



Basics of Christian Discipleship

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

Vision

The vision behind this **8-week journey** is to promote intentional and Biblically based discipleship relationships. The goal isn't to simply fill our minds with information, but to impact our hearts with God's truth so our lives change for His glory.

What We're Asking

1. Find someone who's *Available, Humble, Teachable,* and *Willing* to meet with for the next 8 weeks.
2. During these 8 weeks would you meet once a week with this person and go through these studies?

Before Meeting

Take time to pray before doing these studies and ask God to teach you, convict you, encourage you, and transform your life. Using your Bible, work your way through the study for that week, answer discussion questions, and meditate on the Scripture you read.

When Meeting

Spend the first few minutes in prayer with the other person. Ask God to bless your conversation and to use each of you to encourage the other. Be transparent about what God is teaching you, and share how each of you can pray for the other. At each meeting ask the other person how they've been doing with what they learned the previous week.

The Studies

This isn't school. No one's turning anything in. The 8 studies in the packet are simply a tool to promote discipleship and get us looking at Scripture together. Each will cover a foundational truth taught in the Bible. We do ask that you and the person you're meeting with work through the study for that week before you meet, and that each meeting would primarily be about what you're personally learning from that week's lesson. Work through the study with your Bible, and fill in the blanks as needed. (Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version.)

Study 1 – Our Purpose & Salvation

Why Are We Created?

What is our purpose on earth? Are we created to be born, live our lives and die? The bible is very clear on why we were created. The Bible tells us in the very beginning we were to be created in HIS image. What a great honor to be created in the image of GOD!

Genesis 1:26-28

26 Then God said, "Let _____ make man in Our image, according to _____; 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." 27 So God created man in His _____ image; in the image of God He created him; _____ and _____ He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over _____ thing that moves on the earth."

In verse 26 and 28 the Bible also tells us that we have dominion over every living thing that moves on earth. God created humans with a specific purpose distinct from all of creation.

We Are Created by God And We Are Called To Praise HIM.

Psalms 139:13-16

13 For You _____ my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and _____ made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from You, when I was _____ in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Your _____ saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your _____ they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Our Human Instinct

We as humans have been rebellious since the beginning of time (Genesis 3). We know we have been created by God to do the things He has planned for us in life, but we choose to follow our own ways. For example, the tower of Babel when they wanted to make a tower to the heavens to make a name for themselves. (Genesis 11:4) The Lord confused their languages and spread them across the earth. WE were never created to bring glory to ourselves or our name, but we are created to bring glory to GOD and HIS name.

Bring Glory to God

1 Corinthians 10:31

31 Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or _____ you do, do all to the _____ of _____

Isaiah 43:7

7 _____ who is called by My name, whom I have created for _____ glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him."

We are not put on earth to live a meaningless life, but we are put here to bring glory to the One who created us. Never think you or anyone has no purpose in life because through the bible God tells us differently!

Sin Is The Problem

The concept is easy to fulfill our duty of why we are created, the action is much harder. God loves all his children with the hope that they will live a life that will bring Him glory, but there is one small problem...sin. Sin is simply disobedience to God (rebellion). God has given us the 10 commandments (the law) to know what sin is (romans 7:7). Below is a list of the ten commandments from exodus 20:1-17, take a look and be honest if you have broken God's law.

1. You shall have no other Gods but me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any idol, nor bow down to it or worship it.
3. You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.
4. You shall remember and keep the Sabbath day holy.
5. Respect your father and mother.
6. You must not commit murder.
7. You must not commit adultery.
8. You must not steal.
9. You must not give false evidence against your neighbor.
10. You must not be envious of your neighbor's goods. You shall not be envious of his house nor his wife, nor anything that belongs to your neighbor.

We all Sin

We have all broken God's law at one time or another in our lives.

Romans 3:23

²³ for all have _____ and fall _____ of the glory of God

Ecclesiastes 7:20

²⁰ For there is not a just man on earth who does _____ and does not _____.

Romans 5:12

¹² Therefore, just as through one man _____ entered the world, and _____ through sin, and thus _____ spread to all men, because all _____.

There Is A Punishment For Sin

God is 100% Love and 100% Just.

Romans 6:23(a)

²³ For the wages of sin is death

Revelation 21:8

⁸ But the cowardly, _____, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all _____ shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the _____ death."

The bible says God takes sin very serious and there is punishment, the punishment is death. (Leviticus 20)

God Has Provided Salvation Through JESUS!

Praise be to God that is not the end of the story. Remembering that God is 100% love and 100% just, He loves us so much He provided a payment for sin, through His Son Jesus Christ. Throughout the bible we see a need for a blood sacrifice for the atonement of sins (Leviticus 16) The Passover lamb (Exodus 12) had to be spotless without blemish. In order for the payment to be satisfied Jesus had to be spotless perfect without blemish, and He was entirely. (1 Peter 2:22)

John 3:16-17

¹⁶ For God so _____ the world that He gave His _____ begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not _____ His Son into the world to _____ the world, but that the world through Him might be _____

Romans 6:23(b)

²³ but the _____ of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus _____ Lord.

Ephesians 1:7

⁷ In _____ we have redemption through His blood, the _____ of sins, according to the riches of _____ grace

Romans 5:6

⁶ For when _____ were still without strength, in due time Christ _____ for the ungodly.

We have all gone astray at times in our lives. God knew we would, and He sent Jesus with a mission, and Jesus embraced it fully with all humility. Luke 19:10 Jesus says, “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” We were all lost. Jesus comes to find us let us know we are loved and reveal to us the beautiful promise that there is redemption through His blood.

1 John 2:2

² And He Himself is the _____ for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the _____ world.

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For He made Him who knew _____ sin to be sin for us, that we might become the _____ of God in Him

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who _____ the _____ of the world!”

Jesus is not only the One who paid for our sins. He is also the Giver of eternal life, which we so desperately need. While praying to God Jesus said that the Father has given Him the authority to give eternal life (John 17:2).

John 5:21

²¹ “For as the Father _____ the dead and gives _____ to them, even so the Son gives _____ to whom He will.”

John 6:33

³³ “For the bread of God is _____ who comes down from heaven and gives _____ to the world.”

Salvation Is God's Gracious Gift

The Bible teaches us that eternal salvation is a *free gift* from God.

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁸ For by _____ you have been saved through _____, and that not of yourselves; it is the _____ of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Romans 3:24

²⁴ being justified _____ by His _____ through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

The word "justified" means *to be declared righteous*. God justifies us freely as a gift of His grace and not by our works. The Bible actually shows that grace and works can never be mixed.

Romans 11:6

⁶ And if by _____, then it is no longer of _____; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of _____, it is no longer _____; otherwise work is no longer work. (Romans 11:6)

To call salvation a free gift does not make it cheap. While it is free to us, our salvation cost God immensely, for Jesus had to give His very life so we could be saved. The freeness of salvation actually brings God more glory because we cannot take credit for it.

How We Receive Salvation

With something as important as eternal life it would be natural to think it should cost us everything. But the Bible teaches that eternal salvation is received by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and not by our works.

John 6:47

⁴⁷ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who _____ in Me has _____."

Acts 16:30-31

³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ So they said, "_____ on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by _____ in Jesus Christ, even we have _____ in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by _____ in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Faith is simply taking God at His word. It is the conviction that what God says in His word is true. To receive eternal life God requires us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31; 1 John 5:1). This means that Jesus is the Savior, the One sent to give eternal life freely (see John 4:42). There is only one way to receive salvation and that is through Jesus

Acts 4:12

¹² Nor is there _____ in any other, for there is no other _____ under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

John 14:6

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the _____, the _____, and the _____. No one comes to the Father except through Me

You Can Be Sure

While many struggle with doubts about their salvation, God wants us to know for sure we belong to Him forever. We can have assurance that we have eternal life because Jesus promised to give it to us when we believe.

John 11:25-26

²⁵ *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he _____." ²⁶ And whoever lives and believes in Me _____ . Do you believe this?"*

1 John 5:13

¹³ *These things I have written to you who _____ in the name of the Son of God, that you may _____ that you have eternal life.*

Romans 10:13

¹³ *For "whoever _____ on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

Jesus also promised that once we have received eternal life we can never lose our salvation.

John 5:24

²⁴ *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me _____ everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."*

John 10:28-29

²⁸ *"And I give them eternal life, and they shall _____ perish; neither shall anyone _____ them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to _____ them out of My Father's hand."*

Because God never lies (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), Jesus will keep His promise of eternal life to the believer, and will never lose them (John 6:35-40). Knowing for sure that we are saved allows us to live without fear, and should motivate us to live lives of obedience to God.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

In addition to receiving eternal life and God's righteousness, when we believe we also receive the permanent indwelling of God's Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having _____, you were sealed with the _____ of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Galatians 4:6

⁶ *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the _____ of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"*

Having God's Spirit within us allows us to live in freedom and victory. At times we feel defeated by sin, but the Holy Spirit is here to empower us to live the lives God has called us to. Paul wrote that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17). He also wrote that when we walk by the Spirit our sinful desires will be overcome (Galatians 5:16). In salvation God truly has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3).

Response

Through the course of this 8-week journey we will explore what discipleship means. Discipleship demands our total commitment and devotion to Jesus. But before we do this we must remember that our commitment and devotion do not save us. Isaiah tells us that “all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Paul also says, “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). We serve God not in order to be saved, but because we have already been saved freely.

If you have believed in Jesus Christ, you have God’s guarantee that you have eternal life. You know a magnificent truth that all people need to hear. Our response to receiving this amazing gift should be to share it with others. As you move forward pray that God would give you opportunities to share the gospel with people in your life. The Spirit is always seeking the lost, and we are invited to partner with God in spreading this good news to others.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you known the reason you were created?
2. Have you ever thought of how serious God is about sin? Did you ever think there was a punishment for sin?
3. Why is grace a hard concept for many to accept? Do you personally have a difficult time with the idea that eternal life is a free gift?
4. Read through John 3:16; Acts 16:30-31; Romans 4:5; Galatians 2:16; and Ephesians 2:8-9. What word(s) comes up in each of these verses? How does God want people to respond to the gospel message? How does this impact how we share the gospel with people?
5. Have you ever struggled with knowing you’re saved? Read through John 5:24; 6:47; and 11:25-26. What does Jesus say about how to know we have eternal life? Why is assurance important in our lives?
6. Who has God placed in your life that needs to hear the message of Christ? Think of a specific name(s). Will you intentionally pray for opportunities to share the gospel with this person?

Study 2 – What is Discipleship?

The Command of Discipleship

One of the last things Jesus told His disciples before ascending to heaven was to go make more disciples.

Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

This shows us that disciples should always be concerned with teaching others to be disciples. We should never be satisfied only with our own spiritual growth, but should seek to help others grow as well.

The Meaning of “Disciple”

The word *disciple* means “student” or “learner.” In Jesus’ day Jewish teachers called Rabbis had students they would take under their wing, and these were called their *disciples*. Jesus Himself was called a Rabbi on several occasions (Mark 9:5; John 1:38). The goal of a disciple was to learn the teachings of their Rabbi so they could be like him (see Luke 6:40).

The Bible shows us that discipleship should begin immediately after a person comes to faith in Christ.

John 8:30-32

³⁰ As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My _____, you are My _____ indeed. ³² And you shall know the _____, and the truth shall make you _____.”

Scripture teaches that people receive eternal life when they believe in Christ (see “Study 1 – Salvation”). In John 8 after people believed in Jesus He immediately told them **how** they could become His disciples, and the **result** of doing so.

How: Abide in Christ’s _____.

Result: You will know the _____, which will make you _____.

Faith in Christ doesn’t instantly free us from all struggles with sin. We must learn and apply Christ’s teachings if we are to experience freedom. This means that spending time in God’s word (the Bible) is essential to being a disciple. While discipleship involves more than just reading our Bibles, it can’t be less than this. The point is not to make time in the word a ritual, but to make it a priority in our lives. If we miss a day in the Bible God understands. But are we hungry for God’s word? Are we asking the Spirit to teach us through it?

The Demands of Discipleship

Being a disciple is no easy task. Jesus demands total surrender, and that we fully deny ourselves for Him if we are to be His disciples.

Luke 14:25-27

²⁵ Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to Me and does not _____ his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My _____. ²⁷ And whoever does not bear his _____ and come after Me cannot be My _____.”

These verses show the level of commitment required for discipleship. Our love and devotion to Christ should be so strong that by comparison our love for our families and even our own life looks like hatred. When Jesus spoke of bearing a “cross,” He was referring to crucifixion, which was a common method of execution in that day. To *bear our cross* is to follow Christ in obedience even if it costs us our life.

Discipleship will also take us out of our comfort zones.

Matthew 8:19-20

¹⁹ *Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”*

²⁰ *And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

Jesus didn’t live a life of ease. At times He didn’t even have a place to sleep. Likewise, following Him as a disciple will take us outside of what is comfortable and familiar, but it is there that we are transformed to be more like Christ.

Keys For Making Disciples

Intentional

While large crowds of thousands of people followed Jesus, He had a discipleship relationship with only a small few of these. Jesus showed much intentionality with those He called to be His disciples.

Matthew 4:18-20

¹⁸ *And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him.*

We shouldn’t expect discipleship relationships to fall into our lap. Jesus made it a point to call His disciples from what they were doing into what He was doing. This shows us that to make disciples we must be intentional with people. A helpful way to do this is to set a regular time and place to meet with the person you are discipling.

We should also be wise and prayerful about who we disciple. Before God chose David as king over Israel Samuel was sure, based on physical appearance, that David’s oldest brother was God’s choice (1 Samuel 16:6). Then God told Samuel how He would make His decision.

1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ *But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his _____ or at his _____, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the _____, but the LORD looks at the _____.”*

Jesus was a perfect example of One who looked at the heart rather than outward appearance. One of His chosen disciples was Levi, a tax collector who would have been hated by the Jews (Luke 5:27-32).

When praying about who to disciple we recommend looking for these qualities: **Available, Humble, Teachable, Willing**. If a person doesn’t want to make time, is arrogant and unteachable, or isn’t willing to obey the Lord, it will be difficult to engage in a discipleship relationship.

Clear

Jesus was also clear about what discipleship should entail. He told His followers to *baptize* believers and to *teach* them to do everything He commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). When calling someone into a discipleship relationship we must be clear about what we are doing with them. Along with water baptism, the teaching of God's word should always be a part of discipleship. Since the goal is for people "to observe all" of Christ's commandments, we should teach both *what* the Bible says and model *how* to apply it.

Reproducible

Biblical discipleship is always reproducible. Like Jesus, at some point it's necessary to challenge those we are meeting with to find another person with whom they can begin a discipleship relationship.

Integrity

We can't lead someone where we ourselves aren't going. If we want to make disciples, we must be disciples as well. The leading teachers in Jesus' day were the Pharisees, yet Jesus said, "they are blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 15:14). They weren't actually living by God's word, and because of this they couldn't lead anyone spiritually.

Response

We've taken a brief look at why discipleship matters, what discipleship is, and some keys for discipling others. Take time to meditate on the Scriptures we've looked at in this study. Examine your own heart with how you are doing in the path of discipleship. Finally, pray over who you could invite into a discipleship relationship.

Discussion Questions

1. Consider the meaning of the word *disciple* as a "student" or "learner." Is there anything hindering you from being a student of Christ?
2. Jesus promised that abiding in His word would give us the truth, which will set us free (John 8:31-32). As you examine your life, what do you need freedom from? What steps are you taking to live in freedom in that area?
3. Discipleship demands total commitment to Christ, and Matthew 8:19-20 shows that following Jesus will be uncomfortable at times. How are you living uncomfortably for Christ? How could you step further outside your comfort zone in following Jesus?
4. Think about the keys to making disciples examined in this study. Who are you intentionally calling into a discipleship relationship?
5. Examine yourself in light of the qualities: ***Available, Humble, Teachable, Willing***. Do these character traits describe you? Who in your life possesses these qualities, and are they being discipled?

Study 3 – The Bible

Reliability of the Bible

Rather than being a single book, the Bible is a collection of 66 different books written over a span of 1500 years by many different authors living in different locations and speaking different languages. Yet from beginning to end the Bible has a unified theme and purpose. But is the Bible reliable?

Ancient Copies

Has the text of the Bible been accurately transmitted down through the centuries so that the Bible we have today reflects what was originally written? Or has the text of the Bible been tampered with and changed over time so that it is drastically different from what the original authors wrote?

The New Testament (NT) is by far the most copied ancient document of all time. The NT was written in Greek, and we possess today around 5,800 Greek copies. There are around 10,000 Latin copies of the NT, as well as many other ancient translations, so that the total amount of existing copies is over 24,000. The second most copied ancient document is Homer's Iliad with 643 copies. The early church fathers also quoted the NT so much that if we lost all other copies we could reproduce the entire NT from their quotations alone. The evidence shows that the NT began to be copied and spread around immediately after it was written (see Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 22:18-19). Naturally with this many copies there are variations between them, mostly due to common mistakes that happen through hand copying. Yet there is a remarkable amount of consistency among NT copies. Scholars throughout church history have used these ancient copies to reproduce what the original text was, so that we can be confident that the NT text we have today reflects what the original authors wrote.

The Old Testament (OT) was also copied extensively through the centuries, and the number of OT copies is estimated in the tens of thousands. This copying was done with extreme care by professionally trained Jewish scribes (1 Chronicles 24:6; Ezra 7:6; Matthew 17:10). The OT text that our modern versions is based on is called the Masoretic Text, and dates from around A.D. 900. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a mass amount of OT copies that are over 1,000 years older than the Masoretic Text. When these copies are compared they agree with each other 95% of the time, and most of the variations in the remaining 5% are minor spelling changes or other differences that don't affect the translation or meaning. This shows that the OT, like the NT, has been faithfully preserved through the centuries for us to read today.

Historically Accurate

If the Bible is inaccurate in its historical details, how can we trust that its spiritual and theological claims are true? For a long time skeptics have pointed to supposed historical errors in the Bible. Yet ancient sources and archaeological finds continue to support the historical accuracy of the Bible.

One example is the Hittite nation. Until the late 1800s we had no knowledge of the Hittite people outside of the Bible (Genesis 15:20; 1 Kings 10:29). Because of this skeptics supposed the Bible was wrong in what it said about this nation. But in 1906 archaeologists discovered a Hittite capitol city. This, along with Assyrian and Egyptian records, not only confirms that the Hittites existed, but that they were a large empire just as the Bible describes them.

The more knowledge we gain about ancient cultures the more we see that the Bible holds up to scrutiny. The Bible is incredibly accurate in its descriptions of things like Jewish feasts and cultural customs, branches of Judaism like the Pharisees and Sadducees, the dating of kings and rulers, and the portrayals of people groups like the Samaritans. This shows that the biblical authors took great care to be precise and accurate in what they wrote.

Fulfilled Prophecy

One of the most powerful proofs that the Bible is truly from God is fulfilled prophecy. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Bible, but the following are just a few examples of specific prophecies with their fulfillment.

<i>Prophecy</i>	<i>Fulfillment</i>
Isaiah 44:28-45:13 -Predicts that a king named Cyrus would send the Jews home to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple around 150 years before it took place.	Ezra 1:1-4 -Records the decree by king Cyrus of Persia allowing the Jews to go back to their land and rebuild the Temple.
Micah 5:2 -Predicts that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.	Luke 2:4-7 -Records that Joseph and Mary returned to Bethlehem to be registered for the census, and Jesus was born while they were there.
Daniel 9:25 -Predicts that 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem the Messiah would be revealed to the nation of Israel.	Luke 19:28-44 -Exactly 483 years after the decree Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt while the Jews welcomed Him as their King.
Luke 21:20-24 -Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by foreign armies, and that the Jews will be taken captive into other nations.	Josephus (1 st Century Jewish Historian) -Wrote a detailed account of the Jewish-Roman war (A.D. 66-70), which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in A.D. 70, the scattering of the nation, and the deaths of around 1 million Jews.

Eyewitness Accounts

Is the Bible just hearsay? Are all the stories in the Bible just legends passed down that were written hundreds of years after they supposedly took place? The OT and NT are full of eyewitness accounts to what God did. This is especially true with Jesus' death and resurrection. Let's look at some statements from the Apostle John.

John 19:35

³⁵ *And he who has _____ has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.*

John 21:24

²⁴ *This is the disciple who _____ of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.*

1 John 1:3

³ *that which we have _____ and _____ we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

Paul also reports that he saw the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1).

1 Corinthians 15:8

⁸ *Then last of all He was _____ by me also, as by one born out of due time.*

The NT writers weren't simply sharing their thoughts or opinions, or some story they were taught. They claimed to be communicating what they saw and heard directly from Jesus.

Galatians 1:11-12

¹¹ *But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to _____.* ¹² *For I neither _____ it from man, nor was I _____ it, but it came through the revelation of _____.*

The evidence suggests that all 27 books of the NT were written before Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70. Since Jesus was crucified in A.D. 33, this means that all of the books were written by people living at the time when the events of the NT took place. It wasn't as though Jesus lived and died and a hundred or two hundred years later people wrote about Him. The NT writers can be trusted because they were either eyewitnesses to Jesus, or associated with the eyewitnesses.

God Breathed

While the Bible is well preserved and historically accurate, it isn't a history book. In his last letter before he died Paul spoke of the spiritual value of Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶ *All Scripture is given by _____ of God, and is profitable for _____, for _____, for _____, for _____ in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *that the man of God may be _____, thoroughly equipped for every _____.*

The words *by inspiration of God* actually mean "God-breathed." God is the author of everything in Scripture (see 2 Peter 1:20-21). This passage also shows that all of the Bible applies to our lives. It may not always directly apply to us (like the OT sacrificial system), but everything in Scripture is meant to teach us about God, to correct us, and to train us to live righteously. The passage actually implies that living a life of *good works* can't happen apart from knowing the Bible. The Psalmist also thought that God's word has a direct impact on the way we live.

Psalms 119:11

¹¹ *Your _____ I have hidden in my heart, That I might not _____ against You.*

If we don't know God's word we are more likely to sin against God. The more we know God's word the more we can walk free from sin (see John 8:31-36).

The Sword of the Spirit

God's word and the Holy Spirit are closely connected.

Ephesians 6:17

¹⁷ *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the _____, which is the _____ of God.*

God's word is a weapon the Spirit uses in our lives. But how exactly does He do this?

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a _____ the glory of the Lord, are being _____ into the same image from _____ to _____, just as by the _____ of the Lord.*

Paul had been talking about how Jewish unbelievers can't understand the true meaning of the OT Scriptures because they rejected Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:14). A "veil lies on their heart" (3:15) when they read the OT because "the veil is taken away in Christ" (3:14). As believers who are in Christ, we can come to Scripture "with unveiled face." Nothing keeps us from understanding the true message of the Bible. Then he uses a mirror as an illustration. While a mirror usually shows us our own image, Scripture is like a "mirror" that reflects "the glory of the Lord" to us. The "Spirit of the Lord" uses this mirror to *transform* us into the "image" of God we see in Scripture. This happens from one stage of "glory" to the next. As we spend time in Scripture with a teachable heart, the Spirit will use the Bible to make us more like Christ. So if we want the Spirit to transform us we have to do it on His terms.

Study 4 – Prayer

Talking With God

Take a moment and think about how incredible it is that we can talk to the God of the universe. And not only that. The God of the universe actually hears us when we talk to Him, and He answers! The same God who created the stars and planets, the same God who parted the Red Sea, this God hears when we pray.

Prayer has always been central to the life of disciples. The Psalms are full of prayers to God (Psalm 3), the early church was faithful in prayer (Acts 2:42), and Jesus Himself took time to be alone in prayer to His Father (Luke 5:16). The Bible is full of stories where the impossible is made possible through prayer. While there isn't a formula to go by, the Bible does give us some keys to a powerful prayer life.

God Wants Us To Ask

If we believe that God is annoyed or too busy when we pray, we probably won't do it. But God is clear that He loves it when we ask Him for things. Jesus actually commands us to.

Matthew 7:7-8

⁷ “_____, and it will be given to you; _____, and you will find; _____, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”

This doesn't turn God into a vending machine who gives us whatever we ask for. This passage actually doesn't specify what God will give us when we *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*. But Jesus promises we will be given something. He goes on to describe the character of God.

Matthew 7:9-11

⁹ “Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰ Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? ¹¹ If you then, being _____, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your _____ who is in heaven give _____ to those who _____ Him!”

Good human fathers would never give their kids a rock or snake when they desperately need food. And human fathers are “evil” compared to God. God is an infinitely better “Father” than our earthly fathers, so we can be confident that He will “give good things to those who ask Him!” Because God is good He doesn't always give us what we ask for. Sometimes we don't know what we really need. But He loves that we ask, so He promises to give us something good, which will be what's best for us.

Praying In God's Will

One theologian defined prayer as “earthly permission for heavenly interference.” Prayer will never make God do something He doesn't want to do already. But God may wait to do certain things He wants to do until we ask. James said, “you do not have because you do not ask” (James 4:2). Consider what John says about prayer.

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ Now this is the _____ that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His _____, He hears us. ¹⁵ And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we _____ the petitions that we have asked of Him.

This is a powerful statement. When we ask for things that are in God's “will” we can know that “we have” those requests. But how do we know God's will? This is a big question, but one sure place to find God's will is His word. That is where God has clearly revealed Himself. John specifically had in mind God's “commandments” that are found in His word (1 John 5:3). Each commandment reveals an aspect of God's will. Think about these New Testament statements:

Galatians 5:14

¹⁴ “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Philippians 4:6

⁶ Be anxious for nothing.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.

Think about these commandments as revelations of God’s will. If we’re supposed to pray *according to His will*, what could you pray relating to these three verses?

Preparing Our Hearts Before God

God is a gracious God. His free gift of eternal life is a prime example of that (see Study 1 – Salvation). But God is also a holy God, and it’s important to remind ourselves of who we’re talking to when we pray.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

² Do not be _____ with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything _____ before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.

Matthew 6:9

⁹ “In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, _____ be Your name.”

Sometimes we make God like us, but God is so much greater than us.

Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸ “For My _____ are not your _____, Nor are your _____ My _____,” says the LORD. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways _____ than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

The greatness and holiness of God should lead us to confess our sins to Him when we pray (Psalm 51; 1 John 1:9). The Bible actually says God won’t respond to someone’s prayers if they’re unwilling to acknowledge and repent of their sin.

Proverbs 15:29

²⁹ The LORD is _____ from the _____, But He _____ the prayer of the _____.

Isaiah 1:15

¹⁵ When you spread out your hands, I will _____ My eyes from you; Even though you make many _____, I will not _____. Your hands are full of blood.

Praying In Faith

Another aspect of a powerful prayer life is faith (Mark 11:24).

James 1:6-8

⁶ But let him ask in _____, with no _____, for he who _____ is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will _____ anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, _____ in all his ways.

When we don’t believe God for things He’s promised we insult His character. It’s like we’re saying, “God, I know You said that, but I don’t believe You’re going to do it.” In affect, we’re calling God a liar. God is clear that He rewards faith. If we don’t believe God we can’t expect Him to answer our prayers.

Your Prayers Matter

Sometimes we think people in the Bible were somehow in another spiritual class that we can't reach today. We think, "Moses parted the Red Sea, David slayed Goliath, but I'm just ordinary." The Bible says our prayers can make a difference because we all pray to the same God.

James 5:17-18

¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a _____ like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Elijah was a prophet that God used to do incredible things. His prayers about rain actually led to the nation of Israel turning back to God (1 Kings 17-18). James said our prayers can also accomplish miraculous things because Elijah was no different than us. The power of prayer is not in how good we are, but in the God we pray to.

Staying Consistent

Have you ever had the experience of praying for something for a while but not seeing an answer? When this happens it can be easy to give up. Sometimes we think that if we don't see an answer right away God isn't listening, doesn't care, or maybe that prayer doesn't really work.

Read through Luke 18:1-8. Jesus told this parable "that men always ought to pray and not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). We often *lose heart* in prayer when God doesn't answer in our time table. It can be difficult to wait for God's timing. But Scripture does show that God's timing isn't always our timing. When God promised Abraham a son he was 75 years old (Genesis 12:1-4), but God didn't fulfill that promise until Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5). While Abraham struggled with God's timing, God was faithful to do what He said He would do.

Response

Prayer is a beautiful and powerful thing. Through the ages disciples have poured out their hearts to the Lord and He has responded in magnificent ways. Maybe it's been a while since you've prayed. Make it a goal this week to make intentional time each day to pray. It's okay to pray on your way to work, or while you're at your job. But challenge yourself to remove distractions and set aside a certain time to just focus on praying to your Father.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you find it hard to make time to pray? Why is that?
2. Are knowing God's word and praying in His will connected? If so, how?
3. Has there ever been a time when you've seen God clearly answer your prayer? How did that impact you?
4. Are there people/things that you have stopped praying for because you haven't seen an answer? Take a moment to bring those concerns to God again. He will answer in His timing.

Study 5 – Sharing the Gospel

Sharing The Excitement

Think about something that excites you. It could be a hobby, your favorite TV show, or a new job. When we're excited about something it's natural to want to tell others about it. We want them to experience our excitement. Sharing the gospel should be no different. As believers we've received eternal life and forgiveness from God freely (see "Study 1 – Salvation"). We've entered into an everlasting relationship with Jesus Christ. That's something to be incredibly excited about, and something that people desperately need to hear.

An Urgent Need

In Romans Paul asks an important question.

Romans 10:14

And how shall they _____ in Him of whom they have not _____? And how shall they _____ without a _____?

Before a person can come to faith in Christ certain things have to happen.

1. Before believing a person must _____.
2. Before hearing someone must _____.

As long as there are unbelievers in the world there will always be a need for people to preach the message of Christ (see Romans 10:17). Jesus and the apostles make preaching the gospel a priority.

Mark 16:15

¹⁵ *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and _____ the _____ to every creature.*

Colossians 4:2-4

² *Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving;* ³ *meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the _____, to _____ the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains,* ⁴ *that I may make it manifest, as I ought to _____.*

It Is Our Mission

Jesus came with clear vision and determination to complete the mission The Father had set before Him. We as His followers have a mission set before us. May it be our goal to live with that same vision and determination. Let us have the same attitude Isaiah had when the Lord asked whom shall I send? Isaiah's response was SEND ME!(Isaiah 6:8)

John 20:21

²¹ *So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has _____ Me, I also _____ you."*

2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁰ *Now then, we are _____ for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be _____ to God.*

Ezekiel 3:18-19

¹⁸ *When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to _____ his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at _____ hand.* ¹⁹ *Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have _____ your soul.*

Seeking The Lost

Read John 4:1-26. In this story Jesus broke through racial, religious, cultural, and gender barriers when He talked alone with a Samaritan woman. That would've been unheard of. Not only was she a Samaritan, and a woman, but she was an immoral woman. But Jesus loved her. He wanted her to believe in Him as the Messiah so that she could have God's gift of eternal life (John 4:10, 13-14, 25-26).

After this encounter Jesus taught His disciples a valuable lesson about evangelism.

John 4:35

³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!"

The disciples had already gone into the city to buy food (John 4:8), but they hadn't thought to tell the people there about Jesus. Their racial and religious resentment of the Samaritans kept them from seeing the harvest right in front of them.

This story shows the importance of intentionality with people. A woman like that probably would have never talked to Jesus if He hadn't initiate the conversation. It also shows the importance of keeping our eyes open. We all have people in our lives that we consistently rub shoulders with. They may be coworkers, classmates, or friends. God deeply loves them, is seeking them, and wants them to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and we have the opportunity to be a part of that.

We need to get out of what is comfortable and see the major need around us. Jesus was moved when He saw the need.

Matthew 9:37-38

³⁵ Then Jesus went about _____ the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the _____ of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. ³⁶ But when He saw the multitudes, He was _____ with _____ for them, because they were weary and _____, like sheep having no shepherd

The key is prayer, we need God to open doors and soften a persons heart to receive what He has for them.

Matthew 9:37-38

³⁷ Then He said to His disciples, "The _____ truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few."³⁸ Therefore _____ the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

Colossians 2:2-4

² Continue earnestly in _____, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; ³ meanwhile _____ also for us, that God would _____ to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, ⁴ that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

The Message We Preach

When God gives us opportunities to share the gospel what should we share? The Bible doesn't have a word-for-word statement we're supposed to recite to an unbeliever. But there is a consistent message to be preached.

No one will believe in Christ for eternal life if they don't think they need eternal life. Because of this it's important that people know they "have sinned" (Romans 3:23) and that without Christ they are spiritually dead (Romans 5:12). The Bible says that unbelievers are "condemned already" (John 3:18), and "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Knowing the problem we're in helps us appreciate what Jesus did on the cross.

Romans 5:8

⁸ *But God demonstrates His own _____ toward us, in that while we were still _____, Christ died for us.*

When Jesus died He paid for sins once and for all. He is the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). But the heart of the gospel is that our Savior isn't dead, but alive!

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

³ *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ _____ for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was _____, and that He _____ the third day according to the Scriptures.*

In Christ, God has told everyone, "You are loved!" The truth that Christ died and rose again is incredible news. But those facts alone don't tell a person *how* to be saved. The Bible has a consistent response God requires of people to receive eternal life.

John 20:30-31

³⁰ *And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written that you may _____ that Jesus is the _____, the _____, and that believing you may have _____ in His name.*

The Gospel of John is a unique book of the Bible. It's the only book specifically written to unbelievers to bring them to faith and eternal life (see John 3:16; 5:24; 6:47). John had a specific **response** he wanted his readers to have, and a **result** if they did.

Response: "_____ that Jesus is the _____, the _____."

Result: You will "have _____ in His name."

John recorded 8 "signs" (miracles) of Jesus in his book so that his readers would "believe." The word *believe* is actually used 100 times in the book! But this isn't talking about a general belief in the existence of God, but believing a specific truth about Jesus: *that He is the Christ, the Son of God*. This means that Jesus is the Savior, God in the flesh, who gives the free gift of eternal life (John 4:42; 6:35; 11:25-27).

The message of John's Gospel is the same message preached by the apostles and the early church (see Acts 9:20; 17:3; 18:28; 1 John 5:1).

Acts 5:42

⁴² *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the _____.*

Acts 16:30-31

³⁰ *And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be _____?" ³¹ So they said, "_____ on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be _____."*

When we share the gospel we're inviting a person to look to Christ alone to meet their need for eternal life. It's not a popular idea, but Jesus was exclusive. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). There is only one way to receive eternal life, and it is by believing in Christ alone (see Acts 4:12).

We Don't Save People

If we share the gospel we're going to get a lot of different responses. Some people will believe and others won't. At the end of the day we can't control the way a person responds. Only God can bring someone to faith.

2 Corinthians 4:3

³ *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are _____, ⁴ whose minds the _____ has _____, who do not _____, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

The enemy, Satan, makes it his goal to blind people to the truth. He works hard to create a world system that's opposed to God (1 John 5:19). We are in a spiritual war, human souls are at stake, and the enemy won't simply roll over without a fight. Because of this we have to pray. We need to ask God to open the eyes of the unbelieving like He opened our eyes when we first believed.

2 Corinthians 4:6

⁶ *For it is the God who commanded _____ to shine out of _____, who has _____ in our _____ to give the light of the _____ of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

Faith in Christ is a miracle of God, like a blind person suddenly able to see. Our job isn't to save anyone, but to point them to the Savior.

Response

As believers in Christ we know a truth that the world needs to hear. This doesn't mean we stand on a street corner shouting the gospel at people who walk by. Jesus' greatest commandment was to "love one another" (John 13:34-35). The more we do that the more people will be open to hearing about Jesus. Make it your goal to start praying daily for opportunities to share the message of Christ with people. And look for God to answer this prayer, because He will!

Discussion Questions

1. Do you find it hard to share the gospel with others? Why is that?
2. What are some things that push people away from being willing to hear about Jesus? What can you do about that?
3. Read John 20:30-31; Acts 5:42; 18:28; 1 John 5:1. What did the apostles and the early church want unbelievers to believe about Jesus? What is God's promise to those who believe this?
4. Who in your life doesn't know Christ? What practical steps can you take towards sharing the gospel with them?

Study 6 – The Church

Christ's Body

A single soldier doesn't fight against a whole army. A single athlete doesn't win against an entire team. We understand this, but when it comes to our relationship with God we sometimes attempt to do it alone. The reality is this way of doing life doesn't work.

The Bible describes the Church as the unified body of Christ.

Colossians 1:24

²⁴ *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His _____, which is the _____.*

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

¹² *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by _____ we were all baptized into _____—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.*

Like a body, the church is a unit where each member supports the others so the whole body can function. Let's take a look at how Paul describes this in Romans.

Romans 12:3-8

³ *For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to _____ a measure of faith. ⁴ For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same _____, ⁵ so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. ⁶ Having then _____ differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us _____ them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; ⁷ or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸ he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

God, through His Spirit, has given each believer a spiritual gift so we can "use them" in the church. When each believer is using his or her gift as it was intended to be used, the church body is healthy and operates the way it was supposed to. If we don't use our gifts the entire body suffers.

What are some ways you could use your spiritual gifting to support your local church?

Lights In The World

The local church is what God uses to advance the gospel in the world. It's the primary way God intends unbelievers to hear about Jesus and grow as disciples.

Philippians 1:27

²⁷ *Only let your conduct be worthy of the _____ of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in _____ spirit, with _____ mind striving _____ for the _____.*

Philippians 2:14-16

¹⁴ *Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a _____ and _____, among whom you shine as _____ in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the _____ of life.*

We live in a corrupt world. It's a world that's "under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). Paul says here that the church is to be united in spreading the gospel, or the "word of life," to our generation. But what all goes into this?

Loving One Another

The greatest commandment Jesus gave His disciples was to "love one another" (John 13:34). This is a powerful witness to the world.

1 John 4:12

¹² *No one has _____ God at any time. If we _____ one another, God _____ in us, and His love has been _____ in us.*

When John wrote this he was focusing on the what the church *community* does, not just individual believers. While God can't be seen with our eyes, people can see God at work among us when we "love one another." Our love for each other can draw people to God, just as hatred toward each other will push people away.

Preserving Unity

Unbelievers won't be drawn to the church if we can't get along. The Bible doesn't say we're supposed to *create* unity in the church, but that we're supposed to *preserve* it.

Ephesians 4:3

...endeavoring to _____ the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

God has already made us one. Sometimes we confuse unity with uniformity, but unity doesn't mean we're all the same.

Galatians 3:27-28

²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

What do these verses say about being inclusive in the church?

It's been said that 11am on Sunday morning is "one of the most segregated hours" in America. This is a tragedy. The church is meant to be one diverse body of different races, genders, ages, social classes, all made one through faith in Jesus. Our job is to protect that unity.

This is easier said than done. The church is full of people, and people are sinful. All believers are at different levels of maturity, and we won't always treat each other like we're called to. A healthy church is an inclusive church where people are "forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave [us]" (Ephesians 4:32).

Coming To Serve

The idea that we're a body means each member of the church needs to be concerned with the spiritual health of the other members. Paul said, "if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Christ is the ultimate example of what it looks like to focus on others ahead of ourselves.

Philippians 2:3-5

³ *Let nothing be done through _____ ambition or conceit, but in _____ of mind let each esteem others better than himself.* ⁴ *Let each of you look out not only for his _____, but also for the interests of _____.* ⁵ *Let this _____ be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

If anyone had a right to think of himself first it's Jesus. But Jesus didn't come to be served, but to serve others (Mark 10:45). A healthy church is one where believers sacrifice and share their resources to meet the needs of others (1 John 3:16-17).

Why We Gather

Church is more than a Sunday gathering, but the Bible does teach that we should regularly gather together.

Hebrews 10:24-25

²⁴ *And let us consider one another in order to stir up _____ and _____, ²⁵ not forsaking the _____ of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but _____ one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

We gather to encourage each other. We gather to motivate each other to love and do good works. We come to give, not to get.

How does our American culture challenge this attitude?

The Bible doesn't give strict rules about what a gathering has to look like, but there are essential things the Bible says should happen.

Colossians 3:16

¹⁶ *Let the _____ of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, _____ and _____ one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, _____ with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

The teaching of God's "word" and worshipping together are essential to a church gathering. It's important for a church to be grounded in what God's word says so we worship the true God and not an idol of our own making. Paul commanded Timothy to "Preach the word!" in the church he was pastoring (1 Timothy 4:2).

God also told us to practice communion and baptism.

Communion

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³ *For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took _____; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in _____ of Me." ²⁵ In the same manner He also took the _____ after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in _____ of Me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

The meaning of communion is to *remember* what Jesus did for us on the cross. Jesus died to pay for our sins and to guarantee the "new covenant" (see Hebrews 7:22). We eat the bread and drink the cup together to remember that His sacrifice is what unites us.

Water Baptism

Water baptism is something Jesus commanded His disciples to do when making other disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). Baptism isn't a condition for salvation, but it is the first step of obedience to God that a new believer is to take. The early church was faithful to baptize new believers (Acts 2:41; 8:12).

Acts 18:8

⁸ *Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, _____ on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, _____ and were _____.*

Through being baptized a believer publicly identifies with Christ and commits to being His disciple.

Response

The Christian life was never meant to be lived in isolation. We were meant to do life together and bear each other's burdens (Galatians 6:2). The church is the body of Christ, a community of diverse people made one by faith in Jesus. There's no perfect church. Because churches have people they will inevitably have problems. Maybe you're someone who loves church, or maybe you've been hurt by the church. Consider what we've learned in this study about God's desire for His church. What would it look like for you to invest your life into your local church for God's glory?

Discussion Questions

1. Read Romans 12:3-8. What does it mean that the church is the body of Christ? How can you serve your role as a member of His body?
2. How do you think people are affected when members in a local church are living selfishly?
3. Do you know anyone who has been hurt by the church? What turns people away from going to church?
4. Read Colossians 3:16. Why are the teaching of God's word and worshiping together important when the church gathers? How have you been impacted by these two things?

Study 7 – The Path to Freedom

It's A Process

It's been said, "There are Christians who struggle, and there are liars." The idea of a Christian who never battles selfishness, pride, lust, or any other sin, just isn't true. Let's look at John 8 again.

John 8:31-32

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who _____ Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you _____."

If believing in Jesus automatically freed us from all struggles with sin there would be no need to "abide" in Christ's "word." We could paraphrase what Jesus said this way:

"Now that you've believed in Me, keep listening to what I have to say, and do it. That's what being My disciple is all about. If you do this you will learn to live in freedom."

We receive eternal life the moment we believe (John 5:24), but being made free is a lifelong process of being transformed. Paul said it happens in stages "from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

But how does this process work?

By Grace Through Faith

"The Christian life is just about trying harder." "If we struggle with some sin it's just because we're not trying hard enough." These are ideas we commonly believe, but the Bible says something radically different.

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by _____ in Jesus Christ, even we have _____ in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by _____ in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Write how many times Paul mentions **faith/believing in Christ** in this verse: _____.

The word "justified" means "to be declared righteous." This looks at our initial salvation (see Ephesians 2:8-9). In this verse Paul said 3 times that God declares us righteous by *faith in Christ*, and 3 times that it's *not by works*. A couple verses later he applied the same truth to his daily life as a Christian.

Galatians 2:20-21

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I _____ in the flesh I live by _____ in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the _____ of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

We weren't justified by trying harder, and we don't grow by trying harder. If righteousness was something we could just grind out by ourselves then Christ's death would've been for nothing. So what's the point?

Each day God invites us to rely fully on His grace, and to "live by faith in the Son of God," just like when we were initially saved.

A Work of God's Spirit

Read Galatians 2:20 again, and write down who lives in you now: _____.

What could this mean? Later in Galatians Paul said we become "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). This new position comes with a huge benefit.

Galatians 4:6

⁶ And because you are _____, God has sent forth the _____ of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Christ lives in us because His Spirit dwells in our hearts. Paul has a lot more to say about this truth. Take a moment to read through Galatians 5:16-26.

How does Paul define the word "flesh"? How does our flesh differ from God's Spirit?

Galatians 5:24-25

²⁴ And those who are Christ's have _____ the _____ with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we _____ in the Spirit, let us also _____ in the Spirit.

Because we belong to Christ the "flesh" part of us has been put to death. It's been "crucified with Christ" (Galatians 2:20). This means it's not our boss anymore. The "flesh" doesn't have the power to call the shots on how we live. Our new life comes from God's Spirit.

Let's put all this together.

Christians have 2 paths they can go down. We have the "flesh" that only wants to do evil, and the Spirit of God Who can empower us to obedience. When we sin it's our flesh doing what comes natural to it. To break free from this experience we need to learn to *walk by the Spirit*.

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶ I say then: _____ in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the _____ of the flesh... ²² But the _____ of the _____ is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

The key to freedom is God's Spirit. God's character can be expressed through us by the Spirit. But what does *walking by the Spirit* actually look like?

From Glory To Glory

How does the Spirit change us?

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a _____ the _____ of the Lord, are being _____ into the same image from _____ to _____, just as by the _____ of the Lord.

Pause and think about what we just read. There's a "mirror" we are to look into. This mirror shows us God's "glory." Then we're "transformed" to be more and more like the "image" we see in the mirror. This happens "from glory to glory," or from one stage of "glory" to the next. All this is accomplished "by the Spirit of the Lord."

Read through 2 Corinthians 3:12-18 and think about what the "mirror" is.

The Old Testament was written to the Jewish nation. But because they rejected Christ Paul says a "veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ" (3:14). A "veil lies on their heart" (3:15), and this covering keeps them from understanding what Scripture truly says. But "when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away" (3:16).

What's the point of all this? Because we've believed in Jesus we have His Spirit, and the Spirit is the One who brings true freedom (3:17). So unlike the unbelieving Jews Paul was talking about, we can come to Scripture "with unveiled face" and see God's glory in it. The Spirit will show us the glory of the Lord and radically transform us to be more like God's image we see in Scripture!

Study 8 – The Rewards of Discipleship

Life To The Full

We only get one shot at life. We can't go back and relive our lives when we're finished. Because of this we need to know how to make the most of it. Jesus says He can give us the fullest experience of life.

John 10:10

¹⁰ *The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have _____, and that they may have it _____.*

The “thief” (Satan) only wants to take from us. Jesus is the ultimate Giver. Through Him we can both “have life” and “have it more abundantly.” There are 2 levels to this. The Bible says that the moment we believe in Christ we have eternal life (See Study 1 – Salvation; John 5:24; 6:47). But at the same time those who “have” it can “have it more abundantly.” When we believe in Christ the eternal life we are given is the very life of God (see John 11:25; 14:6; 1 John 5:20). Because of this there is no limit on the extent to which we can experience that life.

Think of this like a human relationship. You may have a friendship that is only just beginning. You have that relationship, but you may not know the person on a deep level yet. But if you both work at it, the friendship will grow to where you know the person in a much deeper way. Our relationship with God is like that. We enter into it freely, but it takes effort to know God deeply.

John 15:14, 17

¹⁴ *You are My _____ if you do whatever I command you... ¹⁷ These things I command you, that you _____ one another.*

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples in the final hours before He was crucified. These disciples had believed in Jesus about 3 years before, and had walked faithfully with Him for those years. Now Jesus told them how to become His “friends.” This speaks of intimacy with Christ that results from keeping His commandments (see John 14:21-24). Being a disciple involves obeying Christ's word (John 8:31-32), and the promise of obedience is that we grow to know the heart of God in a deep and intimate way (see 1 John 2:3-6). This is life to the full.

Eternal Rewards

The Bible also teaches that when Christ returns believers will be rewarded for how we served and obeyed Him (Matthew 16:27).

Revelation 22:12

¹² *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My _____ is with Me, to give to every one according to his _____.”*

The “reward” Jesus is talking about can't be the same as justification or eternal life since it's based on our “work.” Let's look at this difference a little closer. When Paul was talking about justification (being declared righteous) he wrote,

Romans 4:4-5

⁴ *Now to him who _____, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. ⁵ But to him who _____ but _____ on Him who justifies the ungodly, his _____ is accounted for righteousness.*

Paul says that what a person receives for their “works” can't be considered “grace” because they worked for it. But God's righteousness is given by grace “to him who does not work but believes.” We are eternally saved by grace through faith and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This shows that receiving eternal rewards is a very different thing than receiving eternal life from Christ. It's important for us to realize that just because we become God's children freely, that doesn't mean our works don't matter. God cares about how we live our lives, and promises to reward us for our obedience.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

The idea of eternal rewards goes hand in hand with the fact that Jesus will judge believers for their works. The Bible teaches 2 different judgments. One is called the Great White Throne Judgment, which is only for unbelievers (Revelation 20:11-15). The other is called the Judgment Seat of Christ, which is only for believers. At this judgment Jesus will evaluate our works and give out rewards.

2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ For we must all appear before the _____ of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has _____, whether _____ or _____.

Romans 14:10, 12

¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the _____ of Christ...¹² So then each of us shall give _____ of himself to God.

Paul described this judgment in more detail in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

¹¹ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Write how many times Paul mentions **work** in this passage: _____.

This passage teaches that there is a "Day" coming when those of us who believed in Christ will stand before Him and answer for how we invested our time, talents, and treasures for the Lord. Jesus will "test each one's work" to determine its quality. The one whose work passes the test "will receive a reward," while the one whose work doesn't pass the test "will suffer loss." But this "loss" isn't the loss of eternal life because "he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

Missing out on reward doesn't mean a person loses their salvation. We didn't earn salvation by our works, and we can't lose it by our failures. It's a free gift of God's grace. But rewards are earned by works and we can miss out on reward if we don't live for the things that matter to God.

Accountability In God's Family

It might seem like the idea of eternal rewards goes against God's grace. The thought of earning something from God doesn't usually sit well with us who have come to know God's grace in salvation.

It might be helpful to think of this like a family. A parent might say, "There's nothing my child could ever do to make me stop loving them." But does this mean the parent doesn't care how their child lives? Does this mean the parent doesn't discipline their child when they disobey, or reward them for obedience?

God as our Father operates in the same way.

Romans 8:38-39

³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to _____ us from the _____ of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Galatians 6:7

⁷ Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

1 Corinthians 4:5

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and _____ the _____ of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.

On the one hand there's nothing that can separate us from our Father's love for us (see John 6:35-40; 2 Timothy 2:13). But on the other hand we reap what we sow. We are accountable to God, and will answer for what we do, even "the counsels of [our] hearts." This means we will even answer for the motives behind our actions. Jesus actually says that the Father won't reward even good things done with selfish motives (see Matthew 6:2, 5, 16).

Is Seeking Rewards Selfish?

Should we pursue eternal rewards? Isn't this a selfish motivation? These are natural questions to ask when confronting what the Bible says about rewards. Let's consider what else the Bible says about this.

Matthew 6:19-21

¹⁹ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but _____ for yourselves _____ in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your _____ is, there your _____ will be also.

It can be really tempting to live life to be rich. This is especially true in America where our culture is obsessed with material things. But Jesus actually commands His disciples to ignore earthly treasure and live for heavenly treasure. He gives 2 reasons for this. (1) Nothing can destroy or take away the "treasures in heaven" that we "lay up" for ourselves. (2) If we're living for heavenly treasure our "heart" will be focused on heaven too, instead of the concerns of this world.

Disciples are called to obey everything Jesus commanded us (Matthew 28:19-20). We're actually obeying Christ when we seek heavenly reward because He told us to seek it. This doesn't mean rewards are the only motivation we have to obey Christ. We should serve Jesus simply out of a thankful heart for all that He's done for us. But rewards are *another* motivation.

Response

God is a Giver. He gave His only Son for us. He gives sinful people the gift of eternal life when they believe in Jesus. He gives His Spirit to live inside our hearts. He gives us His word so we can know Him. All these gifts are far more than we deserve. But God loves to give. The rewards for discipleship are another example of that. Being a disciple of Christ takes effort and sacrifice. It can be painful and uncomfortable. It requires denying ourselves daily and putting God first in everything. But it's worth it! Discipleship is richly rewarded both now and in eternity.

Congratulations dear Christian! You have now completed a study of the basics of being a disciple, a follower of the Lord Jesus. Rest assured that even though the principles are simple, incorporating them into daily living is quite the challenge. As a disciple of Christ, you will spend the rest of your life learning God's Word, being led by the Holy Spirit and seeking how to do Jesus' will. There is much to learn, and we have much more to learn together as we seek to love God and love our neighbor.

Please prayerfully consider two things:

- 1) A disciple of Jesus typically learns the most by applying the truths that he/she learns. Jesus always gave His disciples opportunities to go out, minister, work, and be an example. Likewise, we find it very rewarding to serve in the Body of Christ in some way to increase our opportunities to share God's love. If you would like to serve in some way, please talk to your discipleship mentor(s) or one of the ministry leaders at church or the Christian organization where you would like to volunteer.

- 2) As you have enjoyed being mentored during this discipleship process, you are now equipped to help another brother or sister in Christ to learn about discipleship. Disciples are always called to make more disciples! Jesus specifically commissions, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20) Please pray about those with whom you have existing friendships or new acquaintances that would benefit from discipleship and ask them to prayerfully consider allowing you to be their mentor. If you need a clean copy of this material, please email us at Info@legacychristian.org. God bless you!!

Additional Notes

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