


NORTH MAIN
CHURCH OF CHRIST



**THE
WHOLE
MAN**

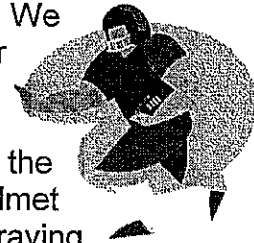
By Victor Campbell

THE WHOLE MAN

"Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand against the wiles of the devil," (Ephesians 6:11).

The primary objective for this class, "The Whole Man," is to teach us that God does not want half measures from us and that we must be determined to give ourselves completely to His service. Our goal is to thoroughly explore those things that are pleasing to God and how we must give ourselves to Him. We want to learn what the "good and acceptable and perfect will of God" is for our lives (Romans 12:2).

God wants the whole man, not small parts of him, not every once in a while, but the whole man completely. He wants those who will put on the whole armor of God and will equip themselves against the evil one. We are engaged in a struggle as we wrestle against the darkness of this world and against spiritual wickedness in high places. This is why we must put on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). We must have our loins girt about with truth, much like the football player or athlete who braces himself with protective clothing and shoes so that these will be a help to him, not a hindrance. We must put on a breastplate of righteousness and shod our feet with preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, we must take on the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always and watching with perseverance and supplication for all saints.



Our course of study will concentrate on the characteristics that a Christian must develop to become the whole man that God wants him to be. There will be discussions about circumstances that will occur in our lives and how we should deal with them according to God's will.

We are all faced with choices for the short term and long term in our daily lives. From early adulthood we must choose what course we want to follow. We must choose our spouse, how many children we want to have, what kind of houses we will live in and what kind of car we will drive. All of these choices are predicated on our ability to earn money and what we can afford. But, we all understand the commitment or giving of our whole selves to something. For example, as a husband, I must give all of myself to my wife and children. As an employee, I must give all of myself to do my job while I am on company time. My marriage would not be very good, or any good at all, if I just gave part of myself to my wife and children. And certainly if I gave only partial effort to any cause, it would not go very far. These things we readily accept and understand. Our commitment to giving our whole selves to God's service is many, many times more important. Just as our spouses and children want our entire devotion, just as our employers want our whole and entire loyalty, God above all wants our whole and entire mind, soul and body.

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Our Lord Jesus Christ went to the cross and gave up all that He had. He gave Himself wholly to saving us from hell and redeeming us to God so we could have eternity in heaven. In return, He wants us wholly, mind, body and soul devoted to Him and His service.

Just as soldiers on the battlefield watch for each other, God's training of His saints not only prepares us for battle with evil, but also prepares us to watch for our brethren, "praying always all prayers and supplications in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). The whole man that God wants is the man who prepares himself to battle evil and stands shoulder to shoulder with his brothers in Christ watching for their safety, as well as his own.

INDEX OF LESSONS

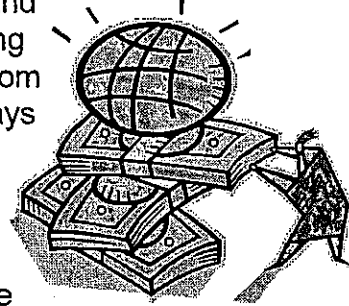
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Lesson One

WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

Our first lesson is taken from Matthew 19:16-26, Mark 10:17-27 and Luke 18:18-27. It relates to a young man who came and knelt before Jesus and asked our Lord the question "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus had been traveling extensively throughout Galilee and Samaria preaching to the multitudes, accompanied by His disciples. While on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus is approached by a young man who was very rich. Luke tells us that this man was a ruler.

Mark's account in chapter 10 tells us that the young man came running and knelt before Jesus, calling Him "Good Master." Jesus gives glory to God the Father when He asks the young man, "Why do you call Me good? There is none good but one, that is God. Jesus goes on to tell the young man to keep the commandments. The young man asks "Which ones?" Jesus said, "You shall not murder, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man answered Jesus and said, "All these things I have kept from my youth up. What am I still lacking? The text in Mark 10 says that Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and then told him that one thing he lacked; Jesus told him to go and sell whatsoever he had and to give to the poor and he would have treasure in heaven; he also told him to come, take up his cross and follow Him. When the young man heard this, he became very sorrowful because he was very rich. Jesus saw the young man's sorrow; the young man then went away grieving. Jesus then told His disciples how hard it was for rich people to enter into the kingdom of God because of their trust in riches.



Jesus compares it to being easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

The disciples were astonished by what Jesus said and asked who then can be saved? Jesus told them that with men it is impossible but with God all things are possible.

Observations:

- The rich young ruler seems to be very motivated and earnest in that he ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him to ask Jesus about what he should do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17).
- When Jesus tells him to keep the commandments, the young man asks – "Which ones?" (Matthew 19:18).
- Jesus tells him the commandments. The young man was still very sincere and tells Jesus he has kept them since his childhood, but he realizes that he is still lacking (Matthew 19:20). The young man asked further, "All these things I have kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?"

- When Jesus tells the young man to give up his possessions and follow Him, the young man is no longer motivated. He went away grieving and sorrowful.
- The young man wanted eternal life on his own terms, and he went away sorrowful because he could not give up his riches. He loved them more than his desire for eternal life.

Discussion Questions:

1. What comparison can we make with the rich young ruler of the text and ourselves today?

Are we rich?

What do we have to forfeit to become disciples of Jesus?

2. Did Jesus want the young man to be completely dedicated to following Him? Did He want the whole man or just part of him?

3. Did you realize when you became a Christian how much the Lord expects of you?

4. Are we sometimes like the young man?

Do we ask how much do we have to do?

Do we ever ask which of the Lord's commands do we have to keep, which ones can we ignore?

5. What do you believe the main obstacle was that prevented the young man from following Jesus?

a. His love for his possessions.

b. His unwillingness to be in subjection to Jesus. (i.e.) He was a ruler.

c. Facing the problems that might come from following Jesus.

6. Did the young man know that even though he kept the commandments that he still was lacking something?

7. What motivates you to attend every service that you can?

8. Is your devotion to the worship service always attentive, or do you have to train yourself to stay focused?



Which part of the worship service do you have the most trouble paying attention to?

Does your level of reverence vary through the worship service?

How long does the sermon topic stay with you after church is over?

Can you remember what the lesson was three or four days later?

When you are faced with temptation, maybe through watching TV, or tempted to do something dishonest, or even to tell "little white lies", do you rely on your remembrance of God's word to help you resist when you are tempted?

Lesson Two

BE DOERS OF THE WORD AND NOT HEARERS ONLY

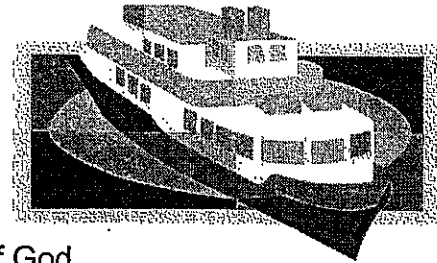
JAMES 1:22

This admonition from God is repeated time and again in the scriptures. We are told by James that we deceive ourselves when we allow ourselves to forget what we are taught from God's word. Here is the text from James 1:23-26 (KJV):

For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.

Note that James implies that the man who is a doer of God's word is a man who bridles his tongue. James had more to say about the power of the tongue in James 3:1-12.

- It is just like the bit in a horse's mouth, one little tug on the bit can turn the horse's head.
- It is like the small rudder on a big ship, one little touch of the wheel and the helmsmen can turn the whole ship even in a fierce storm.
- With our tongue we bless God, and with the same tongue we curse men, who are made in the image of God.



We must be doers of God's word, not merely hearers. With our mouths, we may claim to be doers of God's word, but with the same mouth deny that we are doers of His word. How do we do that? By failing to control the tongue!

When we give lip service only to a task, either in the church, at home, or at work, we are like the man described by the Lord in Matthew 21:28-31. Jesus tells us of a father who had two sons. The father asks the first son to work in the vineyard. At first, the son said he would not, but later he repented and went to work as his father had asked him. The father asked the second son also to work in the vineyard. The second son agreed to go to work, but did not go. Jesus asked which one of the sons did the will of his father. Which one do you think did the will of his father?

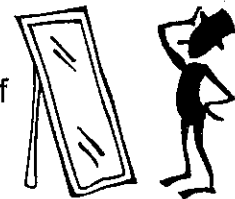
Abraham was called the friend of God (James 2:23). He went where God told him to go without question. Abraham may have had some shortcomings from time to time, but his constant will and desire was to follow God and do His will. Abraham was a doer of God's word.

The wonderful faith chapter—Hebrews 11—tells us of Abraham’s faith. God told him to leave his country, his kindred, and his father’s house; he was told to go into a land that God would show him (Hebrews 11:8-16; Genesis 12:1-4). Abraham departed from his homeland just as the Lord had told him to do.

Abraham heard God speak and then did as God commanded. He was a hearer of God and a doer of God’s will. His faith was manifested by his listening to God, and his works demonstrated his faith in God. See also James 2:19-24.

Observations:

- We must be determined to practice what we learn from God’s word, whether it is from our own study, or from what we are taught in Bible class and worship services.
- The Lord warns us about our forgetfulness with the example of looking into a mirror and then right away forgetting what we saw.
- By our own lack of determination and concentration, we deceive ourselves. But, when we put into practice what we have learned by our commitment, God will bless us.
- We must practice self-control, especially in what we say. The Lord tells us how destructive our tongues can be.
- We must allow a tender conscience to direct us to do good as the first son in the parable did (Matthew 21:28-31). At first he said “no” to his father, but later repented, changed his mind, and from a good conscience, did his father’s will.
- Our reputation among our friends in the world would be rated very low if we did not follow through and do the things that we committed ourselves to do for them. How much more serious it is when we commit ourselves to doing God’s will and then don’t follow through?
- Simply saying that we have faith and then not doing what our faith demands will not get us to heaven.



Discussion Questions:

1. Will God accept Christians who, in their daily lives, do not do His will? Will God accept those who harbor malice or evil toward others?
2. Will God accept the Christian who lives a good life in terms of morality, is a good provider for the family, a good mother or father, but is careless in attendance to Bible class and worship?

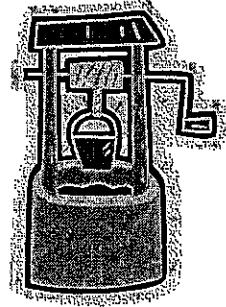
3. Will God accept parents who do not raise their children to honor God and gain knowledge of Him, by not teaching their children the gospel?
4. Are we tempted daily to let our tongue get us into trouble? What things must we do to resist the temptation to say hurtful or evil things?
5. Can we be God's friend, just as Abraham was? If so, how?
6. Can we use our tongue as a blessing to people by speaking as the oracles of God? If so, what kind of things will be heard from our lips?
7. Do our neighbors notice our going to worship on Sunday and Wednesday evening? Can they set their clocks by our coming and going at church times?
8. Do we look for opportunities to speak about the gospel with our friends and co-workers?
9. Do we express our love and build up and edify our brothers and sisters in the congregation?
10. Do we really consider our brethren as our spiritual family? Are we friendly and caring toward our church family?
11. Would we say that God knows our concerns and desires from our frequent prayers?
12. Based on our prayer life, can we be called God's friends?

Lesson Three

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

MATTHEW 5:6

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, He told her about living water. Jesus said "whoever drinks of this water that I shall give him shall never thirst again, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:13-14). In John 6:35, Jesus said "I am the bread of life, he that comes to me shall never hunger and he that believes on me shall never thirst." Jesus goes on to tell us in John 6:40 that "everyone who sees the Son and believes on Him will have eternal life and I will raise him up on the last day."



The water that we thirst for is the eternal life that Jesus offers us. The bread that we hunger for is Jesus Himself, the bread of life. The righteousness that we seek is to be holy as the Lord is holy. We must practice those things that will make us holy, be godlike, and have faith, love, patience and meekness. Here is what Paul wrote to Timothy about holy living in 1 Timothy 6:11-12 (KJV):

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

When we thirst for something, such as water, nothing will satisfy us until we actually have the drink to quench our thirst. There is no substitute and we will not rest until we obtain that drink of water. When we have an intense interest in a subject or hobby, we are not satisfied and will not rest until we acquire the knowledge that we are seeking. We can easily understand how we can hunger and thirst for knowledge and comprehension when we are in the process of accomplishing important goals in our lives, such as buying a home, seeking a position in employment, obtaining medical help for a sickness, or even just wanting to know all we can about our favorite team. We must have a much more intense hunger and thirst for God righteousness in our lives.

God wants us to put Him first in all things. If we apply our energies to knowing earthly things, then we should apply even more energy, effort and determination in seeking to know all about God and His plan for our lives. He wants to use us in His service in saving the souls of others. How can God use us if we don't know His will? God wants the whole person to be devoted to Him.

It is easy for us to be consumed in things that pertain only to this life. Hear what Jesus said in Matthew 6: 31-33 (KJV):

Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the

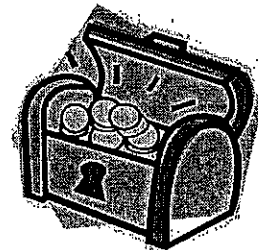
Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

God wants our full attention and devotion to His will. He wants the whole person in subjection to Him. God helps us put our possessions into perspective in Matthew 6:19-21 (KJV):

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Observations:

- We are promised by God that we will be blessed when we hunger and thirst after righteousness, and these blessings come through His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ.
- The overriding blessing is eternal life, made possible only through the sacrifice and shedding of the blood of His Son.
- The scriptures clearly describe the righteousness that we must practice every day in our conduct; godliness, faith, love, patience (longsuffering) and meekness.
- The human emotion of thirsting and longing for something is not a mystery to us when we consider our own daily lives and how much we will do to achieve our own worldly objectives.
- We recognize that we must set aside certain things in our lives when we want to attain our earthly goals, and do so willingly. It might be such things as saving to buy a car, a house or to pay for a vacation. But God contrasts these things (treasures) that corrupt and decay with laying up treasures in heaven, which will not rust or decay or be stolen.
- God does not want anything to come between Him and His disciples. He wants the whole person to put Him above all things, even above family. God tells us in Exodus 20:5 that He is a jealous God!



Discussion Questions:

1. Are we familiar with the concept of hungering and thirsting for something?
2. What must we do to obtain what Jesus offers (the living water)?

3. When we first obey the gospel at baptism, is our hungering and thirsting after righteousness over? See John 6:35 and Matthew 28:20.

4. Is there a middle ground between foolish and hurtful lusts drowning men in destruction and perdition and following after godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness? See Ephesians 4:14-32.

5. How do we become like God – holy? See Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Peter 2:21-23.

6. Has God given us the "how to" in order for us to be righteous? See Philippians 4:13.

7. Where do we find the "how to"? See Proverbs 15:28 and 2 Timothy 2:15.

8. What is one of the other essential "how to's" in our hungering and thirsting for righteousness? See Hebrews 10:24-26.

9. How much of your whole person will you give to God?

Lesson Four

WE ARE THE LORD'S ROMANS 14:8

"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord and whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether we live therefore, or die, *we are the Lord's*" (Romans 14:8).

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Romans 14:9).

When we submit to the gospel and become Christians, we are no longer our own; we no longer submit to our own will, but because we are the Lord's, we submit only to His will.

Because we are the Lord's, we are called His children.

"I will call them my people which were not my people...there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Romans 9:25-26).

We have become God's children through our faith in Jesus Christ. "For we are all children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).

Being children of God and joint heirs with Christ, we must be very much aware of the responsibilities and obligations that are now ours as children of God.

We are laborers together with God; we are God's workers; we are God's field and God's building (1 Corinthians 3:9). We are not to boast, for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:9-10).

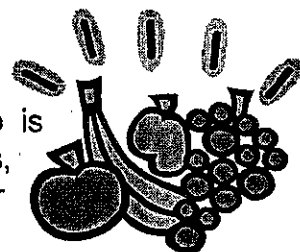


Each one of us is part of the holy temple of God. "We are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together growth unto a holy temple in the Lord. In whom we also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Our job as God's laborers is to bear much fruit (John 15:8). Jesus tells us that He is the vine, we are the branches, and if we abide in Him and He in us, then we will bring forth

much fruit. But without Christ, we can do nothing. If we don't abide in Christ, we will be cast forth as branches and cast into the fire and burned (John 15:5-6).

Jesus said that His Father is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15:8). When we do the Lord's will, then we become more than servants—we become His friends (John 15:15). One who is merely a servant does not know His master's thoughts and plans, but we know what our Lord's will is; we understand His plans for our lives.



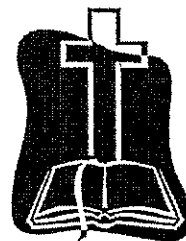
As God's children, we must love each other as God loves us. In John 15:9, Jesus said, "As the father has loved me, so have I loved you, continue in my love." The Lord tells us that if we keep His commandments, that we abide in His love, even as He has kept the Father's commandments and abides in the Father's love. See John 15:10-17.

We must learn to love one another, just as God has loved us. We must remember that we belong to the Lord. We are not at liberty to do as we please. Instead, we please Him. Note the characteristics of love as Paul outlined them in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8—NKJV:

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...

Observations:

- In a world that is obsessed with personal rights, personal freedom and individualism, the Christian must recognize that he is not his own. He belongs to the Lord.
- Jesus has bought us with the price of His own life by the shedding of His blood on the cross (Acts 20:28).
- God claims us as His own children. He acknowledges us as His own.
- Because of our faith, we have put on Christ, God's Son. Thus, we are partakers of God's promise of heaven.
- We are fellow laborers with God and His son, Jesus; and as a result, we are to do the good works that God created us for.
- All the saints make up the household of God, His habitation.
- God's purpose for us as His children and fellow laborers is that we bear fruit. We must be always on the lookout for opportunities to teach the lost about God's plan.



- Love is an absolute essential element of our character as God's laborers. We are to demonstrate that love to our brethren, not merely as a preference, but as a commandment from God.

Discussion Questions:

1. What part of us belongs to the Lord? See 1 Thessalonians 5:23.
2. What was the price paid for our salvation? Who paid that price? See Ephesians 5:25 and 1 Timothy 2:1-6.
3. When and how did we become God's children? See Acts 2:38-39 and Romans 5:1-2.
4. Being children of God, what do we become relative to Jesus Christ? See Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:29 and Galatians 4:6-7.
5. With whom do we labor? See 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians 5:9; 6:1.
6. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto _____
which God has prepared beforehand that we _____
_____.
7. In whom must we abide in order to bear fruit?
8. "We must love each other." Is this a suggestion or a command? See John 15:17.
9. Are we allowed to draw our own conclusions about what love is and how it should be demonstrated? See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.
10. Can I be the whole person that God wants me to be without love? See 1 Corinthians 13:1-3?

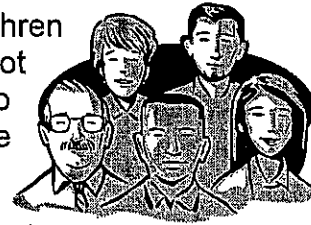
Lesson Five

PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE

ROMANS 12:1

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Following this opening in Romans 12, Paul goes on to give us clear instructions on how we are to conduct ourselves among the brethren and how we are to live before those outside the church. We are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. Paul points out to us that we have different abilities and functions within the church, but we are all members of one body, and every one members one of another (Romans 12:4-5).



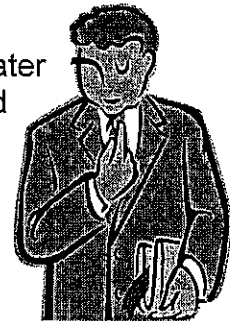
We have different abilities that God has blessed us with according to His grace, and we are to use these talents accordingly. If our strong point is ministry, then we are to minister by attending to our brethren or being ready to serve whenever called upon.

Those of us that have the ability to teach are to use that ability and teach. If we can exhort (encourage), we are to do so. When we give, we are to do our giving with liberality and with simplicity. If we lead, we must do it with diligence and carefully, with seriousness. And we must be ready to be merciful and apply mercy carefully. We are to love without hypocrisy and to abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good.

Observations:

- Our reasonable service unto God is to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. This kind of service is what we conclude that we must do when we hear the gospel and obey what we hear. It is the only conclusion that knowledge and sound judgment will allow.
- God clearly states through Paul how much of us He wants in His service; it is the whole person which is acceptable to God. Anything less is unacceptable.
- As a result of hearing the gospel and studying the things we hear and submitting to God's will, our minds are renewed—they are transformed. As we gain understanding and act on that understanding, our lives are changed.
- Paul goes on throughout the rest of Romans 12 to instruct us on what kind of persons we must be as a result of giving ourselves as a living sacrifice, being holy and acceptable to God.

- We are not to elevate our thoughts about who we are. We are not to think too highly of ourselves. We are not to consider ourselves better than other people, but we are to be sober, to think and act with sound judgment, according to the faith that God has instilled within us.
- Being members of the one body of Christ compels us to abide in relationships with our brethren and to exercise the blessing that God has bestowed upon us. We are to use our different talents to comfort, edify and teach one another about God's will.
- Our giving should be done with liberality and without fanfare, but simply and quietly.
- We must love with genuine love; our love must be agape love, without hypocrisy, preferring one another without partiality.
- We must always turn away from evil with disgust and hatred for all that it represents, and we are always to seek only righteousness.
- Our service to the Lord must be with intensity and earnestness.
- We are not to show partiality toward those brethren who have greater blessings, but we must seek out those who are less fortunate and encourage them.
- We must not hold grudges or seek to harm anyone who may have hurt us, but rather we must treat them with kindness and provide for them if they have a need.



Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to "present our bodies a living sacrifice"?
2. What is the process by which we transform our minds?
3. What does it mean to "prove" the good and acceptable will of God?
4. Do you think you have a tendency to think too highly of yourself? Do you think other people have a tendency to think too highly of themselves?

5. How do our different strengths and abilities fit in with the functioning of the one body? How do your personal strengths and abilities fit in?

6. What should our attitude be toward giving? See 2 Corinthians 9:7.

7. Is our love the love that God wants us to have, if we love others with partiality?

8. How can we train ourselves to be fervent in what we do in God's service?

9. Is it easy to love our enemies? Why? Or why not? See Luke 14:27-29, 33 and Matthew 5:38-48?

10. With what frame of mind should our overall service be to the Lord?

Lesson Six

I AM SET FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

PHILIPPIANS 1:17

Paul wrote to the Philippians about the conditions under which some were preaching the gospel. Here is what he said in Philippians 1:14-18:

... and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.



Note that Paul says, "I am appointed for the defense of the gospel." The KJV uses the word "set" instead of "appointed." It was God's will that Paul be ready to defend the truth of Christ. Paul was willing to defend the gospel, regardless of the consequences—even if it cost him his life. Note what he says in Philippians 1:20-22:

... according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.

This is consistent with what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also the Greek."

Paul believed in the gospel's power and he was not afraid to proclaim it. Certainly Paul was not the only Christian who had such courage. The courage of the early Christians is revealed to us in the book of Acts. We are told how Paul preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus (Acts 9:27-29). Even though Paul's life was in danger, he spoke boldly in the name of Jesus and disputed with the Grecians. The disciples who were scattered in Acts 8:1-4 were equally bold in proclaiming Christ.

In Acts 18:24-28, we read of Apollos, a man who was mighty in the scriptures but knew only the baptism of John. While it is true that he had to be corrected by Aquila and Priscilla, we can learn from him about the value of speaking with boldness. Even though these Christian's lives were in danger, they spoke out boldly in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Paul encouraged Timothy to preach the word, to be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering (2 Timothy 4:2). Paul also instructed

Timothy to take heed unto himself and unto the doctrine that he taught. If Timothy was diligent to continue in proper conduct and proper teaching, he would save himself as well as those who heard him preach (1 Timothy 4:16). Certainly Timothy had to be bold in doing this, for there were some who opposed the teaching of truth (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Being bold in teaching is not reserved only for preachers. James tells us that all Christians have an obligation to teach one another. Hear James 5:19-20:

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

This text is talking about relationships among brethren, not people in the world. Even though we seek to convert people in the world, we have special obligations toward brethren who have wandered away from the truth. The means of turning an erring brother away from his sin is the teaching of the word of God.

Note what Paul writes in Ephesians 6:13-20. Pay careful attention to what he says in the final verse of this section.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Observations:

- Paul points out in Philippians 1 that even though some brethren preached Christ for the personal purposes of envy and strife, it was good that Christ was preached. But, he also points out that men taught Christ without fear and spoke boldly.
- Paul stresses that we should not be ashamed of the gospel, that we should speak with boldness, and that Christ should be magnified in our lives.
- The early Christians had to overcome fear and danger of persecution and even loss of life to preach the gospel. They did not preach in whispers, but in boldness.

- Apollos, even though he did not know the complete gospel, taught what he did know and taught without fear and with boldness. By God's providence, he was taught the baptism of Christ by Aquila and Priscilla. Apollos went on and proved mightily by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.
- We are to teach the gospel regardless of when and where it is. We are to reprove and exhort with all longsuffering.
- We must meditate on the doctrine of Christ, being ready to teach the gospel at any time that the opportunity arises.
- We must always be aware of how essential it is for us to teach the gospel to save souls, and thereby save our own souls.
- We must be completely equipped with sound knowledge of the gospel. We must equip ourselves completely by study and attendance to worship so that we can speak as we ought to speak – boldly.

Discussion Questions:

1. How can we gain the confidence needed to speak boldly about the gospel? See 2 Timothy 2:15.
2. Must we be experts on all the Bible says in order to approach someone to study and to teach them?
3. Even though our lives are not in danger as the early Christians were, do we still need courage to teach the gospel to others?
4. How do we overcome our fears of teaching others?
5. How do we prepare ourselves to be set for the defense of the gospel? See 1 Peter 3:15-16 and Colossians 4:6.
6. When we are challenged regarding our faith, are we sometimes ashamed of what we believe and practice? Do we shy away from issues about baptism, the Lord's Supper, or not forsaking the assembly?

7. How must our personal conduct and speech be as we try to influence non-believers to listen when we speak boldly about the gospel? See Titus 2:7-8 and 1 Timothy 6:3-4.
8. How important is self-examination as we teach others? 1 Timothy 4:13-16?
9. How much of himself is Paul instructing Timothy to give to serving God and continuing in the doctrine of Christ?
10. What part should our prayer life play in speaking boldly for the Lord?
11. Can we defend the gospel with only part of God's armor on us? How effective is a soldier in battle without all of his armor on to protect himself?

Lesson Seven

O MY GOD, I TRUST IN THEE

PSALM 25:15

David's cry to God expressed his complete dependence on God. Hear what David said in Psalm 25:1-5:

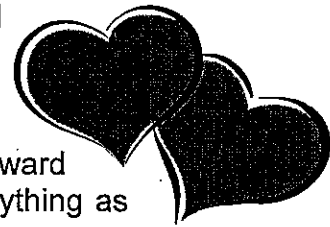
To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in You; Let me not be ashamed; Let not my enemies triumph over me. Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; Let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause. Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day.

This disposition of absolute trust and dependence on God is that of the whole person; it is what God wants from His children. We are not to trust in ourselves. When Paul faced a sentence of death, he did not trust in himself. Here is what he said in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10:

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.

Just as God delivered David and Paul from the things they faced, God also delivers us and will keep us in His care. When troubles come upon us, trusting in ourselves brings death. But trusting in God brings blessing. In 2 Corinthians 3:2-5, Paul wrote the following to the Christians:

You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God.



When we have absolute trust and reliance on God, we become His epistle to all men. We develop our trust and confidence from God's word, the gospel.

The whole person who serves God will teach others the gospel, as Paul states in 2 Timothy 2:2, "and the things thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men who will teach others also." The whole person will eagerly declare his or her trust in God in the same way that Jesus did in Hebrews 2:13, "saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee, and again, I will put my trust in him."

Our trust in God will develop confidence in us to continue on in God's way. "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Just as David sought safety and refuge in God because of his trust in Him, the whole person that God seeks will find the same safety and refuge that David found. Hear what David wrote in Psalm 62:7-8.

In God is my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, And my refuge,
is in God. Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before
Him; God is a refuge for us.

When we seek God's refuge, we lay hold upon the hope set before us (Hebrews 6:18).

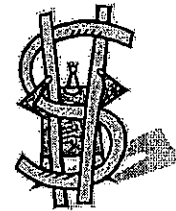
We are to flee from evil and flee to the safety of God's refuge where we will enjoy godliness and contentment. Hear what Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:6-11:

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Observations

- Our cry unto God should be just as fervent as David's cry. Unto thee O God do I lift up my soul. We are God's children just as David is. Our trust in God must be just as complete and emphatic as David's trust in Him.
- Our whole person must commit to trust in God. Our total dependence on God must be complete and absolute, not just a sometime thing.
- If we trust in ourselves rather than God, we face eternal death.
- If we trust in God, we are rewarded with eternal life in God's presence.
- Our faith and trust in God will mold us into His servants. We become examples, epistles to the lost around us, and an encouragement to our brethren.
- God makes us into effective workers in teaching the lost, but not of our own strength, but from the strength that comes from God through our trust in Him.

- Our obligation to trust in God for eternal life and for all things here while we live on earth extends beyond ourselves to our children. As Jesus instills trust in God's children, we should instill this same trust and devotion to God in our children.
- When we trust in God completely, as David did, God is also the rock of our strength, our salvation and our refuge.
- We must take the message of safety and refuge out to the lost so that they too can obtain God's salvation through His son Jesus Christ. Only then, can they enjoy godliness and contentment.
- We are not to trust in riches, which will drown us in destruction and perdition. But we must flee from evil with the confidence that God allows us to lay hold upon the hope set before us.



Discussion Questions:

1. Can we have the same strong trust and dependency in God that David had? If so, what do we need to do to gain that kind of trust?
2. At what stage in our physical lives do we learn about trust and dependency?
3. Even as adults, how much does trust and dependency play a part of our daily lives?
4. How much contact do we want to have with someone or something that we believe we cannot trust?
5. How does it affect us personally when another person does not trust us?
6. Does God give enough reason for us to put our trust in Him completely? If so, what reasons or evidence do we have that assures us that we can trust in Him?
7. Does trusting in riches bring the same contentment that is described in I Timothy 6:6? Why? Or why not?

8. Have you ever been let down by someone you trusted?

9. How has God proven to us that He will never let us down?

10. Can we trust God with only part of ourselves? For example, will it work if I trust God only on Sunday and Wednesday evenings?

Lesson Eight

DESPISE NOT THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

PROVERBS 3:11

The whole man that God seeks is the man who recognizes that total dependence for his well being is upon God. And, as one of God's children, the whole man will from time to time need to be corrected. Proverbs 3:12 says, "For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights."

God corrects us by means of His word. It is given for our correction (2 Timothy 3:16-17). God also corrects us by means of other Christians (Galatians 6:1-2). The rebuke of a brother may be the loving hand of God seeking to chastise a wayward saint.

Just as we view our earthly father-child relationship, the Bible teaches that we have a heavenly father-child relationship. These relationships are similar to one another. Of course our heavenly Father is perfect in His correction. Earthly fathers, no matter how hard they try, are imperfect. Listen to Hebrews 12:9-11:

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.



The gospel is replete with scriptures that illustrate this father-child relationship. And just as we were chastised and corrected by our earthly fathers, so it is with our heavenly Father.

And just as a good child would obey their earthly father, so will a child of God obey his heavenly Father. Proverbs 4:1-4 teaches us that we have been given good doctrine and we are not to forsake God's law. We are to keep God's commandments and live. We are to seek wisdom and understanding. We are to embrace wisdom and exalt her. We are not to enter the path of the wicked nor go in the way of evil men.

Proverbs chapter three (the chapter from which our lesson title comes) contains numerous things to help us in life. When we hear these things from the word of God, this is the means by which God chastens, corrects and directs our lives. Here are some of the statements from Proverbs chapter three:

3:11-12 "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor detest His correction; For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights."

3:3-4 "Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man."

3:5-7 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil."

3:27 "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so."

3:28 "Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,' When you have it with you."

3:29 "Do not devise evil against your neighbor, for he dwells by you for safety's sake."

3:30 "Do not strive with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm."

Some of the above passages deal with our relationship with God; others deal with our relationships with our neighbors. In every case, the Lord wants us to lead disciplined lives. Our lives must show that we are following God's direction. When we find our lives out of harmony with God's will, then we must be willing to be corrected. God's word is given for our correction and chastening. Hear what 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof**, for **correction**, for **instruction** in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Even our speech—our communication with one another, with our families or our co-workers must be brought under the control of God. If our speech is corrupt, we must allow the word of God to reprove us, correct us, and instruct us in how we ought to speak. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Ephesians 4:29).



For those of us who are married with children, probably the most frequent chastening or discipline that we need is in regard to how we conduct ourselves before our families on a daily basis. We may have a tendency to let down our guard and not exercise self-control when we are with our spouse and children. We may show a side of ourselves that those outside of our families never see. Husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25). We are not to treat our wives any different than Christ treats the church. We are not to be sporadic in giving to our wives the kind of loving nurturing that God says they need. We are to be constant in loving our wives. Wives are to be in subjection to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22-24). That means holding them in high honor and respect.

Husbands must not be overbearing and domineering with their wives. The Lord commands the wife to recognize her husband as the head. However, the husband must not abuse the authority that God has blessed him with. Both husband and wife must practice the things we learn in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 about loving one another.

Love never fails when the husband and wife conduct their lives as they are commanded by the gospel. Their lives together will be content when they seek only God's will for each other. God does not want us to sometimes practice some of these things. But God wants the whole person to practice all of these things all the time. Does your life need to be corrected with regard to how you treat your spouse?

Observations:

- God delights in His children and He corrects us when it is needed, because of His great love for us.
- God corrects us by means of His word, and by means of other Christians. When a brother or sister rebukes us for our ungodly conduct, that is a form of chastening from the Lord! When we read or hear the word of God, we should have hearts that are open to correction, for God often corrects us by His word!
- Even though our earthly fathers were and are imperfect, we have great respect for them, even with their imperfections. Our respect for our heavenly Father must be of an even higher order.
- Just as our earthly fathers taught us to respect the laws of the land and to treat civil authorities with respect, God teaches us the same, but on a much higher level. His teachings go beyond respecting man's law, but respecting and honoring His law.
- Our respect for kindness and truth should be obvious to all that we come in contact with. We are God's ambassadors and His epistle to the lost. People should see in us in how we conduct our daily lives that we are God's children.
- We must not use or rely on our own wisdom, but we must cloth ourselves with the wisdom from God.
- We must not give lip service to those who are in need. If we have the means to help those in need, we must do it with a kind and humble heart.
- Probably the place where we need the most correction is how we treat our own family members. Where we would not use the sharp side of our tongue with friends and co-workers, we may use that sharp tongue with those closest to us, our spouse and children, those we love the most.
- We must be on guard all the time regarding our speech at work and at home. We must fear the Lord and turn away from the evil of corrupt speech. Rather than set a bad example with our speech, we must use our speech in a manner that we edify those we talk to, that they may see the grace of God in us.
- Sometimes the discipline from our Heavenly Father will bring us sorrow, sorrow from the shame that we feel, or sorrow from having to submit to God's will when it may be difficult at the time. But we must be encouraged by the fact that how we

respond to God's discipline will bring the peaceful fruit of righteousness, if we respond according to His will.

- By husbands loving their wives as Christ loves the church, it guarantees the wife the comfort and security that she is loved by her husband according to God's will. The wife will encourage and edify the husband when she treats her husband with respect for him as the leader of the family.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do we conduct ourselves every minute, every hour, every day, every week, every month, every year, as God's children, totally depending upon Him?
2. Do we sometimes forget that we can depend on God's will to show us the right way? And because we forget, we try to work out our problems by ourselves?
3. Do we at times not submit to God's will and purposely decide to go it alone?
4. How are we to display kindness and truth?
5. How do we guarantee that our lives will be secure?
6. What will our submission to discipline bring us?
7. What area of our lives typically needs more correction than other areas?
8. How do we obtain the wisdom God wants us to have?
9. How does God chasten us when we need it?
10. What should the sorrow that we feel from God's chastening lead to for us?

Lesson Nine

IF ANY OF YOU LACKS WISDOM, LET HIM ASK OF GOD

JAMES 1:5

God's children must seek God's wisdom. David pleaded with God, "Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day" (Psalms 25:4-5). The whole person that God wants is one that is eager and ready to be taught God's wisdom.

The world regards wisdom in terms of experience, good judgment, discretion, and that which is gained from study of man's history down through the ages. The wisdom of this world is often perceptive, shrewd and cunning. The wisdom that the world seeks is drawn from man, not from God. God offers us a higher form of wisdom.

In Proverbs 3:7, God tells us not to be wise in our own eyes but to fear the Lord and depart from evil. Romans 1:21-23 tells us about the wisdom of this world and how men, thinking they are wise, actually become fools because they have rejected God. Hear what Paul wrote to the Romans:

...because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

The wisdom of this world not only rejects God, it also rejects the provision God has made for man's salvation. The wisdom of this world rejects the cross of Christ. Hear what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

God makes a very clear distinction between His wisdom and worldly wisdom. Note these passages from Proverbs that speak of God's wisdom:

Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

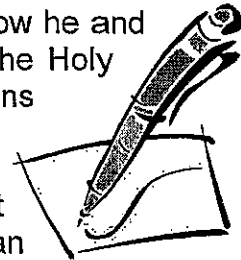
Proverbs 3:13 "Happy is the man that finds wisdom, and the man that gains understanding."

This section out of Proverbs is especially important. It is a text where Solomon speaks to his own son regarding wisdom. We would do well to heed these words that Solomon wrote in Proverbs 4:4-11:

He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you." Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.

The wisdom contained in the scriptures is not the wisdom of man. It is wisdom that has been revealed from heaven. It is inspired wisdom. Paul wrote of how he and the other apostles and prophets received wisdom from above when the Holy Spirit supernaturally guided them. Hear Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 2:10-15:

But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.



"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18).

The whole person that God wants is the person who diligently seeks God's wisdom and then abides in it. Our society (the world) wants to dominate our lives. The TV and radio blares out all day long to make us captive of worldly events and pleasures. Our friends and co-workers want to influence us with worldly desires. They want us to go to the ball game, go to the party, attend school events, and go to the movies. Thus, we are constantly confronted with choices. We must be filled with and influenced by God's wisdom; if not, then we are vulnerable to making choices that are in opposition to God's will, which lead to our own destruction. The world's wisdom tells us that we have to be flexible and put some things ahead of God and His church. Yet the wisdom of scripture admonishes us to seek first the kingdom of God. Hear what Paul said in Hebrews 10:23-25:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love

and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

The wisdom of this world cares nothing for the worship of God or the encouragement of the brethren. The world can see no reason for singing praises, Bible study or any of the things we do in worship. In the verses following Hebrews 10:25, the author points out the need for diligent service unto God. He shows that we should never be careless in our relationship to God or slothful with respect to worship. Carelessness and sloth lead to apostasy; they lead to the loss of souls. Hear what the writer said in Hebrews 10:26-31:



For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Observations:

- Seeking God's wisdom starts with the desire in our hearts to learn about God and God's plan of salvation for us. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do his commandments; his praise endureth for ever" (Psalm 111:10).
- We must grow in our wisdom. "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2).
- God requires us to grow as His children. We must continue in our study and learning. "Study to show thyself approved, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).
- God does not want us to remain babes in the faith. See Hebrews 5:12-14.
- Those men who are held in high esteem according to worldly wisdom are not held in such high esteem by God. According to God, "Great men are not always wise" (Job 32:9).
- We must not trust in our own wisdom, but trust only in God's wisdom. Those that Paul wrote of in the book of Romans professed themselves to be wise, but they had become fools (Romans 1:22).

- God promises blessing and reward to the whole man who diligently seeks His wisdom and His will (Hebrews 11:6).
- Our seeking of God's wisdom must be done with perseverance and with careful, steady effort and preparation. See what Paul said about the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18.
- We must be always ready and willing to encourage and help each other, especially regarding our attendance to worship.
- We must always be aware of the consequences of turning away from the Lord and not repenting of our sin. See Hebrews 10:26.

Discussion Questions:

1. Which do you think is more readily accepted in the modern society, man's wisdom or God's wisdom? Why do you think it is that way?
2. How does Romans 1:21-23 relate to modern man's way of thinking?
3. Why can't man's wisdom turn men to God?
4. What means does God use to turn the lost to Himself?
5. If I am the whole person that God wants me to be, will I be inclined to willfully miss worship for no valid reason?
6. How does God view the person who chooses to willfully forsake the assembly?
7. How does God compare sinners under Moses' law to those who forsake the assembly today?

8. Whose responsibility is it to encourage, consider and provoke Christians unto good works, i.e. attending worship?

9. What is it that will keep a Christian as a babe in Christ, never growing, but always needing the milk of the word?

10. What is required of us to become mature Christians?

11. To what extent should we seek God's wisdom?

Lesson Ten

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

GALATIANS 6:2

As God's children, we must not isolate ourselves from our brethren, nor should we prefer one group over another. Galatians 6:10 says "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

We are to provoke one another unto good works (Hebrews 10:24). The whole man that God seeks will be one that loves and encourages the brethren. Such passages as Colossians 3:16 speak of the impact we are to have on one another in worship. It says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Note that we "teach and admonish one another." We are to comfort one another by encouraging each other to prepare each other for the Lord's coming.



The whole man that God wants us to be is one who will seek out his/her brethren to develop friendships and trust for one another. We should develop such relationships of trust that we can do as James 5:16 says, "Confess your faults to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." God assures us that He hears our prayers for one another.

In order for us to bear one another's burdens, we must seek the good of our brethren, rather than merely seeking our own good. Listen to Paul in Romans 15:1-2:

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Note that Paul speaks of those "who are strong." It is a mark of spiritual strength when we are able to seek the well-being of others and not to please ourselves. By contrast, it is a mark of spiritual weakness when we are focused only on our own interests. Just as Christ has born our burdens, we are to bear each others burdens and fulfill the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Paul taught the same thing in Philippians 2:1-5:

Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

The whole man that God seeks is one who is growing in all aspects of His life with God. Notice what 2 Peter 1:5-11 says. Pay careful attention to the words "brotherly kindness." If we truly love our brethren, then we will seek to bear the burdens of our brethren.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our love and kindness toward one another is a sign that we are growing to spiritual maturity. Yet, we must be careful not to pretend to love one another. Our love must be genuine; it must go beyond our words; it must be seen in our actions. Note the following passages that speak of our love for one another:

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:11-12 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

1 John 4:20-21 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.

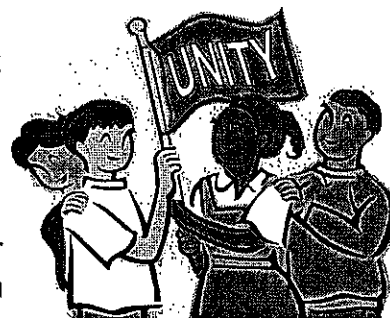
Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Jesus wants the whole man, not some of him, not the whole man sometimes, but the whole man all of the time, keeping His commandment to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind. And the commandment to love each other is the same and equally important as the command to love God.

Observations:

- We are not to love each other with partiality; our love must be with truth, not in pretence, with genuineness, not a false love, but an honest love.
- We must work at and cultivate relationships so that we can be an influence on those outside the church. But the relationships we should focus on most are those with our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- We must develop strong relationships with our brethren so that in times of trouble we can lean on each other and help carry each others burdens.
- We should not be hesitant to encourage each other by singing in the assembly. Outside the assembly we should talk about the Lord to one another and encourage each other with our looking forward to the Lord's coming.
- We must be able to trust each other in order to confess our faults to one another.
- We are to esteem (hold in high regard) our brethren more than ourselves.
- We will be fruitful in our Lord's eyes and useful in the kingdom when we practice perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love, preferring one another.
- The Lord assures us and gives us confidence that if we practice and do His commandments, then we will not stumble.
- The whole man that God seeks will truly love his brethren as he loves God.
- Loving our neighbors (brethren) and those outside the body of Christ is not optional, but a command.



Discussion Questions:

1. How do we follow our Lord's command to love each other? Where do we get the "how to"?
2. Can we confess our faults to someone who we hardly know? What should I do if I have no close relationships with any of my brethren?

3. Is it possible, can I please God, if I just love and develop friendships with just some of my brethren—and ignore others?
4. Are there any people in particular in the congregation that I should try to develop a relationship with?
5. Can I have a personal relationship with our 300+ brethren?
6. If not, how can I be what God wants me to be to my brethren?
7. Can I be the whole person to God and my brethren if my attendance to worship is sporadic? Why? Or why not?
8. Do we have closer relationships with friends and those who are not brethren than we have with our brethren?
9. What kind of burdens must the whole man bear for his/her brother or sister? Are all of our obligations spiritual in nature, or do we also have physical obligations to one another?
10. If I have difficulties being all the things God wants me to be, what should I do?

Lesson Eleven

LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER ECCLESIASTES 12:13

"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

The culture in which we live encourages man to "do his own thing," to "be independent." Our society insists "We have our rights." While it is true that we are a free society, as God's children, we must be constantly on guard to resist these platitudes of men.

Someone may ask "Why does God want me so completely?" It is because we belong to Him. We do not belong to ourselves; He is our Creator. See Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

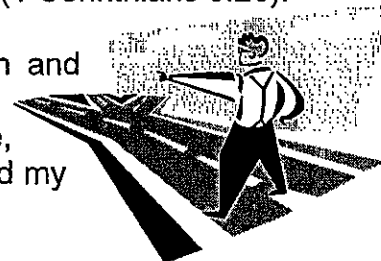
God is our Creator; therefore all of mankind is His. In Ezekiel 18:4, God said, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine..."

Our sin had separated us from God, but because of His great love for man, He has made provisions for us to be redeemed back to Him. Although He is our Creator, He has not made us like the animals, nor has He made us as mindless robots without the freedom to reason and choose. In fact, God calls us to come and reason with Him. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Our God promises forgiveness of sins to all who will come to Him. "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before" (Acts 3:19-20).

The price for our salvation was the death of Christ. As a result of a price being paid for us, we do not belong to ourselves. "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

While God has definite claims on us by virtue of creation and redemption, He still allows us to make the choice about whether or not we will serve Him. Joshua told the people, "Choose you this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).



The disciples of Jesus made a right choice when they decided to stay with Jesus, even though others were turning away. Listen to John 6:66-69:

From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the plan of God to make Jesus our Savior. Listen to Isaiah 53:10-12:

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.

Because God has paid such a great price for our sins and bought us back through the death of His son Jesus on the cross, He has the right to demand our allegiance. That is why God wants us so completely. Christ paid the complete price for our sins. He gave His all. Why would we think that our God would accept half-hearted service on our part? God wants us and He wants us completely.

We must stay focused day after day in giving of ourselves completely to Jesus. Note these passages that speak of giving ourselves to the Lord and of our devotion to Him:

Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

1 Thessalonians 5:17-23 Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified.

Observations:

- Our whole duty as God's children is to fear and respect God. He and He alone will judge us on those things we have done in our life as His children. See Romans 14:8-12.
- God has made it very clear throughout the Old and New Testaments that all souls that have descended from Adam and Eve belong to Him.
- All souls belong to God, but all men have sinned (James 1:14-15). But God has brought us back from the penalty of death through His son Jesus.
- God requires that we put Him above everything in our lives. This does not mean that we must forsake our duties and responsibilities as husbands, or wives, as fathers and mothers, or our obligations to provide for our families by working. We must be diligent employees. In fact, the whole man that God seeks is the person who will fulfill all of these areas to please God. But when these responsibilities become more important than worship and our total giving of ourselves to God, then our service to God diminishes.
- We must keep our eyes on the goal of heaven. We must stay focused on our service to God. If we keep our eyes on the prize, it will be easier to follow God's commands to pray without ceasing, to thank God constantly for all our material blessings, to seek God's mercy and grace with our daily struggles in life, and to pray for each other with regularity. Remember, Christians have a goal (Philippians 3:14).
- We must not allow ourselves to be distracted by the events that go on around us in our daily lives. We must not participate in or even appear to approve bad language, sinful jokes, or any other dishonest thing. If these things go on about us, rather than stay quiet (silent approval), we must speak out against evil, and hopefully bring about an opportunity to teach. See 1 Peter 3:15-17.



Discussion Questions:

1. Which of the following best describes the relationship God wants with His children?
 - a. God wants us to be absolutely dedicated to Him all the time.
 - b. A casual relationship is OK as long as I come to worship on Sunday morning.
 - c. We are to keep all of our daily activities in perspective and give equal attention to family responsibilities, going to work to provide for the family, and have the best clothes, best cars, best house, etc.—and, of course, go to church.

2. God wants us to pray without ceasing. Does this mean...
 - a. Having a prayerful attitude and praying constantly in my mind all day long?
 - b. Having specific times throughout the day when I pause from what I am doing and pray quietly to God when I get up in the morning, when I eat my lunch and dinner, and praying together with my family at the end of the day?
 - c. Saying the Lord's Prayer whenever I hear it being spoken on religious programs on TV or radio?
3. God wants us to study His word to show ourselves approved, a workman not ashamed. Should our study be:
 - a. Confined to Bible classes on Sunday and Wednesday.
 - b. Only when I can study with other Christians.
 - c. Having a specific time set aside each day to study with my family and alone.
4. God wants us to love each other. Which of the following describes what God means?
 - a. I am to love my family and have some affection to the people at church.
 - b. Confine my relationships to a select group of Christians with whom I have a lot in common and who I am comfortable with.
 - c. To love all of the brethren and to strive to know them by name, and to have an interest in their daily lives. I want to know what they do for a living, how many children they have, and how they became Christians. I want to invite them into my home.
5. God wants us to bear each other's burdens. Does this mean to...
 - a. Try to offer sympathy and express sorrow for their problems?
 - b. Tell others in the congregation about a brother's or sister's problem?
 - c. Personally help the brother or sister myself?
 - d. Enlist the help of others in assisting the brother or sister?
 - e. All of the above.
6. How can we know for sure that our conduct, our manner of life, our service to God, is pleasing to Him?
7. To be the whole man that pleases God, must I forsake family, job and friendships to devote myself wholly to Him?

