). He teaches, encourages, comforts, pleads for us and leads us into all truth (John

16:13, Acts 9:31, John 14:16, Romans 8:27).

Romans 8 tells us that allowing our minds to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is the key to "life and peace" (8:6) and experiencing victory over the sin that seeks to control us. As we continue our study of Romans, we will look at how we can appropriate the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. a. How do the following sum up the end result of fighting sin in our own strength as believers? Romans 7:21-23

b. The Spirit-controlled life is a life of abiding in Christ. What does Jesus tell us in John 15:5 about living the Christian life without the Spirit's control?

2. a. How do the following describe the 3 different types of people in the world?

--natural person (without Christ): 1 Corinthians 2:14

--worldly (carnal) Christian: 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

--spiritual person controlled by the Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:15,16

b. What must we continually choose as Christians? Romans 8:5

3. What did Jesus promise about the Holy Spirit?

John 14:16-17

John 14:26

4. What does the Holy Spirit produce in our lives?

Galatians 5:22-23

Acts 1:8

5. Why does God put His Spirit in our hearts?

Ezekiel 36:27

Ephesians 3:16-17a

Ephesians 1:13-14

6. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is a command for the Christian. How is this command stated in Ephesians 5:18?

Note: The analogy here with wine shows how being filled with the Spirit controls one's life as completely as alcohol does when one is drunk.

7. To appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit, we must:

a. Confess any sin in our lives, claiming 1 John 1:9.

b. Present every area of our lives to God. Romans 12:1-2

Note: *body* refers to all the areas and capabilities of our lives.

c. Ask God to fill us with His Spirit. Luke 11:13

(continue to SUMMARY)

SUMMARY

8. Are there areas in which you are struggling to be more Christlike? What hope is offered in this lesson? What one or two verses would you like to claim for your situation?

9. a. Have you ever imagined Christ living His life in you through the power of the Holy Spirit? What difference would it make in your home, workplace, neighborhood?

b. What is your prayer regarding the Holy Spirit and your life? If you have never asked Christ to fill, or control and empower you with His Spirit, perhaps you would like to ask Him for the first time now.

The following is a suggested prayer that you can pray daily:

Lord Jesus, I acknowledge that I have tried and failed to live the Christian life in my own strength. Thank you that you have forgiven my sins through your death on the cross for me. I now invite you to take control of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as you have commanded me to be filled and as you promise to do if I ask. Live your life through me, Lord, in the power of your Spirit. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

LESSON 6 NOTES

1 Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 104.

2 *in the likeness of sinful man* (8:3). God provided deliverance from sin by sending His own Son, not in sinful flesh but *in the likeness* of it. His human nature was protected and preserved from the indwelling principle of sin that has plagued all other human beings since Adam (cf. Luke 1:35)." Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*, p. 469.

3 *to be a sin offering* (8:3). "Jesus gave Himself as a sacrifice ('sin offering') for our sins. In Old Testament times, animal sacrifices were continually offered at the temple. The sacrifices showed the Israelites the seriousness of sin: blood had to be shed before sins could be pardoned (see Leviticus 17:11). But animal blood could not really remove sins (Hebrews 10:4). The sacrifices could only point to Jesus' sacrifice, which paid the penalty for all sins." *NIV Life Application Bible*, p. 2041.

4 *sons of God* (8:14). "God is the Father of all in the sense that He created all and His love and providential care are extended to all (see Matthew 5:45). But not all are His children. Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews of His day, 'You belong to your father, the devil' (John 8:44). People become children of God through faith in God's unique Son (see John 1:12-13), and being led by God's Spirit is the hallmark of this relationship." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1717.

5 *if indeed we share in His sufferings* (8:17b). The Greek construction here does not set up a condition but states a fact; i.e. we will suffer in this world as Christ did, then be glorified with Him.

Lesson 7

INTRODUCTION

The letter of 1 John was written by the Apostle John while he was living in Ephesus, probably around 85 A.D. Persecution in Rome under Nero, which had led to the execution of Peter and Paul around 65 A.D., followed by the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 A.D. caused the Asian trade city of Ephesus to become the center for Christianity. Paul had planted a church there in 55 A.D. that Timothy, among others, had pastored and grown.

The Apostle John, who lived well into his 90's, spent most of his latter years ministering to the Asia Minor churches from Ephesus. 1 John was probably a "circular" letter sent to these churches, carrying the great authority John had as the only living apostle linked to Jesus Christ's earthly ministry.

The church existed in Ephesus under the immoral pressures of a very pagan city. The magnificent temple of Artemis (Diana), with its 127 columns 60 feet high surrounding an area 425 by 220 feet, was a source of enormous wealth. Even though it was a house of prostitution in the name of religion, people were proud to call themselves "temple-keepers" of the great Diana (Acts 19:35). Ephesus was also a city addicted to superstition, magic and sorcery (Acts 19:19). In light of this, it makes sense that John's letter would insist on ethical behavior as a mark of being a true Christian. To love God, who is pure and holy, would mean a break from evil.

But the greater issue John confronted was the infiltration of the church with false teaching by self-proclaimed "spiritually elite" whose "enlightened" theology struck at the root of all Christian teaching in both Old and New Testaments. Among other things, they denied the incarnation of Christ, which John himself had witnessed, and claimed "special knowledge from the Holy Spirit" that fostered immorality, confusion, and a split in the church.

While John addressed believers in his letter tenderly as "dear children" and "dear friends," the apostle logically proved these false teachers to be liars (2:4, 22; 4:20). He did this by stating the truth--about spiritual light and darkness, about

love and hate, and about the historically-based central truths of God's revelation in Christ that assure those who believe that they really do have eternal life. He shed light on the outright hypocrisy of the false teachers as he argued that no one can make a true profession to know God without a holy life, a clean break with sin, and a deep love for God and other Christians.

As in the first century, we face similar problems today where the church and individual believers are pressured to accommodate prevailing ideas of the secular culture. We are forced to either confront the world or absorb its culture, to either "conform" to the world's pattern or "be transformed" as we hold fast to the truth of God's Word (Romans 12:2). We will either subjectively rely on our feelings and experiences or objectively embrace God's Word of truth in order to stay close to God and His people.

Indeed, we live in critical times for the church and individual believers. The question is will we be authentic followers of Christ, or people who say they are Christians but do not really submit to God? John explains that authentic believers experience a relationship with God as a much-loved child. They enjoy freedom in God's forgiveness, the Holy Spirit's power to discern truth and love with God's love, freedom in prayer, and assurance of eternal life with God. Those who claim to know God but fail to submit to Him have no real relationship with God and have none of these freedoms.

God asks each of us to decide if we will "walk in the light" with Him or not. Our quality of life, our relationship with God, our effect on others, and our legacy in years to come will be determined by our decision. Even in the midst of the confusion of our day, this timeless letter will help make the choices involved very clear.

WALKING IN GOD'S LIGHT

1 John 1:1-2:14

John begins his letter to the churches much as he began the Gospel of John, declaring Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of God and Word of life who became

human to bring God's light and life to mankind. John emphasizes that he, along with the other disciples, actually worked alongside Jesus during His ministry. They saw his pure lifestyle, completely devoted to loving God and people. They witnessed him heal the sick, cast out demons, feed 5,000, walk on water and calm a fierce storm with a word. John saw Jesus die, saw Him after He rose from the dead, and watched Jesus ascend into heaven.

Having had this great privilege and ever after the joy of a personal relationship with the living Lord Jesus Christ, John wanted fellow believers to rest secure in the truth of the apostles' testimony and teaching "... that you also may have fellowship with us...with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1:3).

With this introduction, John continues by discussing the first mark of the person who truly has fellowship with God: he will "walk in the light." John introduces God as "light," meaning He is absolutely pure and holy, good, true, and reliable. When we walk in the light of God's light, everything is exposed for what it is in our lives. Darkness, which represents what is sinful and evil, is defeated as God continually guides us out of sin, and as we continue to choose to walk in the light with Him.

This walk includes first accepting the free gift of God's forgiveness made possible through the cross of Christ that alone can bring us into a personal relationship with God (1:7; 2:2; John 14:6). Then, as we walk with God, He continually guides us to see, confess and forsake sin so we can stay in fellowship with Him and grow in our relationship with Him (1:9; 2:6). Through it all, John declares that Jesus is an Advocate who continually intercedes for each person who seeks to live a life of obedience to Him (2:1b).

Read 1 John 1:1-4.

1. a. What is John claiming about Jesus from the outset of his writing (1:1-2; see also John 1:1-3)?

Reference: Note 1, *The Word*, p. 69.

Note: *we* refers to John and the other *apostles*, technically the Twelve (Mark 3:14) and later Paul (Romans 1:1), all of whom Jesus authorized to be His representatives.

b. In writing 1 John, what was John's desire (1:3-4)?

Read 1 John 1:5-2:14.

2. a. What had Jesus taught the apostles about God (1:5)?

Note: *Light* represents what is pure and holy, good, true and reliable, while darkness represents what is evil and false.

b. What are the two spiritual paths we can choose from, and what does John say about them (1:6-7)?

Reference: Note 2, *blood of Jesus*, p. 69.

3. What does John declare about everyone (1 John 1:8, 10)?

Reference: Note 3, *if we claim to be without sin*, p. 69.

Note: We *make God out to be a liar* (1:10) when we justify actions that God's Word and our God-given consciences judge as sin.

4. When we sin, what can we do to continue to “walk in the light” and have fellowship with God (1:9)?

Note: God is *just* in His freely given forgiveness because Christ’s death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin. See Note 2, *blood of Jesus*, p. 69.

5. When we confess our sin, who is our Advocate (2:1b-2)?

References: Note 4, *atonement sacrifice for our sins*, p. 70, and Note 5, *for the sins of the whole world*, p. 70.

6. How does John contrast people who have a personal relationship with God (walk in the light) and those who only claim to know God?

Has relationship with God.

1 John 2:3-6

No relationship with God.

1 John 2:9-11 (*brother* is a fellow believer)

Note: To “walk as Jesus did” (2:6) is to follow His teachings and His lifestyle of obedience to God and loving service to people.

Note: John is exposing false teachers of the day called Gnostics, who claimed to be Christians, but disregarded biblical morals and despised those who believed in Jesus Christ.

7. As John addresses different stages of Christian growth, he speaks of blessings any person will experience who truly has fellowship with God. List phrases that describe these blessings (2:12-14).

Note: In these repetitive verses, John assures his readers that, in spite of the rigorous tests contained in the letter, he is confident of their salvation. *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1908.

Reference: Note 7, *the devil*, p. 70.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Freedom of Forgiveness

One of the most wonderful aspects of the true believer's life is found in the freedom of forgiveness. God's love has made it possible for all who love Him to be continually cleansed when we fall into temptation and sin. This is a lasting truth of Scripture that allows God's children to experience His love and forgiveness over and over and forever.

In contrast, unresolved guilt not only breaks our relationship with God and keeps us "in darkness," but also is a great destroyer of self-esteem. It is an emotion that can control our lives from morning until night. While guilt can provide motivation for change that needs to take place, it can also cause serious problems if we do not know how to deal with it constructively. Mental health institutions and prisons are filled with people whose lives have been ravaged by unresolved guilt.

The western world's answer to guilt is somewhat the same as the Gnostics' of

John's day. Each declares that wrong behavior isn't really wrong, based on "one's personal truth." Man's reasoned or imagined laws become truth. As in modern psychology where the word "sin" is hardly used, we might be encouraged that our guilt is only false guilt.⁶ Or we are helped to place blame on others or circumstances for our wrong actions or to embrace new relativistic ways of thinking that deny the existence of moral absolutes.

But as hard as we may try to deny guilt, our hearts know the truth, and we continue to live with a defensive, rather than a forgiven, spirit. The world's answer to guilt cannot provide the freedom from guilt we need. As 1 John puts it, we stumble around blindly in darkness.

God knows we were not made to live with guilt, and the Scriptures declare the incredible lengths to which God has gone to allow us to experience forgiveness and freedom from this powerful emotion. The follower of Christ can experience forgiveness and a freedom from guilt that distinguishes him/her as an authentic Christian.

1. a. What are some wrong responses to guilt promoted in our culture today?

b. Why might these responses to guilt only produce more problems?

2. a. What negative effects can guilt have on people's lives?

b. How would you define the real needs of the guilty person?

3. a. One reason God hates sin is that it destroys our lives. How does Psalm 38:4-6 describe some of the feelings produced by guilt?

b. How is the freedom of forgiveness described in Psalm 32:5 (3-4)?

Note: Verses in parentheses () are supportive of the given verse and are optional.

4. a. Freedom from guilt first requires *confession*, or agreeing with God that a specific action was wrong. How did David confess his sin?

Psalm 51:3-4

Note: To confess is to agree with God about a specific sin.

Reference: *True Guilt, False Guilt* Chart, p. 71.

b. Freedom from guilt through forgiveness also requires *repentance*, a total turning from wrong to live a godly life. How did the psalmist express his repentant spirit in Psalm 51:10-12?

5. What will we find when we come to God with sincere confession and repentance? Isaiah 55:7

Acts 3:19

6. On what basis are we cleansed from sin? 1 John 1:7b; 2:2

References: Notes 2, *blood of Jesus*, p. 69, and Note 4, *atonement sacrifice*, p. 70.

Isaiah 53:4-5 (cf. 10-12)

Note: This prophecy about Jesus Christ was written around 700 B.C.

7. How does 1 John 1:9 explain the process that brings freedom from guilt?

8. What is also necessary at times to experience freedom from guilt?

Colossians 3:13 (cf. Matthew 6:12, 14-15)

Matthew 5:23-24

9. How does Psalm 32:1-2 describe the freedom of forgiveness that God wants to be a mark of truly being His child?

SUMMARY

10. From what can God's forgiveness set you free?

11. What heart attitude is important as you come to God for forgiveness?

12. a. Why was the blood of Christ shed on the cross necessary for a holy God to forgive you? What does the cross prove about God's love for you? (Helpful

Reference: Note 2, *blood of Jesus*, p. 69.)

b. If you have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and the gift of forgiveness He offers through His death on the cross, perhaps you would like to do this now. What do these verses promise?

John 1:12 (speaking of Christ)

Revelation 3:20 (Christ speaking)

If you would like to invite Christ into your life, the following is a suggested prayer.

Lord Jesus, I need you. I confess that I have been living my life my own way apart from you, which is sin. Thank you for dying on the cross to take the penalty for all the wrongs of my life so that I can be freely forgiven. I now commit my life to you and receive your forgiveness. I invite you to come into my life and make me the person you want me to be.

If you prayed this prayer, what is Jesus' promise *to you* in Revelation 3:20?

Hebrews 13:5b?

13. What attitude does an understanding of the cross give the authentic Christian?

Note: *Are there areas of your life where you would like to experience God's forgiveness once and for all? It may be helpful to take a piece of paper, go before the Lord, and prayerfully list unforgiven sin, even sin committed long ago. After this time of confession and repentance, write 1 John 1:9 in large letters across the sheet and destroy it, symbolizing God's total forgiveness.*

You may want to then express forgiveness to yourself and acknowledge forgiveness of specific individuals who have hurt you. Finally, you may feel led to ask forgiveness of individuals you have wronged. As difficult as these tasks may seem, great joy and freedom is the result.

LESSON 7 NOTES

1 *The Word* (1 John 1:1) “in Hebrew Scripture was an agent of creation (Psalm 33:6), the source of God’s message to His people through the prophets (Hosea 1:2), and God’s law, His standard of holiness (Psalm 110:11). In Greek philosophy, *the Word* was the principle of reason that governed the world, or the thought still in the mind. In Hebrew thought, *the Word* was another expression for God. John’s description shows clearly that He is speaking of Jesus (see especially John 1:14; 1 John 1:2-3)—a human being he knew and loved, but at the same time the Creator of the universe, the ultimate revelation of God, the living picture of God’s holiness, the One in whom ‘all things hold together’ (Colossians 1:17). To Jewish readers, ‘the Word was God’ was blasphemous. To Greek readers, ‘the Word became flesh’ (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1-2) was unthinkable. To John, this new understanding of the Word was gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.” *The Life Application Bible, NIV*, p. 1869.

2 *blood of Jesus...purifies us* (1:7). “How does Jesus’ blood purify us from every sin? In Old Testament times, believers symbolically transferred their sins to an animal which they then sacrificed. The animal died in their place to pay for their sin and to allow them to continue living in God’s favor. God graciously forgave them because of their faith in Him, and anticipated the day when Christ would completely remove sin. Real cleansing from sin came with Jesus, the ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). Sin by its very nature brings death—that is a fact as certain as the law of gravity. Jesus did not die for His own sins; He had none. Instead by a transaction that we may never fully understand, He died for the sins of the world. When we commit our lives to Christ and thus identify ourselves with Him, His death becomes ours. He has paid the penalty for our sins, and His blood has purified us. Just as Christ rose from the grave, we rise to a new life of fellowship with Him (Romans 6:4).” *The Life Application Bible, NIV*, p. 2275. See also Note 4, *atonement sacrifice for our sins* below, and Note 1, “Why did Christ have to die...?” p. 102.

3 *If we claim to be without sin* (1:8,10). “The false teachers not only denied that sin breaks our fellowship with God (1:6) and that they had a sinful nature (1:8), but they also denied that their conduct involved any sin at all (1:10). That was a lie that ignored one basic truth; all people are sinners by nature and by practice.

At conversion all our sins are forgiven—past, present, and future. Yet even after we become Christians, we still sin and still need to confess. This kind of confession is not offered to gain God’s acceptance, but to remove the barrier to fellowship that our sin has put between us and Him. It is difficult, however, for many to admit their faults and shortcomings, even to God. It takes humility and honesty to recognize our weaknesses, and most of us would rather pretend that we are strong. But we need not fear revealing our sins to God—He knows them already. He will not push us away, no matter what we’ve done. Instead He will draw us to Himself.” *The Life Application Bible, NIV*, p. 2275.

4 atoning sacrifice for our sins (2:2). “God’s holiness demands punishment for man’s sin. God, therefore, out of love (4:10; John 3:16), sent His Son to make substitutionary atonement for the believer’s sin. In this way the Father’s wrath is propitiated (satisfied, appeased); His wrath against the Christian’s sin has been turned away and directed toward Christ.” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1907. See also Note 2, *blood of Jesus*, p. 69, and Note 2a, *Propitiation*, p. 102.

5 for the sins of the whole world (2:2). Forgiveness through Christ’s atoning sacrifice is not limited to one particular group only; it has worldwide application (see John 1:29). It must, however, be received by faith (see John 3:16). Thus this verse does not teach universalism (that all people ultimately will be saved), but that God is an impartial God.” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1907.

6 True Guilt / False guilt. See chart on next page.

7 the devil. “In this short letter, John says much about the devil:

1. He is called ‘the devil’ and ‘the evil one’ (vv. 12; 2:13-14; 5:18-19).
2. He ‘has been sinning from the beginning’, i.e., from the time he first rebelled against God, before the fall of Adam and Eve (John 8:44).
3. He is the instigator of human sin, and those who continue to sin belong to him (vv. 8,12) and are his children (v. 10).
4. He is in the world (4:3) and has ‘the whole world’ of unbelievers under his control (5:19).
5. But he cannot lay hold of the believer to harm him (5:18).
6. On the contrary, the Christian will overcome him (2:13-14; 4:4), and Christ will destroy his work.” *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1910.

In her book, *Falling Apart or Coming Together*, Lois Walfrid Johnson contrasts the following differences between true and false guilt.*

	<u>TRUE GUILT</u>	<u>FALSE GUILT</u>
GUILT PRODUCER	The Holy Spirit convicts, based on truth.	Satan condemns, based on lies.
OBJECTIVE	Improvement.	Defeat.
SPOTLIGHT	Specific unforgiven sin.	Past failures and forgiven sin; general in nature.
YOUR REACTION	Remorse and repentance; asking For forgiveness	Helplessness, a no-win situation; not knowing how to make a change; no peace if you ask for forgiveness.
GUILT PRODUCER'S ACTION	Grace; forgiveness.	Accusation.
RESULT	Peace; feeling set free, cleansed and loved.	No peace; defeat; hopelessness; despair; worthlessness. Feeling emotionally, spiritually and physically tired.

*Lois Walfrid Johnson, *Falling Apart or Coming Together* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p. 66.

Lesson 8

FULLY KNOWN AND FULLY LOVED: SURE FOUNDATIONS FOR SELF WORTH

One of the most painful problems that the human heart can experience is low self esteem. We are painfully aware of our imperfections, and this awareness constantly undermines our sense of self worth. In response to these feelings, some try harder to achieve perfection while others give up and rebel against any standards. But whether we are a conformist or a nonconformist, we all fear the same thing: that if people see who we really are, they will reject us. To avoid this pain, the conformist tries very hard to hide his weaknesses from other people. The nonconformist, on the other hand, seeks approval in the nonconforming crowd, still hiding his deep sense of inadequacy. Both responses to feelings of low self worth build barriers that keep people from the unconditionally loving relationships they need to thrive in life.

The truth is, we are all imperfect people, wounded and scarred by our own mistakes and the mistakes of others. Perfection is an illusion that will never overcome feelings of personal dissatisfaction. Neither will rebellion against standards. Self worth must be established in spite of our imperfection and in the midst of an imperfect world.

The good news is that God provides this firm foundation our self worth in the context of His unconditional love. As we grow to understand the value He places on our individual lives and the forgiveness He offers when we come to Him with our failures, we can learn to extend that forgiveness and love to ourselves and others. Self worth established in this way will meet the heart's deep need to love and be loved, despite our imperfections.

As wounded people, we all need the healing that comes from the love of God so beautifully described in the Psalms. To grasp His love, acceptance, and forgiveness is to find freedom from the painful feelings of inadequacy and isolation related to low self esteem. This is reason to celebrate! As we continue our study of the Psalms, we will look at the lasting foundations for self worth found in God's gracious acceptance and unconditional love of His children.

1. Where do feelings of low self esteem originate? What does our culture say makes us valuable as people?

2. a. What are some ways people attempt to overcome a sense of low self esteem?

b. Why do these attempts ultimately fail?

3. What does healthy self esteem produce in a person's life?

4. What do the following verses reveal about God's care for us and our worth to Him?

Psalm 139:13-16

Psalm 139:17-18

Psalm 139:1-4

Psalm 139:9-10

Psalm 121:3, 7-8

5. a. Being loved by God, the creator and ruler of the universe, makes us individuals of great worth. What is the nature of God's love toward us according to these psalms?

Psalm 36:5, 7-9

Psalm 117:2

Psalm 103:11-14

Note: *fear* of the Lord refers to reverent trust based on a relationship of love.

b. How does 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a describe God's perfect love toward us?

6. a. Why did the psalmist find God's love so amazing in Psalm 8:3-4?

b. How does God declare our worth within the context of His marvelous creation according to Psalm 8:5-8?

7. According to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 16:26, what value does God place on a human soul?

8. The greatest testimony of our worth to God is found in the sacrificial giving of His Son for our redemption. Of what do the following verses remind us?
John 3:16

Romans 5:8

Reference: Note 1, *Redemption*, p. 11.

9. How do the following verses describe the transformation that begins when we choose to receive God's gift of redemption through Christ?

John 1:12

John 3:6-8 (Titus 3:5)

Ezekiel 36:26-27

2 Corinthians 5:17

10. a. What do the Scriptures promise about the Spirit of God and our weaknesses?

Romans 8:26a

Ephesians 3:16, 20

b. When we seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, how do the results affect our self image?

Galatians 5:22-23

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 104.

11. When we suffer feelings of inadequacy or failure, where can we put our confidence?

Psalm 73:26

2 Corinthians 3:5

2 Corinthians 12:9

Romans 8:28

12. a. In order to experience the self worth that comes from God's love, our relationship with God must have first place in our lives. What attitudes and choices allow us to experience God's love and comprehend our worth to Him?

Psalm 63:8

Psalm 105:4

Psalm 13:5-6

b. Optional: Mistaken trusts can keep us from walking closely with God and experiencing His love. Where must we avoid putting our trust?

Psalm 49:13

Psalm 49:6

Psalm 118:8-9

13. a. We can lose sight of God's love when we doubt His plans for our lives. In spite of his circumstances, what attitudes about God's plans sustained David's sense of God's faithfulness and love?

Psalm 18:30a, 32

b. What does the Lord promise to those who look to Him in faith, regardless of circumstances or feelings?

Jeremiah 29:11

Romans 8:32

14. Deep roots of low self esteem may take time to overcome. As we continually place our lives in God's hands, however, He works steadily to bring about the healing we need. How do these verses describe the healing He brings?

Psalm 40:2-3

Psalm 56:13 (Malachi 4:2)

SUMMARY

15. What have you learned about the value God places on your life?

16. How would you describe God's love for you?

17. Why is your worth in God's eyes and God's love for you a strong basis for loving yourself in spite of your imperfections?

18. How can an understanding of God's love for you and your worth in His eyes affect your relationships with others?

19. a. Why does receiving Christ play such an important part in the process of developing a healthy sense of self worth?

b. How does the Holy Spirit help build your self-worth?

Reference: See Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 81.

20. Has anything in your life been keeping you from experiencing God's love? What is your desire?

21. Psalm 37:4 promises that when we put God first in our lives, He will give us the desires of our hearts. What is your desire with regard to your comprehension of God's love? What is your desire with regard to your sense of self worth?

LESSON 8 NOTES

1 The *Holy Spirit*. God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), all with the same essence of deity. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12; 14:16-17). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (3:8).

The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27b).

Lesson 9

JESUS' FAREWELL

John 16

Still in the Upper Room with His disciples the night before His death, Jesus continued to prepare them for His departure. He had already warned them of persecution, but further explained that because of their faith, they would be expelled from the synagogue¹. Some would even view killing Jesus' disciples as worship to God. Jesus gave such warnings so that these events would not surprise His followers, but instead would prove His knowledge of all things.

Understandably, Jesus' words about leaving them filled the disciples' hearts with sorrow. "But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away," Jesus said. "Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." Jesus promised that the Counselor², the Holy Spirit, would replace Jesus' visible presence. The Spirit would be like Jesus had been to them and would equip them to face the persecution and new challenges ahead.

Jesus also explained that the Holy Spirit would have a ministry like His to the unbelieving world. Jesus had been His disciples' defense in the world, but His presence and testimony had been an indictment on those who rejected the truth. Soon the Spirit would assume the place of Christ to the unbelieving world. He would expose sin, reveal God's standard of righteousness in Christ, and judge Satan, the "prince of this world," who stood behind those who opposed the One sent by God. The very presence of the Holy Spirit in the world would show that Jesus had won the battle against the evil one.

The Holy Spirit would also become the resident advocate and teacher of Jesus' disciples, continuing to unfold the truth about God and His Son to each succeeding generation of believers. The Gospel of John and all the New Testament Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21) would exemplify fulfillment of this prophecy.

The disciples still did not understand what Jesus meant when He said, "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." Knowing their frustration, Jesus used the analogy of the birth of a child to explain further. His imminent departure (His death) would bring tremendous pain, but His return (His resurrection) would produce in them an indescribable joy. After that, the Father would welcome their prayer requests in the name of His Son. "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name," Jesus said. "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

Not only this, but soon His teachings would cease to be figurative and puzzling. The Holy Spirit would teach them in terms that they could easily understand. And they could be assured that as they prayed to the Father "in Jesus' name," God would not only answer but also be a Father *to them*. He would love and welcome them because they had loved and welcomed His Son.

In closing, Jesus reiterated what was still a painful and baffling proclamation to the disciples. "I came from the Father and entered the world," He said. "Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." Despite their confusion, the disciples still declared their faith. They believed Jesus was from God and knew all things. But Jesus knew that in the hours to come, as they were scattered and forced to abandon Him, they would not understand. In the midst of the trouble they would face, Jesus encouraged His faithful and dearly loved followers to find peace *in Him*. "In this world you will have trouble," He declared. "But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Read John 16:1-15

1. a. Why did Jesus warn the disciples about the persecution ahead (16:1,4a)?

b. Why would this persecution take place (16:3)?

2. What feelings did Jesus acknowledge in the disciples regarding His departure (16:5-6)?

3. Why did Jesus say His departure would benefit the disciples (16:7)?

Note: The Counselor could be translated: "Comforter, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengtheners, Standby." *The Amplified Bible*.

4. What would the Holy Spirit do as He assumed the ministry of Jesus to the unbelieving world (16:8)?

Reference: Note 5, *Three important tasks*, page 93.

5. a. What would the Holy Spirit do for Jesus' disciples (16:12-13)?

b. To what end would the Holy Spirit's activity be directed (16:14-15)?

Note: *what is to come* (16:13) "probably means the whole Christian way or revelation (as presented and preserved in the apostolic writings) still future at the time Jesus spoke." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1628.

Read John 16:16-33

6. a. How did the disciples react to Jesus' predictions (16:16-18)?

b. What promise did Jesus make as He responded to their confusion (16:19-22)?

7. What did Jesus promise would bring *complete joy* to his disciples (16:23-27)?

Reference: Note 3, *Ask and you will receive*, page 93.

8. What clear statement did Jesus make as He drew His farewell discourses to a close (16:28)?

9. The disciples didn't understand God's plan, but they believed that Jesus knew all things. What final prediction did Jesus make about the hours to come (16:32)?

10. a. Why had Jesus told the disciples what He did the night before His death (16:33a)?

b. What was His final promise to His dearly loved followers (16:33b)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

The Fulfillment of Prayer

As Jesus prepared His disciples for the challenges that would face them after He left, He told them that they could not live for Him without drawing on His power. As they allowed the Holy Spirit to control their lives, they would experience God's presence and witness incredible miracles. In this context, Jesus emphasized that an effective prayer life would "complete their joy" (16:24). The one who believed in and welcomed the Son would be put in open communication with a loving heavenly Father, to whom he/she could speak with all honesty and without fear.

The joy of prayer to which Jesus referred is not only found in answers to prayer requests, but even more in the privilege of direct interaction with a loving heavenly Father. Communication with Him fulfills the heart's desire to worship as well as the need for "a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). This One who hears our every plea is all-wise, all powerful and infinitely loving. He knows and accepts us completely and is available anywhere, anytime, and under any circumstances. In His presence we encounter His love and are transformed into His image (II Corinthians 3:18). In these facets of prayer are found the greatest treasures and keys to fulfillment.

Prayer is a natural instinct of man, and an effective prayer life is *essential* for fulfillment in life. In this lesson, we will be looking at biblical principles that instruct us in how to experience the joy of prayer.

1. a. Jesus said that we must welcome Him into our lives (John 16:26-27) and pray in His name to be heard by God. This is because to enter the presence of a

holy God, we must be declared holy by God. How are we declared holy (righteous, cleansed from sin) by God?

Romans 3:22-25a

II Corinthians 5:21

b. In light of this, what did Jesus declare about gaining access to God?

John 14:6

Note: Forgiveness through Christ is not exclusive, but is available of all people in all nations (Matthew 28:19-20; I Timothy 2:4-6a).

2. Jesus instructed us to pray to the Father in the name of the Son. Who helps us pray?

Romans 8:26

Jude 20

Note: *in the Holy Spirit* means "according to the Spirit's promptings and with the power of the Spirit." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1921.

3. A simple acrostic has helped many to remember the different facets of prayer.

It is:

Adoration

Confession

Thanks-giving

Supplication

Adoration, or Praise.

God is honored when we begin prayer with praise. What are some of the things for which we can praise God?

Psalm 145:3-7

Psalm 145:8-9, 13-19

Confession of sin.

a. What do the following reveal about this important aspect of prayer?

Psalm 66:18

I John 1:9

b. As we ask God for forgiveness of sin, what did Jesus instruct us to do? Mark 11:25

Thanksgiving.

What instructions about gratitude to God are found in these verses?

Psalm 100:4

Ephesians 5:20

Supplication, or prayer requests.

a. What kinds of things can we pray for ourselves?

Philippians 4:6

Matthew 6:11,13

James 1:5

Psalm 51:10

b. What kinds of things can we pray for others?
Ephesians 1:15-19a

Ephesians 3:16-19

James 5:14-16

b. **Optional:** What must we remember when God does not answer specific requests when or how we desire?

Romans 8:32

Psalms 25:10a

Psalms 27:14

Isaiah 55:8-9

Job 42:2-3

4. Prayer is essential to experiencing the fulfillment Jesus spoke about. Why should we go to Him in prayer?

I Peter 5:6-7

Philippians 4:7

Jeremiah 33:3

SUMMARY

5. What components of prayer are represented by the **A C T S** acrostic?

Why are each of these facets of prayer important for fulfillment?

6. What principles regarding prayer from this lesson are most helpful to you?

7. Do you have a certain time of day when you read the Bible and pray? Have you ever kept a prayer list in order to see God's answers more clearly? These may be habits you would want to begin or renew in order to experience the fulfillment of prayer.

Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him about your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself and to others.

If you thus pour out all your weaknesses, needs, troubles, there will be no lack of what to say. You will never exhaust the subject. It is continually being renewed. People who have no secrets from each other never want for subjects of conversation. They do not weigh their words, for there is nothing to be held back; neither do they seek for something to say. They talk out of the abundance of the heart, without consideration they say just what they think. Blessed are they who attain to such familiar, unreserved intercourse with God.

*17th Century Archbishop
Francois de la Mothe Fenelon*

LESSON 9 NOTES

1 expelled from synagogue. "At the time when the Gospel was written these words had acquired a special relevance from the inclusion in the synagogue

prayers of a curse on the Nazarenes [Christians], which was intended to ensure that the followers of Jesus could take no part in the service." F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John*, page 317.

2 I will send Him [the Holy Spirit] to you (16:7). This prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:1f).

3 Ask and you will receive. In John 16:23-27, "Jesus is talking about a new relationship between the believer and God. Previously, people approached God through priests. After Jesus' resurrection, any believer could approach God directly. A new day has dawned and now all believers are priests, talking with God personally and directly (see Hebrews 10:19-23). We approach God, not because of our own merit, but because Jesus, our great high priest, has made us acceptable to God." *Life Application Bible*, NIV, page 1915.

4 Reference: In Jesus' Name. See following: *whatever you ask in My name*, (John 14:13). Asking in the name of Jesus means to ask in accordance with God's will and character. "God will not grant requests contrary to His nature or His will, and we cannot use his name as a magic formula to fulfill our selfish desires. If we are sincerely following God and seeking to do His will, then our requests will be in line with what He wants, and He will grant them." *Life Application Bible*, NIV, page 1911.

"Not simply prayer that mentions Jesus' name but...prayer aimed at carrying forward the work Jesus did--prayer that He Himself will answer (see also John v. 14)." *The NIV Study Bible*, page 1625.

5 "Three important tasks of the Holy Spirit are (1) convicting the world of sin and calling it to repentance, (2) revealing the standard of God's righteousness to anyone who believes, because Christ would no longer be physically present on earth, and (3) demonstrating Christ's judgment over Satan." *Life Application Bible*, NIV, page 1914.

The fruit of the Spirit is . . .

Lesson 10

LOVE

No one would question the song lyrics that state “what the world needs now is love.” Countless human problems would be solved by following the biblical mandate to love your neighbor as yourself. But this unselfish type of love is easier said than done.

The word for love used to describe this fruit of the Spirit in a believer’s life was not a common Greek word for love in Paul’s day. At that time, two Greek words described love. They were *eros*, a passionate, usually sexual love, and *phileo*, tender affection, or friendship love.

But the New Testament used a different Greek word to describe the love of God for us and the love God’s Spirit produces in the Christian. The word for this love is *agape*. It is a love that selflessly acts on behalf of the highest interest of the one loved. Agape love does not depend on feelings, natural human affinity, or worthiness of the one loved. In fact, the agape love which the Holy Spirit produces in us often works with or without natural motivations for love. Agape love often acts contrary to our feelings and has nothing to do with the worthiness of the loved one.

Because such love is the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit, it is to be the identifying characteristic of the Christian. As one song declares, “They will know we are Christians by our love.”

We will begin our study on *Character that Counts* with a look at the agape love that God produces in us as we yield our lives to Him.

1.a. How is the word *love* used in the world around us?

b. How would you describe the love most needed in the world today?

c. What is caused by the absence of love in individuals, families, our society and the world in general?

2.a. What do these Scriptures state about the nature of God?

Psalm 86:15

1 John 4:8b

b. How do the following verses describe God's love for us and the love He gives us for others?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

1 Corinthians 13:4

1 Corinthians 13:5

1 Corinthians 13:6

1 Corinthians 13:7-8a

c. What positive effects does loving this way have on the people around us?

3. To love with God's unconditional love, we must first experience His love. What do the following tell us about God's unconditional love for us?

Romans 8:38-39

John 3:16

Romans 5:8

Reference: Note 1, “Why did Christ have to die...?” p. 102.

4. According to the following, what is the result of comprehending God's love for us?

1 John 4:19

Ephesians 3:17b-19

5. According to these verses, what does love for God bring about in our lives?

John 14:21, 23

6.a. Review Question #2.b. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a). According to the Scriptures, we cannot love with agape love unless God enables us. How does God produce His love in our lives according to these verses?

John 15:4-5

Galatians 5:22-23

Ephesians 5:18b

Note: The analogy in Ephesians 5:18 is that being filled, or controlled, by the Holy Spirit is like being controlled by alcohol—it affects everything we do.

Reference: Note 2, *Holy Spirit*, p. 104.

b. According to Romans 5:3-5, what does the Holy Spirit use to develop God's love in us?

c. Optional: Why do you think suffering builds our capacity to love with God's love?

7. Agape love toward others is not based on feelings, affinity or worthiness of the one loved. Rather, it is unselfish action on behalf of the highest interest of the one loved, including the unlovely person and even enemies. How is this love described in the following?

Luke 6:35 (Romans 12:21)

Note: Verses in parentheses () are supportive of the given verse and are optional.

Romans 12:14, 17a, 19

Colossians 3:12-13

8. What other qualities of agape love does the Spirit produce in us as we yield ourselves to His gracious control?

Romans 12:9-10

Romans 12:13

Romans 12:16

Romans 12:18

Ephesians 4:29

Philippians 4:8

9.a. How can self-will, self-righteousness, self-effort or self-focus prevent us from loving with God's love?

Optional: Give an example from everyday life.

b. How do the results in a given situation change when we respond with loving actions rather than selfish ones?

Optional: Give an example from everyday life.

10. What motivation does God produce in the Christian committed to His will? 1 Corinthians 16:14

SUMMARY

11.a. How would you describe God's agape love that is a fruit of the Spirit? (Review #2 above.)

b. Why must we realize God's love for us before we can love with agape love?

12.a. Are there individuals in your life that you would especially like to love with God's agape love? Take a moment to ask God to help you love them in His power.

b. What aspects of His love as seen in this lesson (#2b, 7, 8) do you especially want God to produce in your toward these individuals?

c. What is His promise when you pray for this love?

1 John 5:14-15

13. What part does abiding in Christ and being controlled by the Holy Spirit have in loving with God's unconditional love?

14.a. Experiencing God's love begins with inviting Christ into our lives. He does not force His way into our lives, but waits to be invited. What do the following verses promise?

John 1:12 (speaking of Jesus Christ)

Revelation 3:20 (Christ speaking)

b. Have you ever invited Christ to come into your life? Perhaps the following prayer expresses the desire of your heart.

Lord Jesus, I want to know you and experience your love personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins. Please fill me with your Spirit and with your love for others.

If you pray this prayer, you can be assured that Christ will keep His promise to come into your life and produce His love in you for others.

LESSON 10 NOTES

1 "Why did Christ have to die in my place?" This is one of the most important yet least understood questions of the Christian faith. The following explanations of various biblical terms answer this question:

a. Propitiation is a biblical word meaning "satisfaction" and refers to the righteous demands of God being satisfied. God will not compromise His attributes of righteousness and justice, and He is therefore legitimately outraged by man's deliberate violation of His will. But God's attribute of love motivated Him to provide a way to bring man back into fellowship with Himself *without compromising* His attributes of absolute righteousness and justice. God's holy character demanded that man's sin be paid for.

Therefore, God came into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Because Christ was born without sin and never committed an act of sin, He alone was qualified to bear the holy wrath of God due the human race as He

willingly died on the cross for our sin. In so doing He "satisfied" the just demands of God's holy character against man's sin. This act set God's love free to pour out grace on those who receive His gift of salvation. In this way, God is "just and the one who justifies the man who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). See explanation in *d. Justification* below.

b. Redemption is a biblical word meaning "to buy out" or "to set free by the payment of a price (ransom)" and refers to a slave being purchased out of slavery. Romans 3:24 says we are "justified freely by his grace through the *redemption* that came by Christ Jesus." As born sinners, we are in the slave market of sin, so to speak. But Christ, the only free man who ever lived (because He was sinless), paid the ransom price of His own blood to purchase sinners out of the slave market of sin and set them free to become sons of God. Only by the price of death can one be set free (Romans 6:23), and only one who is free (sinless as Christ was; cf. Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21) can buy a slave's freedom. By paying the ransom price of His shed blood, Jesus purchased the person who puts faith in Him out of the slave market of sin and sets him free to become a son of God (Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Gal 4:4-5).

c. Reconciliation means "to change a person from enmity to friendship." The Bible says that man is born at enmity with God. Sin erects a barrier between man and God because of a sense of guilt in man. This guilt puts him at odds with God. Reconciliation is the aspect of Christ's death on the cross which removed the barrier of man's sin and its consequences and thus took away guilt which caused enmity against God. Christ's death on the cross removed every barrier between a holy God and sinful man. Reconciliation is available to all men, no matter how sinful. While reconciliation is available and sufficient for everyone, only those who accept the gift of this reconciliation personally by faith receive it.

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "When we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son" (Romans 5:10).

d. Justification refers to God declaring us "not guilty" and righteous in his sight, even though we are guilty of sin. God is able to do this because of the life and death of Jesus Christ acting as man's substitute. When God declares a person

righteous in His sight, He does so on the basis of the life and death of the One who was acting on his behalf. "Jesus our Lord...was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification" (Romans 4:24-25). When we put faith in Jesus Christ to save us from sin, God declares us justified, or not guilty, and righteous. We are justified by the death of Christ which paid the penalty for our sin, and we are justified by the life of Christ whose life of righteousness is also credited to us. This justification, which is all by God's grace and received by faith, brings us into fellowship with God as a child in His family.

2 The Holy Spirit. God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity; three divine persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), all with the same essence of deity. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every person who personally receives Christ (John 1:12; 14:16-17; Romans 8:9). The Scriptures reveal the Holy Spirit not as an "it," but rather as a "He," a distinct personality. In John 3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who brings about regeneration or spiritual birth in the believer. While the Holy Spirit cannot be seen, we can see the evidence of His work (3:8).

The Scriptures further tell us that when we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in you" (Colossians 1:27b).

Lesson 11

MAN'S PREDICAMENT

Romans 1:18-32

The believers in Rome woke daily to the rule of the young and unprincipled Emperor Nero. The inner city problems of Rome were horrible, but the elite experience was very different. While the market places of the city began to bustle with the common people, the handmaidens in sheer gowns in Nero's palace prepared oil baths in warm salt-water pools for their mistresses. The afternoon brought gladiator shows or participant sports in huge gymnasiums with adjacent open baths.

Nero loved grand and extravagant entertainment, often hosting all-night parties at his palace. With pomp and childishness, he would flaunt his huge dining room ceiling that rained down flowers and perfume under the larger revolving roof perfectly synchronized with the heavens. Scantily clad dancing girls entertained the guests as they drank from golden goblets, gorged and feasted, and, as passions rose, indulged in pleasures of all kinds until dawn.

In 64 A.D., six years after Paul sent his letter to the believers in Rome, Nero blamed the Christians for a fire that destroyed large areas of the city. The populace believed Nero caused the fire himself and stood aghast as the emperor carried out torture of Christian men, women and children in the arena (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44).

Under the rule of this ungodly man, the believers in Rome could readily appreciate Paul's words describing such a person in Romans 1. Paul's letter began by explaining man's historical pattern that leads to such corruption. He declared that everyone is given the knowledge of God's existence and eternal power through the splendors of nature. Even so, men choose to "suppress the truth by their wickedness" and "neither glorify God nor give thanks to Him." This response to the Creator, Paul continues, brings God's wrath, a judgment manifested in God "giving over" man to his foolish thinking as he persists in "worshiping the creature rather than the Creator." The results lead to sexual

perversion and a depraved mind given to practicing and promoting all kinds of destructive behavior.

Paul proclaims that the one who refuses to acknowledge God, ignoring the understanding God has given, sinks deeper and deeper into all kinds of wrong behavior. His life-style exhibits debasing passion and vile thinking. God's response is to allow man to suffer the consequences of his behavior.

Read Romans 1:18-27.

1. Toward what is the wrath of God directed (Romans 1:18)?

Reference: Note 1, *wrath of God*, p. 112.

2. How has God revealed Himself to all (Romans 1:19-20)?

3. a. What choices does man make regarding the revelation of God (Rom 1:21a)?

b. What is the result (Romans 1:21b-23)?

c. What outward manifestations display man's decision to reject God (Romans 1:24-27)?

Read Romans 1:28-32.

4. a. What basic sin is identified in Romans 1:28a?

b. What is God's response (Romans 1:28b)?

Note: *God gave them over* (vv. 24,26,28) shows how God's judgment is in letting sin run its destructive course.

5. a. Study and list the sins found in Romans 1:29-31.

b. What knowledge do these sinners have (Romans 1:32a)?

c. What is the two-fold sin found in Romans 1:32b?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Worship and Wholeness

According to the Bible, God made man in His image with the capacity to have a relationship with Him. For this reason, we feel incomplete until we know and

worship our Creator. St. Augustine said centuries ago, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Pascal, the French physicist, stated it this way: "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which only God can fill through His Son, Jesus."

As we see in this lesson, instead of filling this vacuum by worshiping God, man prefers to go his own independent way. He exalts his own thinking and creates material objects of worship (1:22-23). While they meet no real need, they allow him to continue to do what he wants when he wants (against his God-given conscience). He becomes consumed by sexual passions and perversions and begins to "worship and serve created things rather than His Creator" (1:25).

The result of this cycle historically is the destruction of individual character (1:28-32) and the demise of entire societies. Not too many years would pass before the growing moral void in the great Roman Empire would lead to its extinction.

The fact that man's rejection of God immediately leads him into worshipping idols (material things) proves man's spiritual need to worship. Idolatry is the worship of images that is prevalent in societies around the world today. But in a broader sense, idolatry is the deifying of self and other created things rather than God (1:25; cf. Col.3:5).

In his book, *The Pursuit of God.*, A. W. Tozer says, "Before the Lord God made man upon the earth He first prepared for him a world of useful and pleasant things for his sustenance and delight. In the Genesis account of the creation these are called simply 'things.' They were made for man's use, but they were meant always to be external to the man and subservient to him. In the deep heart of the man was a shrine where none but God was worthy to come. Within him was God; without, a thousand gifts which God had showered upon him....Our woes began when God was forced out of His central shrine and things were allowed to enter. Within the human heart, things have taken over. Men have now by nature no peace within their hearts, for God is crowned there no longer, but there in the moral dusk stubborn and aggressive usurpers fight among themselves for the first place on the throne....God's gifts now take the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution."

Man's deepest needs--to experience a relationship with God and receive from that relationship a lasting sense of security, self-worth and being loved--can only be met as we know and worship our Creator. The good news of Paul's letter to the Romans is that lasting wholeness--peace with God and ourselves--can be experienced. In this lesson, we will make some observations about the relationship between worship and personal wholeness.

1. a. What does man choose to worship rather than God as referenced in Rom 1:18-32?

b. Which of these are prevalent in our world today?

2. a. The first of the Ten Commandments states that we should have no other gods before God. The second is that we should not make or bow down to idols (cf. Exodus 20:3-4). What general results of misdirected worship is God seeking to spare us from, as seen in Romans 1:18-32?

b. How is idolatry contrasted with worship of God in the following passages?
Psalm 135:14-18

Isaiah 46:1-7

3. a. What are some reasons God is worthy of our praise?

1 Chronicles 29:11

Psalm 33:6-9

Psalm 113:4-6

Psalm 145:8-9

Psalm 146:7-9

John 3:16

b. When we worship the Lord, what needs are met through the resulting intimate relationship with Him?

Isaiah 1:18 (1 John 1:9)

Psalm 62:1-2

Philippians 4:6-7

James 1:5

Romans 8:31b,38-39

4. a. What is the call to worship found in Psalm 100?

b. What is the promise of Psalm 16:11?

SUMMARY

5. a. What is idolatry, and to what does it lead?

b. What are the results of idolatry in our world today?

6. How can we detect, on a daily basis, what we are truly worshiping in our lives?

7. a. How would you define true worship of God?

b. What does the Bible promise true worship will bring about in your life?

c. What is the relationship between true worship and personal wholeness (defined as *fulfillment* or *being at peace with God and self*)?

LESSON 11 NOTES

1 *wrath of God is being revealed* (1:18). "Not a petulant, irrational burst of anger, such as humans often exhibit, but a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes His holy nature and will. God's wrath is not limited to the end-time judgment of the wicked (1 Thes 1:10; Rev 19:15; 20:11-15). Here the wrath of God is his abandonment of the wicked to their sins (vv. 24-32)." *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1707.

LESSON 12

INTRODUCTION

"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: rejoice!" These words were not written by a contemporary person sitting in a plush chair surrounded by books on how to achieve happiness. The apostle Paul was writing from the physical and emotional discomfort of a prison as he awaited news of a possible death sentence. Not only this, but he at one time or another had faced misunderstanding, sickness, abandonment by friends, persecution by enemies, imprisonment, doubts and despair. But in spite of the uncertainties and tensions, we see a man whose life was filled with joy.

Almost everyone is seeking more joy in life, and the book of Philippians has been called God's guide to joy. In the face of difficulty and discomfort, how could Paul say it is possible to: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!" What were his secrets to a life filled with joy? This is what we will seek to discover as we briefly study this wonderful letter written to the cherished church at Philippi.

JOYFUL IMPRISONMENT

Philippians 1

Philippi was an important city because it straddled the great east-west highway between Europe and Asia known as the Egnation Way. The city population was cosmopolitan, made up of Tracians, Greeks, Romans and a small number of Jews. The city was of typical Roman structure, with a central forum surrounded by fountains, temples, monuments, public baths and a library. Because there were only a few Jewish families in the city, there was no synagogue in Philippi.

Antony had made Philippi a Roman colony in 42 B.C., which provided the Philippians with special rights and privileges as Roman citizens. For this reason, its people were proud of and loyal to the government in Rome. The women

enjoyed high status and positions of public and business responsibility, and correspondingly important responsibilities in the Philippian church to whom Paul is writing.

Paul founded the church at Philippi sometime around the year A.D. 50, during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). From his letter to the Philippians, we learn that this church was taking its share of suffering. It was in some danger of division (1:27; 2:2; 4:2) and may have been leaning toward a doctrine of perfectionism (3:12-13). It was also being threatened by the teaching of Judaizers, a group that insisted that all Christians adhere to Jewish laws and customs.

But despite its problems, Paul loved this church and rejoiced in its successes. As he encouraged the Philippian believers and reported his own circumstances, Paul taught them to rejoice in the face of trial and persecution.

Scholars are not sure from which prison and when Paul wrote this letter, but they have assumed it was either from Rome around A.D. 61-63, or possibly from Ephesus around A.D. 54.

Read Philippians 1:1-11.

1. a. Which associate was with Paul, and to whom did Paul write (1:1)?

b. What was Paul's desire for the believers at Philippi (1:2)?

2. a. How did Paul feel about the Philippians, and why (1:3-5,7-8)?

b. Of what was Paul joyfully confident (1:6)?

c. What was Paul's prayer for the believers at Philippi (1:9-11)?

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

3. On what positive results of his imprisonment did Paul choose to focus (Philippians 1:12-14)?

Note: The Praetorian Guard or palace guard was an elite group of soldiers loyal to the Roman emperor. Although Bible scholars are not sure that Paul was imprisoned in Rome at this time, it is likely that he was under house arrest there, probably chained to a Roman guard continually.

4. a. What were the various motives of those who preached the gospel of Christ around Paul (1:15-17)?

b. How did Paul choose to respond to the situation (1:18)?

5. a. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward being in prison (1:18b-20)?

b. Although there was the possibility that Paul's forthcoming trial could end in his death, what two kinds of help gave him confidence (1:19)?

c. What was Paul's hope for the future (1:19-20)?

6. a. What perspective did Paul have on dying (1:21,23)?

b. What was Paul's purpose for living (1:21-26)?

7. What did Paul encourage the Philippians to do in the face of the persecution they were experiencing (1:27-30)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Joy in the Midst of Difficulty

1. a. What does the word "joy" mean to you? Is it the same as happiness? Explain.

b. Why is joy important according to Proverbs 17:22?

2. What might have been Paul's attitude during his imprisonment?

3. a. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the hardships he had faced. What were they (II Corinthians 6:4-5,8-9)?

b. What did Paul practice in the midst of these hardships (II Corinthians 6:6-7,10)?

c. What perspectives helped him through the hardships according to II Corinthians 6:10?

4. a. According to James 1:2-4, what is possible in the midst of difficulty?

b. Why would developing these qualities produce joy in one's life?

5. What does Job 20:4-5 say about joy for those without God?

6. What sources of joy are found in the following verses?

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 30:4-5

Isaiah 12:2-3

John 16:24

Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22

SUMMARY

7. a. Is your life joyful--always? sometimes? never?

b. If sometimes or always, when are you joyful? Is this joy temporary or lasting?

8. Paul says, "For me to live is Christ," stating the central commitment of his life. At this point in your life, what would you say is the central commitment of your life?

9. Paul was able to rejoice even when he was under extreme pressure. Think of one area in which things don't seem to be working out for you as you would like. How can this pressure point lead to rejoicing in your life?

10. What key to joy stands out to you in Philippians 1?

Bibliography

John Blanchard, *Right With God*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, copyright 1971, revised, 1985.

Fullam, Everett L. *Living the Lord's Prayer*, New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.

Life Application Bible, New International Version. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps & Charts, Old and New Testaments. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993.

The New International Version Study Bible. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation, 1985.

The NIV Topical Study Bible, New International Version. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Corporation, 1989.

Tenney, Merrill C. *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.

Tozer, A. W., *Jesus, Our Man in Glory*. Camp Hill, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications, 1987.

Tozer, A. W., *The Knowledge of the Holy*. New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961.

Vine, W. E. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1981.

Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament*. Scripture Press Publications, 1985.

Essentials of the Faith
A Compilation of CCL Studies

© Copyright by Creative Living International
of the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from Creative Living International, 11560 Brass Lantern Court, Reston, Virginia 20194.

Creative Living International is a Christian organization designed to help individuals find practical biblical principles for today's living.

Scripture quotations are from the *Holy Bible: New International Version (NIV)*.
Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society.

Sponsored by the ministry of: