

— The Next Steps —

The Armor of God

Project • 2019 Edition



*A series of studies for Christians who are serious about battling
the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms... Ephesians 6:11-12*

**LONG ISLAND
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

658 Blydenburgh Rd, Hauppauge, NY 11788

The Armor of God...

An introduction to “*The Armor of God...*”

In 1994 The Long Island Church of Christ was exceedingly blessed with spiritual growth and maturity as we undertook a yearlong study entitled *Look at the Man*. Put together by Tim Woodroof and Glenn Gray, then elders of the Lincoln Church of Christ in Nebraska, this series of studies deepened our relationship with our Lord Jesus and gave us a more mature perspective on our relationship with Him and our role as His Bride on Earth.

As we concluded the study in December of that year, the more mature members of the body desired to continue with a series of studies that would enable the congregation to put into practice all that it had learned the previous year by taking a close *look at the Man*. And so *The Armor of God...* began.

Originally titled *C2IT (See to it...)*, from various passages in Hebrews that denote our accountability to Jesus (namely *Heb 3:12* and *12:15, 25*), the studies are designed to increase awareness of our accountability to our Lord Jesus and to put that accountability into practice by allowing the Holy Spirit of God to mold us and change us according to His will, not our own. The focus of this series is found in the following passages: *Eph 5:8-10; Col 1:10* and *1 Thes 4:1*.

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and *find out what pleases the Lord*.

Eph 5:8-10

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may *please him* in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...

Col 1:10

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to *please God*, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.

1 Th 4:1

Echoing the words of Paul in this last passage, this series of studies encourages all of us to please the Lord by maturing and being sanctified more and more! Part of the realizations that hit you as you mature is the necessity to continue to be holy, as these passages teach us if you continue on reading the verses after the ones I quote here. How does one do this?

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Rom 12:1-2

Our spiritual act of continuous worship is to offer our bodies as living, holy sacrifices - *pleasing to God* because it is a voluntary, eager worship according to the truth as well as with all your heart and soul (*John 4:23*). The *how to* in carrying out our spiritual act of worship according to the truth is in the renewing of our mind as we read the word of God and let His Spirit work in us. Discernment between the things that please God and the things that don't come with the maturity by which we allow the Spirit to work in us.

At the risk of sounding *preachy* I suggest to you that the hardest thing for any Christian to give up is his/her own will. Yes, we get baptized and we attend church services and we do a whole lot of other *acts* of worship, but often we, or should I say more correctly, *I*, forget the *renewing of your mind* part. That's what this series of studies is all about. It boldly and candidly helps us to remember to listen to the Spirit, as opposed to ourselves, so that our worship may truly be pleasing to the Lord because of our sincerity and openness.

Well... that's enough of an intro. Now let's get ready to go over some meaty issues to help you understand where some of our material came from. We're all familiar with the Boston controversy, right? First I want to assure you that the Long Island Church of Christ is not affiliated with the Boston/Crossroads movement in any way. We do acknowledge that the truth is still being taught to the lost by them as of 1995. We believe they are brethren that need to be corrected in some areas. Unfortunately, they have given the devil a foothold by some of their practices and this has corrupted many.

In light of all this, however, there are many good things to be learned. As a matter of fact, if you decide to commit yourself to this course of study, you will notice that the material for the first thirteen lessons will have come from a book published by the Boston Church of Christ called *Shining Like Stars*. It is within this book that these thirteen lessons are collectively called the *C2IT series*. These lessons are biblically sound and form the foundation for the succeeding lessons. They deal with issues that need to be continuously taught to the young Christians that come into the fold.

Within these lessons you will also find *discipleship* being addressed. Although many congregations have looked *down* upon this concept, many in the Kingdom have realized that it is indeed a very biblically sound notion. Don't misunderstand me—the Boston movement has taken biblical accountability far beyond what Jesus taught us through *discipleship*; nonetheless, it is a very biblical and Christian and loving thing to hold each other accountable through our loving relationships that we should have with one another. This is being put into effect by what is called, among some brethren, *care groups*. These care groups are composed of brethren that work with each other to:

... *spur one another on* toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us *encourage one another*--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Heb 10:24-25

These *care groups* are not into extorting, coercing or lording it over the weak or young Christian. The brethren involved in these *love groups* are expressing and putting into practice the deep love Jesus wants us to have for each other, just like He did for us. If you have no experience with these *care groups* I suggest you talk about it with a brother or sister that knows about it more in detail or who has participated in such an activity. You can also call us or correspond with us at the Long Island Church of Christ. We have

The *Armor of God* Intro...

been loving each other by forming these *voluntary* groups and the many testimonials that continue to surface are proof that they work. I won't get into the biblical support for these because the studies cover it in great detail throughout the year.

Well, if at this point you have any questions or concerns before you continue to pass these studies along to your congregation, feel free to e-mail, or mail your questions, suggestions or concerns to us.

You will find that these studies will teach you, correct you, rebuke you and encourage you with all authority from the Word of God and through the Holy Spirit. My prayer is that your relationship with Jesus will develop into an exquisite intimacy that will speak for itself by your actions as the body of Jesus.

May God bless your efforts and your quest for intimately knowing the Lord Jesus.

In Christ,

The Armor of God Project Team

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THE ARMOR OF GOD

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INSIGHT

As Christians, it is important for us to grow in the knowledge and image of Christ. Man has a natural tendency to depart from God's way and to become lax in his faith. From the beginning this was a problem with man: In **Genesis** chapter **3**, we read of how Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit – an act that brought death to all mankind. In **Exodus** chapter **32**, we see God's people, Israel, defiling themselves by following after other gods. Even Aaron, the appointed priest (**Ex. 28:1**), participated in this sin of idolatry.

Isaiah was right when he said *"All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way..."* **Isa. 53:6**

For this reason, we need to familiarize ourselves with Christ and His teachings, and do the things that promote God's goodness in our lives. As the Hebrew writer said: *"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."*

Heb. 3:12-13

Let us "see to it" that we don't turn away from God by sin's deceitfulness. Let us continue to hold to the pattern of the Word and grow in the likeness of Christ. The Spirit tells us through our brother Paul, *"be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us ..."* **Eph 5:1-2a.**

Therefore, let us "see to it," that we get to know Him who died on the cross for our sins. Let us live lives that are acceptable and pleasing to our loving Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Relationship With God **Bible Study: Listening To God**

Key Text: **Ephesians 5:8-9**

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

Theme:

As Christians, one of the top priorities is to become rooted in consistent and productive personal Bible study. Only by wielding "the sword of the Spirit" (**Eph. 6:17**) will we be able to take a stand against Satan and his evil plans. Also, abiding in the Word of Christ is the best way to safeguard against false teachings. The Bible teaches us that some passages are difficult to understand (**2 Peter 3:16**), but not impossible (**2 Cor. 1:13a**). This is why we must strive to be students of the Word and learn the ways of the Lord.

Application:

Hear are some practical suggestions:

1. Have a set time to study your Bible daily.
2. Keep a note book to write down the convicting points or questions from daily reading.
3. Participate in your church bible classes.
4. Focus on the New Testament until you are quite familiar with it; then venture into the Old Testament
5. Study an entire book of the Bible at a time: don't skip all over the Scriptures.
6. Memorize one new verse per week and review verses learned in earlier weeks.

May the Lord richly bless you!!!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
I. The Old Testament As A Tutor A. <i>Romans 15:4</i> 1. Things written in past to teach us 2. The Scriptures give us hope B. <i>1 Corinthians 10:6, 11</i> 1. O.T. examples keep us from setting our hearts on evil 2. O.T. examples as warnings II. Israel's Reminder From God A. <i>Deuteronomy 8:2-3</i> 1. Review of God's goodness a. <i>He was their Deliverer (vs 14b)</i> b. <i>He was their Leader (vs 15)</i> 2. Do not forget Me 3. The Word as Food III. Jesus' Example To The Christian A. <i>Matthew 4:4,7,10</i> 1. The Word used to defeat Satan a. <i>Weakness overcome by the Word</i> b. <i>Trust established by the Word</i> c. <i>Dedication established by the Word</i> IV. Paul's Exhortation To Us A. <i>Colossians 3:16</i> 1. Let the Word dwell in us richly a. <i>So you can teach with wisdom</i> b. <i>So you can admonish with wisdom</i> c. <i>So you can sing with gratitude</i> 2. Let your heart house the Word 3. Let the Word dwell as Master	<i>Warm-up:</i> If you were making a list of the things you would count as important for survival, what would be on that list? What would you consider to be the most important? <i>See To It</i> <i>1 Peter 2:1-3</i> 1. What does it mean to <i>crave</i>? 2. What does the term <i>spiritual milk</i> mean? Explain your answer. 3. Why does the Spirit use <i>newborn babies</i> as examples of how we ought to crave for this spiritual milk? 4. What is a sure sign of an unhealthy baby? An unhealthy Christian? 5. If we are saved at the moment we obey the Gospel, what does "...so that by it you may grow up in your salvation" mean? What kind of "growth" do we experience? Growth in what? <i>Seeing It Closer:</i> 1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is food to you (1:<i>least important</i>; 5:<i>most</i>)? 2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how has the Word of God been rating in your life? 3. What kind of growth have you experienced since you <i>tasted</i> the goodness of the Lord? 4. Does growth come from just reading and/or hearing the Word? Explain. <i>Getting To It:</i> Just as we eagerly desire food when hunger strikes, we ought to fervently desire the milk of the Lord. Let us, therefore, be determined to earnestly desire the pure spiritual milk!

LISTENING TO GOD

MONDAY

Read **Deuteronomy 8:3**. What was God teaching Israel? How does this teaching apply to you today? Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Job 23:12; Psalm 119:103; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2**. Write **Matthew 4:4** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

TUESDAY

Read **Psalm 119:97-104**. Look up the word *meditate* in a good dictionary. What does the word *meditate* mean? What attributes did the psalmist possess as a result of meditating on the word of God? What will meditating on the word of God do for you as a Christian? Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Psalm 19:7-11; 119:105; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**. Write **Psalm 119:105** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

WEDNESDAY

Read **2 Timothy 2:15**. How should you present yourself to God? What should you be competent in handling? What kind of worker is a “shameful” one? What kind of “workman” are you? This passage begins with the Greek word *spoudazo*, which means to be diligent, to labor or to study. The word should not only be *read*, but also *studied* (look up the verb *study*). We should strive to gain knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Pray for wisdom and understanding; ask questions regarding hard-to-understand verses; use cross-references, concordances and other Bible helps to aid in your understanding. Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Acts 17:11** (look up the verb *examine*); **2 Timothy 3:16-17**--focus on verse 17; **1 Peter 3:15**. Write **2 Timothy 2:15** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

THURSDAY

Read **James 1:22-25**. Is it enough to just study the Bible? What must you do as you learn the Word? Do you find yourself just *hearing* the word of God? If so, what can you do to change that? Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Joshua 1:8; Matthew 7:21-27; John 8:31-32**. Write **James 1:22** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

FRIDAY

Read **Colossians 3:12-16**. Paul tells the Ephesians to put on the Christian virtues; them being compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. In order to have these qualities, the brethren were encouraged to do the following: put on love, submit to the peace of Christ, be thankful and allow the word of God to dwell richly in them. Concentrate on verse 16. Do you find yourself lacking one or more of these virtues? Write down those virtues you are lacking or weak in. How can you strengthen these virtues in your life? What happens when the word of Christ dwells *poorly* in you? What can you do to promote the word to dwell *richly* in you? Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Deuteronomy 6:5-6; 11:18; Psalm 119:9-11; James 1:21**. Write **Psalm 119:11** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

INSIGHT

It is wonderful to know that God, our Father, hears and answers our prayers. He doesn't always do what we request, but He answers in harmony with His will and according to what is best for us. This is why the apostle John says in **1 John 5:14-15**: *"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have what we asked of Him"*.

According to the Bible there are many things to include in our prayers: Praising God for His greatness, thanking Him for all He has done, confessing our sins, asking for forgiveness, requesting His help for others, and requesting wisdom and strength.

Prayer is not a ritualistic performance; it is *talking* to God. It does not require special "religious" words such as *Thou, Thee* and *Thy*. God wants our prayers to come from our hearts. We should not allow the fact that we sometimes don't know what to say keep us from praying. The Holy Spirit of God knows our minds and expresses our thoughts according to God's will. This is what our brother Paul said:

Romans 8:26-27: *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will."*

God is our loving Father who is always glad to have you talk to Him. Let Him hear from you often! And pray for the saints as well!

The Relationship With God *Prayer: Speaking To God*

Key Text: **Ephesians 6:18**

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Theme:

What would be more natural between two people who love each other than communication? Surely one would expect to see an enormous amount of communication between man and the God he loves with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. Yet, this is not so! This kind of communication does not come naturally, but it can and must be learned. Satan tries his utmost to keep us off our knees! Satan's obstacles can be overcome, if we are willing to rely on God and give prayer the priority it deserves.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Set a regular time to pray every day.
2. Devotional prayer time should include four aspects denoted by the word

A-C-T-S:

Adoration ----- **1 Chronicles 29:10-13**

Confession ----- **Proverbs 28:13**

Thanksgiving --- **Philippians 4:6**

Supplication ---- **John 14:13**

3. Keep track of these prayer items in a "prayer list".
4. Pray everyday using the ACTS method.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Speaking to God I. "...en pneùmati" A. Uses of this term in the NT - To be in a spiritual state: vision Rev. 1:10--the apostle John - Similar to Peter in <i>Acts 10:10</i> - To inspire or to stimulate to action. Matthew 22:43 - David wrote some of the Psalms. 2 Pt. 1:21--men inspired by the Holy Spirit wrote Scripture. - In the likeness or image of Luke 1:17 - John the Baptist likened to Elijah, the fearless reformer. - In sincerity--Heartfelt John 4:24 - worship in truth (Jn 17:17) - worship in Spirit Rom 2:29 - a true Jew is Jew within II. Pray in the Spirit A. Ephesians 6:18 - Events surrounding verse 18 - Life is a warfare -Enemy: Satan (<i>vs 12,16b</i>) -Armor yourself (<i>vs 13</i>) - armor of defense (<i>vs 14,15,17a</i>) - armor of offense (<i>vs 16,17b</i>) - The conclusion is PRAY!!! - Pray always (Luke 18:1) -- in the Spirit -- on all occasions -- pray all kinds of prayers -- remember the saints!!! Conclusion: 1 Thessalonians 5:17! <i>"...for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thess. 5:18b</i>	Warm-up: Were you ever determined to get something you wanted and wound up getting it? What was that "something" and what did you do to receive it? See To It Luke 18:1-8 - What is the main point of this parable? - What point is Christ trying to emphasize here between this widow and this unjust judge? - What kind of prayer seems to be in discussion here? Explain. - How are we like the widow? How are we unlike the widow? - How is God like the judge? How is God unlike the judge? Seeing It Closer: - Assuming you pray before eating a meal, how often do you pray? - Once a day. - Sometimes once a day. - More than once a day. - Do you find yourself praying mostly for your physical needs or for your spiritual needs? - This widow needed deliverance from her <i>adversaries</i>. What are your personal "adversaries"? - Have you been praying eagerly to God to help you in your struggles? - What does God require of us? What does He promise us? Getting To It: Christ desires us to pray continually, without giving up. All God's people ought to be "praying people." He teaches us that persistent prayers will deliver us from our adversaries. Pray constantly to the Lord and don't give up!

SPEAKING TO GOD

MONDAY

Read **Luke 11:1-4**. We find Christ “*praying in a certain place*”. One of His disciples takes special note of Christ’s prayer life and asks Him “*Lord, teach us to pray...*”. Tuesday, we will look at Jesus’ prayer life, but for now, let us **meditate** on the phrase *teach us to pray*. This phrase in itself is a good prayer. Asking the Lord to teach us, by His word and Spirit, how to pray is very needful. We ought to learn to pray with wisdom. Note the following unwise prayer requests: Moses in **Numbers 11:10-15**; **Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-4**. Why were these prayers unwise? Did these prayers reflect trust in God’s deliverance? Did God grant their requests? Unwise prayers don’t always have to be prayers reflecting despair--read **Matthew 20:20-23**. Remember, God always answers prayers--He answers them with a “yes” or a “no”. Ask the Lord to *teach* you to pray today. Using **Luke 11:2-4** and **Matthew 6:9-13** as your basis, write down the contents of the Lord’s model prayer. Include the person addressed in prayer. According to **John 14:13**, in whose name do we ask? Write **Luke 11:1** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 11:1**. Despite His busy schedule, Jesus always took time out to pray--not only on special occasions, but also as a regular practice. To Christ, maintaining a communication link with His Father was a top priority! What prompted this disciple to ask to be taught to pray? Read the following: **Luke 3:20-21**; **5:16**; **6:12**. Jesus was a man of prayer. Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Acts 2:41-42**; **10:1-2**; **10:9**; **2 Thess 1:11-12**. How often do you pray? Is it a top priority in your life? Write **Psalms 63:1-4** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it. Also, starting today, when a brother or a sister is in need of encouragement, pray with them--whether it’s by phone or face to face. If you are in a Christian household, pray together as a family daily.

WEDNESDAY

Read **James 4:1-3**. Prayers are sometimes rejected by God, either they are not in accordance with His divine will, (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**) or there is a problem with us. From verse 1, what causes fights and arguments? The term “*kill*” in verse 2 is referring to spiritual murder, not physical. Hating our brothers makes us murderers (**1 John 3:15**). Read **Matthew 5:21-23** for further insight. According to **James 4:2-3**, what two things prevent us from “receiving” from the Lord? Why won’t the Lord grant requests asked out of impure motives? Another reason why we don’t receive is because we lack persistence (**Luke 18:1**). Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Psalms 66:18**; **Luke 18:1-8**; **1 Peter 4:7**; **1 John 5:14-15**. Write **1 John 5:14** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

THURSDAY

Read **Ephesians 6:18**. How should we pray? What does it mean to “*pray in the Spirit*”? When should we pray? Write down the kinds of prayers you ought to be praying. Who should you be praying constantly for? Have you been doing this? Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **John 17:20-21**; **Ephesians 3:14-19**; **James 1:5**. Write **Ephesians 6:18** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it. Call up someone who needs your prayers and pray with them over the phone, especially the sick.

FRIDAY

Read **Ephesians 3:14-15**. It is important for us to remember who we are praying to. Various positions in prayer reflect the type of prayer and the humility we must have before God. Paul knew that he was praying to the God of the universe. For this reason he knelt before Him, addressing Him as Father! Write down your thoughts on the following passages: **Psalms 95:6**; **Mt 26:39**; **Mark 11:25**. Write **Psalms 95:6** down on an index card and take it with you wherever you go today and reflect upon it.

INSIGHT

In **Ephesians 2:8** Paul said, *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."* This great truth, although widely accepted, is often misunderstood. In **Hebrews 11:6** we read, *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."* Again in **Acts 16:31** Paul told the Philippian jailer to *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."* These and numerous other scriptures clearly show the tremendous importance of faith. Without it there is no hope for a lost and dying world. Faith can either be acceptable to God or useless, depending upon the state or condition in which it exists.

The Bible describes two different conditions in which faith may exist. One type of faith can and will lead to salvation, while the other will only bring a curse. They are 'living faith' and 'dead faith'. The Bible draws a very clear contrast between a dead, useless faith which cannot save, and an active, working faith which is pleasing to God. There is not one single case in all of the Bible of a person ever being saved through dead faith. Paul made this fact doubly clear in **Galatians 5:6** when he said that the faith which pleases God is *"...faith expressing itself through love."* Every case of Bible conversion shows that people were saved only when their faith was coupled with the works of obedience to God's law. James said, *"...show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."*

James 2:18

We may believe in Christ and even claim to be a Christian, but unless we actively obey His teachings, our faith will be proven to be dead and shall be forever lost.

Yes, it is by *grace* we are saved; but this *grace*, this *gift* of God, comes through *faith*. A faith, that is living and active; not one that is dead and useless.

The Relationship With God *Living Faith*

Key Text: **1 Peter 1:14-16**

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Theme:

The road of salvation is not traveled by works. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we need to realize that to depend on our good deeds for salvation is foolish and worthless. It is only through Jesus' death on the cross that we are saved. It is equally sad, however, that one school of thought prides itself on having arrived at a true understanding of grace, only to encourage lukewarm commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. Clearly, we must strike the balance between faith, works *and* grace.

Application:

Paul said in **1 Corinthians 15:10** that the grace given him was not without effect. Similarly, we ought to allow the grace of God to have its effect in our lives. Let faith show itself by what you do. Seek fellowship, pray often, read His Word and do the things that will lift up the cross of Christ. Remember what our great Lord and Savior Jesus said, *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."* **Mt. 5:16**

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
The Balance: Grace, Faith & Works I. Saved by “chàris” A. Biblical definition of “grace” 1. <i>Ephesians 2:8</i>--God’s saving gift 2. <i>Titus 3:4-5</i>--God’s kindness, love, mercy B. “Chàris” received through faith 1. <i>Ephesians 2:8</i>--through faith (trust) 2. <i>Romans 5:2</i>--access through faith 3. <i>Roman 10:17</i>--faith comes though the Bible C. An effective “chàris” 1. <i>Ephesians 2:10</i> a. Good works produced 2. <i>Titus 2:11-12</i> a. It teaches (trains, disciplines) us II. Two Kinds of Faiths A. Living faith 1. <i>James 2:18,22</i>--Working, active faith a. Doers of the word (<i>James 1:22</i>) B. Dead faith 1. <i>James 2:17,20</i>--Dead, useless faith a. Hearers of the word (<i>James 1:22</i>) III. Conclusion <i>Let grace be effective not defective</i>	Warm-up: Did you ever win a prize in a contest of some sort? What did you win? What did you do in order to win this prize? See To It <i>Titus 3:3-7</i> 1. What does verse three reveal about man’s present condition? How does this verse apply to us as Christians? 2. Why is it important for us to be reminded of our past condition? How does this benefit us? 3. What can we learn about the nature of God from verse four? In what does He delight? 4. Paul says, “<i>not because of righteous things we have done...</i>” Does this mean that the Christian does not have to perform works of righteousness? Explain your answer. 5. How did God save us? What does “<i>the washing of rebirth and renewal of the Holy Spirit</i>” mean? Explain your answer. 6. How do you explain baptism in Acts 2:38 in light of the statement “<i>...not because of righteous things we have done</i>”? Seeing It Closer: 1. Before being baptized into Christ, which of the following relate to you? Explain. a. Foolishness b. Disobedient c. Deceived d. Enslaved by passions and pleasures e. Full of malice and hatred 2. After becoming a Christian, has any of these worldly qualities changed in you? What caused the change and what were those changes? Getting To It: Let us always remember to let grace have its transforming effect on us, for Christ died for a people eager to do what is good (<i>Titus 2:14b</i>).

LIVING FAITH

MONDAY

Probably the hardest thing to do in our Christian walk is to live a balanced life. Balancing faith and works is a tough thing to do! The Bible teaches us that we are not saved by works, but by faith **Ephesians 2:8,9**. At the same time, the Bible teaches us that faith without works is dead! (See **James 2:20-26**). This week we will be examining passages that will teach us about striking the spiritual balance in our lives that will lead us to growth in Jesus Christ. Examine **Ecclesiastes 7:15-18**. What extremes do you believe Solomon is talking about? Look specifically at verse 16. How can someone be classified as overrighteous? How about overwise? Could this be referred to as a condition known as being “superspiritual” or “the church cop”? Have you ever been overrighteous? Read **Matthew 18:23-35**. Can you identify with the wicked servant who had no mercy? This man apparently forgot he was cleansed from past sins. Write down your thoughts on **2 Peter 1:5-9**. Write **Micah 6:8** down on an index card and meditate upon it throughout the day.

TUESDAY

Let's first take a look at *faith*. Hebrews chapter 11 is known as the *faith* chapter. The Hebrew writer uses the patriarchs as examples of men that were called righteous by God because they showed great faith in their lives. Notice *verse 6*. What must you have in order to please God? Notice that the writer gives us a definition of faith in this verse as well. How does the writer define faith? Look up *faith* in a good dictionary and compare definitions. How are the definitions similar? Different? Keeping these definitions in mind, read over chapter 11 in *Hebrews* and describe how each patriarch showed his faith. As you see from these examples, faith is shown by what you do. You don't *do* to get *faith*; but rather *faith* causes you to *do*. Carefully examine **James 2:14-26**. What must accompany your faith? Is it possible to have faith without having any deeds to show for it? Look at verse 14. Can such a faith save you? Read verse 22. What must work together with faith? What happens to your faith when it works together with actions? Write **James 2:17** on an index card and meditate upon it throughout the day.

WEDNESDAY

Now we're going to examine *works*. Examine closely **Ephesians 2:8-10**. Notice that, though we are not saved by righteous deeds, we have been created to do good works, which God prepared in advanced for us to do! That's why he commands us to let our light so shine before men! Whatever works we do are not even our own; for we have been transformed to do them in Christ Jesus. What is it that saves us then? Have we earned salvation or is it a gift of God? Can you boast about your own works? Why or why not? Is this saving grace conditional upon your obedience to the gospel? (Justify the answer to this question using Scripture). Read carefully **2 Kings 5:1-15**. Did Naaman have to follow God's instructions to be healed of his leprosy? Was it the works that cleansed him, or was it God's grace? Was the healing power in the water or in God? Is your forgiveness of sins conditional on your obedience of the gospel? As you can see from these Scriptures, even though we are not saved by our own deeds (thank God!), we have been created for the purpose of doing good things in the name of God. Also we cannot forget our cleansing of sin--the fact that we received grace upon our obedience to the gospel by faith in Jesus Christ! Praise His everlasting name! Write **Titus 2:11-14** down on an index card and meditate upon it throughout the day.

THURSDAY

Amazing *Grace*! How sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me! Read **Titus 3:5-7**. Is salvation based on righteous works? *Why* has God saved you? Notice how our redemption comes by the Holy Spirit, whom we received as a gift! Notice also, from verse 7, that we have been justified (look up this word in a good dictionary) by God's grace, not by anything that we have done or ever will do. By the way, what is the result of this justification? Again, is this justification and the gift of the Spirit conditional on your obedience to the gospel? Remember Naaman's story! Write **Ephesians 2:8,9** down on an index card and meditate upon it throughout the day.

FRIDAY

Let's put all of it together: *faith, grace and good works*! Highlight these three words in **Ephesians 2:8-10**. Read **Jude 4**. Have you used grace as a license to sin? How does God view this licentiousness (look this word up in a dictionary)? Read carefully **Titus 2:11-14**. What has grace taught you? Make a list of the things you need grace to still teach you. Look at verse 13-14. What must you be eager to do? If our lives are well balanced with *grace, faith and works*, His appearing should be what we eagerly and hopefully await! Write **Romans 6:1-2** down on an index card and meditate upon it throughout the day.

INSIGHT

When you became a Christian, you became a child of God; a member of His family. Our wise and loving Father knows how much we need close association with those who share the same faith. This fellowship is provided in the church, which is the body of Christ (***Ephesians 1:22-23***).

One of the most important things a disciple can do is to develop relationships with other disciples within the church. We ought to take the initiative in getting acquainted with members of the body of Christ, for they all are our spiritual brothers and sisters. Paul said in ***Ephesians 2:19***, “*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household.*” As we can see from this passage, the church of Christ is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is a resident of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the family, a servant and a child in God's house. Is there a greater honor or happiness than this? For this reason, we ought to get to know one another, love one another and fellowship with one another.

As Christians, we understand the importance of having a *vertical relationship*, that is, a relationship with God. But God has called us not only to have a relationship with Him, but to have a relationship with all people, especially with those of His household. For Christ said, “*‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*” He also said, “*My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*” Love must be both “vertical” and “horizontal”. See the picture – of the Cross?

The Body Of Christ *Relationships In The Body*

Key Text: **1 Peter 4:8**
Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Theme:
When we enter into the Body of Christ (the Church), relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as our focus, we must consider others as better than ourselves (***Philippians 2:3***). Church is not just something we attend; it is an opportunity to tend to the needs of others. God gave us the Church to have spiritual relationships. He knows that we need each other.

Application:
Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Make it a point to call and write to other Christians in order to build relationships. Set specific goals in this area.
2. Pray for each other daily.
3. Establish a prayer covenant with a brother/sister. Brothers pray with brothers; sisters pray with sisters.
4. Introduce yourself to at least one new person in each service.
5. Write notes or cards of encouragement to your brothers and sisters. Write also to your leaders in the congregation to encourage them.
6. Invite members to your home and accept their invitations to visit them.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Relationships In The Body I. Adopted Children A. Through faith in Christ 1. <i>John 1:12</i> - Right to become children of God --Receiving Him as a gift from God --Receiving His teaching as truth --His grace and love as motivation for our actions --Adopted upon baptism (<i>Gal. 3:26-27</i>) 1 <i>John 3:1</i> - How great is His love that we should be called His children!!! 3. <i>Hebrews 2:11</i> - Jesus calls us His brothers II. A New Commandment: <i>John 13:34-35</i> A. A fundamental law of the kingdom - It is commanded - Christ as example--this is our motive - The distinguishing mark of Christ B. Action-orientated relationship <i>"As I have loved you"</i> - Love is something you do C. Love through Communication 1. <i>1 Cor. 14:3</i> <i>laleo</i>--to speak, utter, tell - strengthen, encourage, comfort 2. <i>Ephesians 4:29</i> - Speak what is helpful to others needs - Speak what is beneficial III. Conclusion <i>Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.</i>	Warm-up: How do you feel about hypocrisy? See To It <i>1 Cor. 13:1-4</i> - From this passage, list the "gifts" that are in question here. - What made these glorious gifts unacceptable before God? Explain your answer. - How does this apply to people professing to be Christians today? Explain your answer. - Read 1 <i>John 4:7-12</i>. Why is <i>love</i> such an important factor in a Christian's life? - How do verses 9 through 10 motivate the true disciple of Christ to love? Explain how these verses help us to love unconditionally. Seeing It Closer: - Do you find yourself "forced" to do good or "motivated" to do good? Explain. - On a scale of 1 to 5 (one being the least open and five being the most open), how open are you towards correction? - Does <i>love</i> always "feel" good? How is being corrected synonymous to being loved? - Read <i>Galatians 2:11-14</i>. Did Paul love Peter? How did you think Peter reacted to Paul's reproof? - What specific things can you do to show the love of God within you? Getting To It: Starting from 1 Corinthians 13 verse 4 to the first part of verse 8, go around the room and have each member of the class read one quality of love, substituting the word "<i>love</i>" or "<i>it</i>" with their name.

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE BODY

MONDAY

Love: unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the well-being of another. The King James Version uses the word *charity* instead of “love” to translate the Greek word Paul used (*agàpe*). The word *charity* comes from the Latin *caritas* which means “dearness,” “affection,” or “high regard.” Today, the word *charity* is normally used for acts of benevolence, and so the word *love* is to be preferred as a translation of *agàpe*. Nevertheless, the reader who comes to the *agape* of the New Testament with the idea of *benevolence* in mind is better off than the reader who comes with the idea of physical pleasure and satisfaction. (*Holman Bible Dictionary*) Carefully consider **John 13:34-35**. How will the world recognize you as a disciple? Make a list of all the possible ways you could carry out Jesus’ command in light of the definition of *agàpe*. Write **1 John 3:16** on an index card and look at it throughout the day, until you have stored it in your heart. Call a fellow Brother/Sister today. Write his/her name here: _____

TUESDAY

In order for our love to be benevolent, we need to consider what kind of attitude needs to be in us. Examine **Phil. 2:5-7** and **Matthew 20:28**. What was Jesus’ focus? Do you think He was concerned with being comfortable, or was His mind focused on making Himself uncomfortable for our sake? Now examine the encouragement Paul gives us through the advice he gave the Ephesian church in **Ephesians 4:29-5:2**. The first thing he addresses is what comes out of our mouths. Why? (**Luke 6:45**) What is the attitude Paul is attempting to instill in the Ephesians? Notice that in **Ephesians 5:1-2** he speaks of Christ’s attitude again. Look at 5:1: Because you are *dearly* loved (*agàpe*), imitate God’s love! Write **Hebrews 10:24-25** on an index card and store it in your heart. Send a note of encouragement to a brother or sister today.

WEDNESDAY

When the attitude of benevolent love begins to live in your soul, you can’t help it but to express that love to those around you. Check out **1 John 3:17-18**. How is the **love of God** (*agàpe* again!) expressed? Must we look out for one another? What attitude must be in us to look out after our brethren? Carefully consider the attitude present as the brethren **served** one another in **Acts 2:42-47**. What were they devoted to? What was their attitude towards material things? What was their concern? (vs. 45) What is the result of having a **servant’s** mindset? (vs. 46) Write **John 13:14-15** on an index card and store it in your heart. Think about a brother or a sister in need. Fill this need today!

THURSDAY

Our love expressed in service must be **sincere**. Carefully consider **1 Peter 1:22**. Our sincere desire to love deeply comes as a result of obeying the truth. Sincere love comes out of a pure heart. Your desire to be holy will result in *agàpe* love towards others. Write down some ways you can express this deep love for the brethren that first pop into your mind. Can you love someone deeply if your heart has been hardened? Look at **Hebrews 3:12-13**. What is it that hardens the heart? Do you pray to the Lord that you may not be deceived by your own sin? When love is sincere, from the heart, our desires will be to be encouraging to each other, building each other up rather than tearing each other down. Write down **Psalms 139:23-24** and treasure it in your heart. Fulfill as much as you can this week the ways you want to express deep love for your brothers/sisters.

FRIDAY

Love is the expression (works) of the *grace* of God received by *faith*. The proof that our expressed love is a sincere one comes from the **respect** given to those we serve. Carefully study out **1 Thess 5:11-13**. What are you called to do in vs. 11? If someone is working hard at doing this very thing and is *admonishing* (look this word up in a good dictionary) you to do the same, what attitude must you have toward him/her? (vs. 13) How are you to view the brethren who sincerely love you? From this passage, what does showing someone **respect** involve? (Look up *respect* in a good dictionary) Why should you show someone respect? Isn’t respect an integral part of loving? Look at **Ephesians 5:21**. Does submission involve respect? Respect toward whom? To whom do we submit? Why do we submit? Brethren, it is because we revere (respect) our Lord that we respect each other. (Look up *revere* in a good dictionary) Hide **1 John 4:20** in your heart. Get together with a fellow Christian (same gender) and pray together.

INSIGHT

One of the most impressive facts revealed in the New Testament is the marvelous unity with which early Christians worshipped and served God. Not only were disciples united in their form of worship, but were united even in the teachings which they embraced. Luke says in **Acts 2:42** that *“they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”* One of the classic facts of both secular and biblical history is that in the days of the apostles there were no separate denominations and all faithful believers were in complete fellowship with all other Christians throughout the world.

The reason for such unity lies in the complete harmony of the apostolic teachings, which are now contained within the New Testament. When Paul went to Rome, for example, he preached the same doctrine that he had preached in Ephesus, Corinth, Galatia and throughout the known world. Therefore, no separate denomination was formed as a result of his teaching. The same was true of all the other inspired teachers. Being divinely guided by God, they never taught conflicting teachings or practices. Instead, the result was a church identical to the others established. In the New Testament, we do not read of a plurality of “denominations,” but simply The Church. In **Acts 2:47**, for example, we read, *“And the Lord added to their number [lit. church] daily those who were being saved.”* Again Jesus said in **Matthew 16:18**, *“...on this rock I will build **my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

Unity is the response of Christ’s prayer. In **John 17:20-21**, He prayed that all His followers be one. For as Christ and His Father are one, so must His disciples be one.

The Body Of Christ

The New Testament Worshippers

Key Text: **John 4:23-24**

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

Theme:

According to Jesus, one of the reasons for unity was to promote belief that He came from the Father (**John 17:21**). Many people in the world today have grown discouraged because of the disunity and confusion found in so-called Christianity. True believers are unified under the Lordship of Christ. Jesus said that the Father seeks those who would worship Him *in Spirit and in truth*. True worship involves not only sincerity, but also truth. Jesus clarifies this statement by defining truth as God’s word (**John 17:17**).

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Read the New Testament epistles, and familiarize yourself with the teachings of the first century churches of Christ.
2. Read the following passages in Acts and familiarize yourself with how sinners were converted to Christ:
*Acts 2:36-42; 8:4-12; 8:26-39;
16:13-15; 16:23-34; 18:4-11*
3. Thank God every day for knowing the truth!!!

*But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. **Mt 13:16***

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Worshipping In The Body I. The “Worshipping” Church A. Worship defined 1. Greek word: <i>Proskunéo</i> a. <i>adoration</i> defined b. <i>honor</i> defined c. <i>devotion</i> defined 2. Worship involves a subject & object B. Motivated To Worship 1. Motivated by Love (<i>1 John 4:9-10</i>) 2. Jesus is the Reason a. Give him honor (<i>1 Cor 6:20</i>) --the honored king (<i>1 Tim 1:17</i>) b. His love controls us (<i>2 Cor 5:14</i>) II. A Worshipping Heart: John 4:23-24 A. True Worship 1. The state of mind in which we worship a. worship not in Mosaic ordinances --canceled (<i>Eph 2:15; Col 2:14</i>) b. worship in spiritual ordinances --<i>Rom 8:9f</i> (anti-flesh) 2. <u>Worship In Truth</u> a. Lordship of Christ (<i>Lk 6:46</i>) b. Truth as the Word (<i>Jn 17:17</i>) 3. <u>Worship In Spirit</u> (primary statement) a. God always sought sincerity b. <i>2 Chr. 16:9</i>--committed heart c. <i>1 Chr 28:9</i> -- Lord searches the heart -- wholehearted devotion sought -- willing mind sought -- motives exposed 4. God Is Spirit: The true object of worship III. The Problem with Half-heartedness a. King Amaziah’s problem--<i>2 Chr 25:2</i> Conclusion: Worship In Spirit (<i>Phil 3:3</i>)	Warm-up: What determines the value of a gift? Is it its cost? Explain. See To It <i>John 4:1-24</i> 1. What is the nature of the water Christ gives? What is this water? Explain with Scripture. 2. What prompted the woman to acknowledge Jesus as a prophet? 3. How does exposure of sin promote true worship of God? What other aspects do we see in this woman that would promote true worship of God? 6. Isn’t worshipping scripturally enough? Why? Seeing It Closer: Take a piece of paper. After the teacher reads each question, write down your answer. Answer honestly and truthfully. No one will know your answers except you and the Lord. 1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how often do you find yourself <u>humbly praying on your knees or prostrate</u> before the Lord? “1” being rarely and “5” being all the time. 2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how is your spirit of <u>giving</u>? “1” being least willing and “5” being most willing. 3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is the <u>assembly</u> of the saints to you? “1” being the least important and “5” being most important. 4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is <u>fellowship</u> to you? “1” being the least important and “5” being most important. Getting To It: Pray for one another that our worship will be a heartfelt worship in Spirit and truth.

Four Aspects of the New Testament Church

MONDAY

This week we are going to examine four events that take place every time we meet on Sunday. Read carefully **Luke 22:7-10**. What were Jesus and His disciples getting ready to celebrate? Look up Passover in a Bible dictionary. What does the bread represent? How about the fruit of the vine? What does He mean by saying He won't eat of this again until the Kingdom of God comes (verses 16 & 18)? Read **1 Corinthians 11:23-26**. Why are we repeating this ceremony today? Write down and think about what goes through your mind when you take the bread and the fruit of the vine on Sunday. Read **Acts 20:7**. Secular history also points out that it was the practice of the early church to partake of the Lord's Supper every Sunday. This is found in Augustus Neader, History of the Christian Religion and Church, Vol. 1, page 322. Write **1 Corinthians 11:26** on an index card; memorize it and meditate upon it. Give an encouragement call to a brother or a sister today.

TUESDAY

Money is something we all think about. Too often we approach money with an unhealthy and unbiblical attitude. The Lord sets our focus straight in **Matthew 6:19-24**. What should you set your heart on? In what ways can your eyes be bad? How can you make them be full of light? List some ways that you might end up serving Money. Read **1 Tim. 6:6-11**. What should you be content with? What happens if you pursue money? What should you pursue? If you pursue these things, it will show in your attitude towards giving: **2 Cor. 9:6-15**. What kind of giver does God want you to be? Look at verse 12 & 13: how is giving described? Paul instructed each member of the church to set aside money to be used for God's people (**1 Co. 16:1-2**). This money was to be collected on Sunday. List the top five things you eagerly desire to spend your money on. Are any of these an expression of giving selflessly? Write **Proverbs 3:9-10** on an index card; memorize it and meditate upon it. Recite it whenever you have the desire to spend money and ask yourself, "How can I honor God with my wealth?"

WEDNESDAY

Being at services every Sunday and reminding ourselves of the reason why we come together on Sundays can be a very convicting affair. As you grow older in Christ you realize the importance of consistent attendance and participation in the services. We are not there as spectators, but as participants of the Supper with Jesus Himself. This can cause us to reflect on our life and doctrine; are they in sync? Am I being sincere before God's throne? Sincerity involves confession of our sin (mistakes). Consider **James 5:16**. To whom must you confess your sins? Whom should you ask to pray for you? Confessing sin and not being ashamed before the Lord is necessary for effective and powerful prayer. Write **Proverbs 28:13** on an index card; memorize and meditate upon it. Get together with a sister/brother and confess your sins and pray for each other.

THURSDAY

Another area of worship is singing. Read **Ephesians 5** and **Colossians 3** carefully and write down the key attitudes necessary for spiritual joy to remain, even in the most difficult trials. Let us focus on **Ephesians 5:17-21**. What does getting drunk on wine lead to? What does being "filled" with the Holy Spirit lead to? How does joy in the Spirit express itself? What is the purpose of singing? The **result** of being filled with the Spirit is a joyful heart that **sings**. Do you like singing? Do you sing with your heart as well as your voice? Write down your thoughts on the following: **Colossians 3:16-17**; **James 5:13**; **Hebrews 13:15**. Express your joy in the Spirit in song. And remember, God does not judge by the quality of the voice, but rather by the quality of the heart! Write **Ephesians 5:18-19** on an index card; memorize and meditate upon it.

FRIDAY

I'm sure that next Sunday's worship service will be seen in new light by all of us who have studied diligently these passages. Isn't it beautiful the way the Lord has arranged everything to be edifying and supportive of us!? Carefully read **Ephesians 4:11-16**. Why has God assigned apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers and pastors to the church? Look up the meaning of these in a Bible dictionary. Is it God's desire for you to grow? Why is it important to grow? Notice verses 15 & 16: What is your part in church growth? Remember, the only way you can be built up is if you are willing to be broken down. What can you do to prepare yourself for the works of service in the church? Write down your thoughts on **Jeremiah 18:1-6**. Write **Ephesians 4:11-12** on an index card; memorize it and meditate upon it.

INSIGHT

The Bible teaches us that the first century believers “*were called Christians first at Antioch.*” *Acts 11:26* Prior to this, all the believers were known as *disciples*. And even after being called Christians at Antioch, they continued to be referred to as *disciples*. It is interesting to know that the term *Christian* appears only 3 times in the New Testament, while the term *disciple* over 260 times. This is due to the fact that the nature of Christianity is not a life of complacency and laziness, but rather of *discipline*, diligence and growth.

The word *disciple* means a *learner* or *pupil*. The term is virtually absent from the Old Testament, though there are two related references (*1 Chron. 25:8; Isa. 8:16*). In the Greek world, the word *disciple* normally referred to an adherent of a particular teacher or religious/philosophical school. It was the task of the disciple to learn, study, and pass along the sayings and teachings of the master. In rabbinic Judaism the term *disciple* referred to one who was committed to the interpretations of Scripture and religious tradition given him by the master or rabbi. Through a process of learning which would include a set meeting time and such methods as question and answer, instruction, repetition, and memorization, the disciple would become increasingly devoted to the master and the master's teachings. In time, the disciple would, likewise, pass on the traditions to others. Jesus taught His apostles the ways of God in this manner. He taught them through instruction, answering questions, proposing questions, correction and by His example. His *discipleship* taught them to be servants of God and to love all men. It is only through discipleship unto Christ that one can grow into the likeness of Christ. Remember, disciples are **made**...not born! *Matt. 28:19*

The Body Of Christ

God's Plan: Accountability

Key Text: **Matthew 28:19-20**

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Theme:

It is indisputable that the Bible teaches the necessity of discipline in the lives of Christians. Training in righteousness is important in maturing Christians unto Christ, but it is the responsibility of the one who has confessed Jesus as Lord to persevere in his or her Christian growth. It is our personal responsibility to grow and mature. If we don't grow in our faith, it is our fault, not the teacher's.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Arrange a regular time to meet together with the one who is training you each week.
2. Strive to have frequent contact with your brother/sister who trains you.
3. Be open to spiritual correction.
4. Get to know each other personally.
5. Get into good habits to train yourself:
 - Have regular quiet times and prayer times.
 - Be organized with your time, studies, etc...
 - Be evangelistic, outgoing and friendly.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Accountability and Christ I. God's Plan A. Disciple defined 1. Greek word: <i>Mathètes</i> a. A pupil, a learner b. Jesus' definition: <i>Luke 6:40</i> -- involves a growing process -- goal is to be as the teacher B. Disciples Are Made--<i>Mt 28:19</i> 1. Through baptism 2. Teach them to obey (observe) a. Disciples must be taught to obey b. Submit to those who teach 3. Focus of the baptized believer: a. Make Christ's commands their rule b. Observe all good things c. Learn from teachers <i>--Eph 4:8, 11-13</i> C. The Disciple's Heart 1. Willingness to learn -- Basis: humility (<i>Matt. 18:3-4</i>) 2. Willingness to imitate good -- <i>As I follow the example of Christ (1 Cor 11:1)</i> 3. Willingness to seek advice -- <i>Prov 12:15</i> 4. Willingness to be corrected -- <i>Prov 10:17</i> D. The Outcome 1. Less of self and more like Jesus E. The Test: Pleasurable or Miserable? 1. Are you a pleasure to work with?	Warm-up: Who is a <i>friend</i>? How does your definition of a <i>friend</i> differ from other people's definition? See To It <i>Proverbs 27:5-6</i> 1. Why is open rebuke better than hidden love? Is "hidden love" love at all? Explain. 2. Why do many people refrain from telling the truth about a person's shortcomings? 3. How do people usually view those who speak the truth in regards to correction? Read <i>Galatians 4:16</i>. Was Paul being a friend or an enemy? Why? 4. What would an enemy do to his associates? Seeing It Closer: 1. How do you react to correction? 2. Do you seek advice frequently? Why or why not? 3. How have you been a friend to those around you? Do you find yourself <u>gently</u> correcting those who need correction? Getting To It: Pray for one another that we would be true friends to all people, especially to the household of God.

MONDAY

The Greek word *paideias* or one of its derivatives is used seven times in **Heb 12:1-11**. This word is not found exclusively in the N.T.; it also was common among the Greeks in reference to the treatment of children, including in its meaning both educational and corporal punishment. NKJV translators have rendered it most often as some form of “chasten” (vv. 5-8, 10, 11), and once as “correct” (v. 9), but it is better translated “discipline.” The divine purpose of this loving discipline is unquestionably to bring man into the privilege and responsibility of sonship. If you do not allow Him to discipline (disciple) you, what do you become? What does the Lord’s discipline bring about? Is discipline something we enjoy? Write **1 Corinthians 11:32** on an index card, learn it, and realize the implications of rejecting the Lord’s discipline. Call a sister/brother tonight and share with them how the Lord has disciplined you and what were the results of you heeding His discipline.

TUESDAY

The Lord’s discipline works through several agents, four of which we will discuss this week. Read carefully **2 Tim. 3:16,17**. What is it that corrects and rebukes us? Where does the Word come from? Who is ultimately doing the correcting and rebuking? Notice the last thing mentioned in this verse: “Training in righteousness”. The Greek word *paideias* was translated as “training”. So, in essence, we are *disciplined* in righteousness. Write **1 Co. 2:13** on an index card and meditate on it throughout the day.

WEDNESDAY

If we all speak the truth to each other in love (**Eph 4:13**), we will encourage and admonish each other, creating an atmosphere where striving toward and reliance on God is stressed. That is exactly the purpose of the assembly; the church. Study **Hebrews 10:23-25**. What is our responsibility to each other? What is the purpose of encouraging each other? Look up *encourage* in a good dictionary. Can you encourage and be encouraged if you “give up meeting together”? Check out **1 Thess. 5:14-15**. Look up *admonish* in a good dictionary. What is your job amongst the brethren? Are all these things being done to you when in the presence of brothers? Are you doing these things in the presence of brothers? Write **Colossians 3:16** on an index card and memorize it. Does it not bring about a new meaning to singing??

THURSDAY

Even with all the encouragement that you receive from the brethren, there are some brothers/sisters that have special impact upon you. Among them may be the brother/sisters that first reached out to you with the saving gospel of Jesus. Read carefully **Hebrews 13:7, 17**. Who are you to remember? What are you to consider? What are you asked to imitate, considering the result of their conduct? (See also **3 John 11**) Why should we submit to our leaders in the faith? Aren’t you ultimately submitting out of reverence for Christ? (**Eph 5:21**) Carefully consider **Ezekiel 3:18-21**. What are you held accountable for? No wonder the Hebrew writer encourages you to make the job of your leaders joyful by submitting to them. They keep watch over you and are accountable to God! Write **Proverbs 10:17** on an index card and commit it to your heart. Don’t hold back your love for the brethren! Be gentle and abide in mercy.

FRIDAY

Study **1 Timothy 4:7,8**. None of the accountability agents that God gives you will work unless you train yourself to be godly. What is this kind of training profitable for? God has even equipped you to be able to undergo self-discipline! Check out **2 Timothy 1:7**. What kind of Spirit is living in you right now, which you have acquired when you obeyed the gospel and were baptized in Jesus’ name? Do any of us have an excuse? Write **1 Timothy 4:16** on an index card and memorize it. See to it that you are meeting with your *spiritual trainer* at least once a week, that you may be fully trained.

INSIGHT

The muscle known as the heart is considered to be the center of physical life. It is the focus for all the vital functions of the body. However, in the *figurative* sense, the heart has come to be known as the center of a person's mental and spiritual life. It describes the person as a whole. The heart, in biblical language, is closely connected with a person's intellect (**Mat. 13:15**), thoughts (**Luke 6:45**), attitudes (**Heb. 4:12**), decisions (**Prov. 16:1; 2 Cor. 9:7**), desires (**Ps. 37:4; Rom. 1:24**), emotions (**Ps. 4:7; John 16:6**) and true character (**1 Sam. 16:7**).

Taking all this into consideration, it is important for us to know the nature of the heart. The Bible clearly teaches that the heart is something that is not to be trusted. Consider what Jeremiah said in **Jer 17:9**, "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*"

Of course, the phrase "who can understand it" is a rhetorical question. The answer is obvious: no one can understand it, except the Lord, who sees its contents. Jesus said that out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony and slander (**Matt 15:19**). What makes us filthy is not what goes into our mouths, but what comes out of the heart (**Matt 15:17-18,20**). The heart is the source of hindrance when we put our trust in it and not in the Lord. That is why **Prov. 28:26** (NASV) says, "*He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.*"

How should we walk? Wisely. Where does wisdom come from? The Lord and His word (**Prov. 2:6; Ja. 1:5; 2 Tim 3:15**). It is God who directs our steps (**Prov. 20:24**).

Pray continually for a pure heart and allow the Word of Christ to dwell richly in you. And let your motive be Christ and His love!

Becoming Like Christ Hindrane: The Heart

Key Text: **Matthew 15:18-20a**

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'...

Theme:

The Bible speaks of the heart as what makes us what we are. A man's heart gives rise to all thoughts and actions. It is imperative that as disciples of Christ, we should be taught to guard our heart--to keep it sensitive and open to God's word. Knowing the nature of the heart, we ought to take hold of the Gospel and allow God to purify our hearts through the blood of Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and through the rich dwelling of the Word of Christ.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Pray for a pure heart.
2. Confess sin and be humble.
3. Implement the exhortation of **Colossians 3:14-16** in your life:
 - a. **Clothe** yourself with love!
 - b. **Submit** yourself to the peace of God. Seek peace and unity!
 - c. **Be** thankful!
 - d. **Let** God's word dwell richly in your heart! Write them on your heart! Especially verses that pertain to you personally.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
The Hindering Heart I. Jeremiah 17:1-10 A. God convicts the Jews concerning sin - Response from question asked in 16:10 - Sin is written with an iron tool -- Iron tools were used to engrave permanent inscriptions -- Their sin was very legible and written in unerasable letters - Issue: Sin is never erased until forgiven - Later on, He would promise restoration (Chapters 30-33) B. The Cause: The Heart - Cursed is he who trusts in the flesh--vs 5 - They didn't rely on the Spirit of God for their strength and protection - Outcome: Ruin--vs 6 - Blessed is he who trusts in the Lord--vs 7 - Those who live by faith even in the worse of times. - Outcome: Unfailing productivity C. The Nature of the Heart - False and Deceitful - It is foolish to trust in it (<i>Pr 28:26</i>) - See Israel's outcome in trusting their hearts, and not God. - It's what makes us unclean (<i>Matt 15:19</i>) - We cannot know it: - Peter didn't know it - Only God knows it - The result of following it is death (<i>Rom 6:23</i>) II. The Nature of God - Only He can save us--<i>John 3:16</i> - Only He can give us a new heart - He promised this to Israel (<i>Ez 11:19</i>) --through Christ, we are spiritually circumcised. (<i>Col 2:11-12</i>) III. Conclusion: Prov 16:3	Warm-up: Apart from communication, what do you consider to be an important element in a relationship? See To It <i>Matthew 15:1-11</i> - From these verses, list some of the problems the Pharisees had. - What seemed to be the root or focal point of their problem? - Define the word <i>hypocrite</i>. From verses 8 and 9, describe what a hypocrite does. How do they appear to others? - Why is their worship in vain? - From verse 11, what two truths does Jesus establish regarding spiritual uncleanness? Seeing It Closer: - In what ways can worship be done in vain today? - Is worshipping the Lord in vain always obvious? Explain. - Read <i>Proverbs 23:26</i>. What does the Lord require of us? - How can we give Him our heart? How do we go about doing that? - Describe how your worship of the Lord has been since you met Jesus. Getting To It: Pray for one another that our worship of the Lord would be out of a heart near to God.

Becoming Like Christ/Hindrance: THE HEART

MONDAY

According to the Old Testament, the **heart** (Hebrew *lebab*) is the center of the physical, mental, and spiritual life of humans. This contrasts to the normal use of *kardia* ("heart") in Greek literature outside the Scriptures. The New Testament follows the Old Testament usage when referring to the human heart in that it gives *kardia* a wider range of meaning than it was generally accustomed to have. First, the word *heart* refers to the physical organ and is considered to be the center of the physical life. Eating and drinking are spoken of as strengthening the heart. As the center of physical life, the heart came to stand for the person as a whole. Read carefully **1 Samuel 16:7**. What does man look at? What does God look at? Write **1 Chronicles 28:9** on an index card, learn it, and seek the Lord with an *earnest* heart. Get together with a brother/sister and confess your sins to one another. Practice earnestness!

TUESDAY

Closely related to the mind are acts of the will, acts resulting from a conscious or even a deliberate decision made in the heart. Connected to the will are human wishes and desires. Not only is the heart associated with the activities of the mind and the will, but also it is also closely connected to the feelings and affections of a person. Read **Jeremiah 17:9-10**. What is the most deceitful thing? Can you trust your feelings to tell you what is right and what is wrong? The heart is exceedingly deceitful and treacherous, especially in propagating the idea that man's heart is naturally good. This lie, planned and dispersed by Satan himself, has been responsible for efforts at self-reform on both individual and social levels. The source of all evil desires is the heart (**Mark 7:20-23**). Who can clean up our heart? Write **Psalms 51:10** on an index card and meditate on it throughout the day. After doing this Quiet Time, take some time out to pray with a brother/sister for a pure heart.

WEDNESDAY

The heart is spoken of in Scripture as the center of the moral and spiritual life. The conscience, for instance, is associated with the heart. In fact, the Hebrew language had no word for *conscience*, so the word *heart* was often used to express this concept. In the New Testament, the heart is also spoken of as that which condemns us (**1 John 3:19ff**). All moral conditions from the highest to the lowest are said to center in the heart. Reflect carefully upon **Hebrews 3:12-13**. What will a sinful, unbelieving heart do? What must you do to prevent your heart from hardening? Encouraging one another is vital to our spiritual survival. Not only must you let others encourage you, but you must also give encouragement! Write **1 Thess. 5:9-11** on an index card and memorize it. Call a brother/sister today and remind them of the wrath we have been saved from.

THURSDAY

Because the heart is at the root of the problem, this is the place where God does His work in the individual. For instance, the work of the law is "written in their hearts," and conscience is the proof of this (**Rom. 2:14-15**). The heart is the field where seed (the Word of God) is sown (**Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:15**). In addition to being the place where the natural laws of God are written, the heart is the place of renewal. Reflect upon **Titus 3:5-6**. Are you saved by what you do? Who has renewed you? (Also see **John 3:3-6**) Now check this verse out: **Col. 3:9-10**. Why should we be truthful? How are we renewed? Write **Rom. 12:2** on an index card and commit to it in your renewed heart.

FRIDAY

Finally, the heart is the dwelling place of God. Two persons of the Trinity are said to reside in the heart of the believer. God has given us the "Spirit in our hearts, as a deposit..." (**2 Cor. 1:22**). **Ephesians 3:17** expresses the desire that "Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." The love of God "is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (**Rom. 5:5**). The job of the Holy Spirit has always been to create since the beginning of the world. Now His job is to re-create you from the inside out. He orders our life, causes it to have a purpose, meaning; causes it to make sense. He's good at it! Let Him do it! Write **2 Chron. 16:9** on an index card and memorize it.

***A good deal of the quiet times this week came from notes in the Believers Study Bible and the Holman Bible Dictionary.*

INSIGHT

The ant (Hebrew, *nemalah*) appears in the Bible only in the Book of Proverbs. It is praised by God as the supreme example of industry. Solomon says, “*Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer*” (**Prov. 30:25**). The ant is described as a wise, hardworking creature (**Prov. 6:6-8**) as opposed to the foolish sluggard, who only wants to sleep (**Prov. 6:9**). This goes to show that God desires workers in His kingdom.

Christianity is not a lazy man’s religion. Laziness never produces success, especially within the kingdom of God. It only produces destruction, despair and negativity--both in the spiritual and the physical realm.

A sluggard has no place in the kingdom of God. For God calls laborers to work His vineyard. Christ was not a man of slothfulness. Neither were His apostles. When Christ called the Twelve, he trained them to be men of diligence; men of action for the kingdom of Heaven. The sluggard has no desire to work--he rather sleep and depend on the labor and generosity of others for support.

As Christians, we must be like the ant; We must be workers in the church of Christ, motivated by the cross of Christ. Jesus calls us to be His faithful servants. He calls us to be faithful to the great commission (**Matt. 28:19**) and to live lives reflecting His teachings (**John 8:31,32; 1 Tim. 4:16**). He calls us to love Him and to love one another. How can God be pleased with an indolent person? For he will be “*as vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes*” (**Prov. 10:26**). Jesus condemned a “*wicked, lazy servant*” (**Matt. 25:26**) but praised and rewarded the “*good and faithful servant*” (**Matt. 25:23**). Let Jesus work in our lives as together we serve Him and one another in the spirit of power, wisdom, diligence and love.

Becoming Like Christ

Laziness, Idleness and Discipline

Key Text: **1 Timothy 4:7-8**

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

Theme:

Few, if any of us, are naturally disciplined. Discipline must be learned. Without discipline we will not be able to take the world for Christ. Discipline must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment. Christ came to the world to save the world (**John 3:17**). He came for a people eager to do what is good (**Titus 2:14**); Workers for the kingdom of God. Are you a worker for the Lord?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Keep a timetable for the best use of your time.
2. Set some goals on what you want to accomplish for the Lord.
3. Spend time with a disciplined person and follow his or her example.
4. If you are not a punctual person, make every effort to be early.
5. Be kingdom-minded!
6. Accept correction from a brother or sister who is trying to help you in your lateness or laziness.
7. Speak often with the Lord in prayer and let Him speak to you through His word.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Laziness And Christianity I. Indolence Not Praised A. The Animal Kingdom 1. The Sloth a. slow moving mammal 2. The Ant a. a hardworking insect --Prov. 30:25--weak but productive --Prov. 6:6--teacher of the lazy B. Attributes of Indolence 1. <i>Proverbs 26:13-16</i> a. He dreads to work --He hates where work is to be done or a journey to be walked (<i>in the road</i>) --Makes an excuse when pressed to be diligent: <i>there's a lion...!</i> --He doesn't succeed because he's lazy b. He's in love with his ease --He's attached to his bed c. Too lazy to do work for himself d. He has a high opinion of himself --Everyone else is wrong except him C. The Outcome of Indolence 1. Weeds, thorns and ruins (<i>Prov. 24:30f</i>) a. Poverty--<i>Prov. 10:4</i> b. He craves and craves--<i>Prov. 21:25</i> c. Spiritual life is in shambles II. Conclusion <i>"Go to the ant...consider its ways and be wise"</i>	Warm-up: If you were buying used property such as a car or a house, what would you take into consideration before purchasing the item? See To It <i>Proverbs 24:30-34</i> 1. How did King Solomon determine that a sluggard owned this field? 2. Why did Solomon address this field owner as one who <i>lacked judgment</i>? Explain. 3. Can we learn a person's nature by how he/she keeps his/her possessions? What did Solomon learn? 4. Where does slothfulness lead to? How come? What is the antidote? 5. Would you ever buy a car or home or anything from a person who doesn't take care of their possessions? Why? Seeing It Closer: 1. How does God feel about slothfulness? Why? 2. Read Proverbs 10:26. Explain the meaning of this verse and how does it apply to us as Christians? 3. How can we prevent the following? a. Missing church, devotionals, etc. b. Being late to services, work, etc. c. Poverty and hunger d. Being fired from a job Getting To It: Pray for one another that we would be diligent workers for the Lord, a people <u>not idle</u>, but pleasing to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Becoming Like Christ/Laziness, Idleness, and Discipline

MONDAY

Discipline is something we all have to **learn**. Letting your heart be molded by God and training in righteousness are attitudes that need to be built into our Christian lives. Then the world will know that we are His! Carefully take in the message in **1 Tim. 4:7-11**. What should you train yourself to be? Some of us know the discipline it requires to maintain physical fitness, and the importance of that. How much more important and more valuable is becoming and *staying spiritually fit*! Verse 10 holds the key attitude in those who labor and strive for *spiritual fitness*. What and who did Paul put his hope in? What do you put your hope in? It will be shown by what you do! Write **2 Tim. 2:15** on an index card, learn it, and see to it that you discipline yourself to this end. Get together with a brother/sister and pray for diligence in your ministry.

TUESDAY

We all know that it requires work to maintain physical fitness. Because of this, it is possible to become tired and not have the desire to continue on with your training. The same happens in our *spiritual fitness plan*. Sometimes you have become weary, and have fallen asleep (in the spiritual sense). Read **Hebrews 6:11-12**. What should you do to the very end? What for? What should you not become? How do you **not** become this? As you can see, discipleship is *key* in our *spiritual fitness plan*. Read **Proverbs 24:30-34**. What will happen to you if you *continue* to be lazy? Write **Prov.24:33-34** on an index card and meditate on it. Remember it whenever you grow weary, putting your hope in Heaven. If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.

If you take the time to read Hebrews from 5:11 through 6:12, you will notice that this whole section deals with some Christians who had become lazy about their spiritual fitness. They were being encouraged to wake up and adopt an attitude of diligence, especially in training in righteousness.

WEDNESDAY

Your discipline, or lack thereof, is evident in how you lead your life in this world. There are many people in the world who are disciplined, and that without Christ. How much more so do we need to be disciplined, that we may lift up Jesus in our lives! Worldly discipline will bring you many good things. Spiritual discipline enables you to be a servant of God. Study **1 Thess.4:11-12**. How will you win the respect of outsiders? Have you been a provider or a taker? "Make it your ambition (KJV: *aspire*) to lead a quiet life" is an unusual expression in Greek. "Aspire" is a translation of *philotimeomai* (Gk.), literally "to love honor." Consequently, the combined word evolved to a meaning of "to be industrious." "Quiet" is a translation of *hesuchia* (Gk.), which implies a restful or quiet life. Hence, the intent of the statement is that a believer should exhibit industry in living a quiet life, one free from contention with others and one ready to act in the sharing of life's essentials among believers. This results in an impeccable testimony to God's sufficiency. (Believer's Study Bible) Write **1 Peter 2:12** on an index card and memorize it. Keep a timetable or a schedule book for the best use of your time.

THURSDAY

Being disciplined also helps us from falling into the devil's trap. As the saying goes: "*Idle hands are the devil's workshop...*", so does the Bible teaches us to keep away from idleness. Carefully read **2 Thess.3:6-15**. What is idleness associated with in this verse? What command did Paul give us from the Lord? Write **1 Cor.15:58** on an index card and commit to it in your renewed heart. If you have been idle and burdening someone, get together with them and pray together to commit to a plan of action that will result in dependence on the Lord and interdependence between each other. Make sure that you are the initiator of this if indeed you find yourself in this position.

FRIDAY

Speaking from experience, discipline is not the most pleasant thing I can think about. However, it is very necessary for you to receive it and incorporate it into your heart and mind! Here's why: Read **Hebrews 12:11-15**. What does discipline produce? Look at verse 14. In it lies the attitude that will lead you to discipline, then peace. The motivation is to be **holy**. If we see to *holiness*, first in us, then in each other, we will glorify the Lord in everything we do! God commands you to strengthen yourself and to walk in the Spirit (vs 12, 13). The call is to **WAKE UP**! Don't fall asleep and be carried away by your heart. Write **Proverbs 12:1** on an index card and memorize it. Spend time with a brother/sister that is disciplined and follow their example.

INSIGHT

Every independent nation has some government agency that handles foreign affairs. In the United States it is called the Department of State, and its chief officer is the secretary of state. In Great Britain it is the Foreign Office, whose chief officer is the foreign secretary. These agencies act under the direction of the head of government to carry out foreign policies.

Every foreign service agency sends out field agents who are stationed in foreign countries to protect and promote the interests of the nations from which they come. These agents are known as **ambassadors**.

This structure of government is also found within the kingdom of God. Like a nation whose head sends out representatives of its government, so does God send out ministers of His kingdom: servants that proclaim the message of the gospel. Paul saw himself as an *ambassador of Christ* (**Eph. 6:20; 2 Cor. 5:20**) and knew that his purpose was to bring hope through Jesus Christ. We too, as Christians, ought to see ourselves as ambassadors of Christ: people bringing the message of God's mercy to a lost and dying world.

Our duty is to evangelize the nations. The word *evangelism* is derived from the Greek word *euaggelion*, meaning "gospel" or "good news." The verbal forms of *euaggelizesthai*, meaning "to bring" or "to announce good news" occur over 50 times in the New Testament and are normally translated with the appropriate form of the word "preach." (**Lk 4:18; Acts 8:40; 1 Cor. 9:16**).

Let us not lose our focus and purpose as Christians, for we are God's ambassadors. He gave us the message of reconciliation, so that it may be passed on through us and by us. Don't let the Gospel message die with you!

Becoming Like Christ

Evangelism, Boldness and Tact

Key Text: **2 Corinthians 5:20**

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Theme:

Evangelism requires us to be both bold and tactful. Many Christians go from one extreme to the other. They are so tactful that they say little or nothing, while others may be so bold that tact is thrown out the window. As disciples of Christ, we need to pray for boldness in preaching the gospel (**Eph. 6:19**). We also need to let our conversation be full of grace (**Col 4:6**). This can be learned through careful observation of those who are diplomatic.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Let your life be a reflection of the beauty of the gospel.
2. Go evangelizing with someone regularly.
3. Set a weekly goal for visitors.
4. Make a list of all your relatives, friends, and co-workers who need to hear the gospel. Pray for them and share the message of Jesus with them.
5. Draw strength and wisdom from God through reading the Bible and prayer.
6. Take advantage of every opportunity. Whenever you come in contact with a soul, let them know of the saving grace of Christ – either by word or by a tract.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Ambassadors of Christ I. How Can They Be Saved? A. Romans 10:13-15 1. God's four-step plan in reverse order a. Believe the message--the gospel b. Hear the message c. Proclaim the message d. An ambassador sent from God B. An Ambassador of Christ: 2 Cor.5:11f 1. Ambassador defined -- <i>a <u>diplomatic</u> official of the highest rank <u>appointed</u> as a <u>representative</u> in residence by one government to another.</i> 2. Applied in Christianity a. Diplomat (skilled with people; tactful) --Col. 4:6 <i>Seasoned with salt</i> --1 Pt. 3:15 <i>with gentleness...</i> b. Appointed by God --chosen people (1 Pt 2:9) --goal: proclamation c. Representative (spokesperson) --The message is from God d. In residence (foreigners) --<i>John 17:14--not of world</i> --Context: evangelism (<i>Jn 17:20</i>) II. Conclusion <i>"...go and proclaim the kingdom of God"</i>	Warm-up: If someone were trying to sell you a product, what will it take to persuade you to purchase the item? See To It 2 Corinthians 5:6-11 1. What was Paul confident about? 2. What is our hope as Christians? 3. Explain verse 7 in light of the context of this passage. 4. What is the goal of the Christian in this present life? 5. From these verses, what motivated Paul to say "...we try to persuade men"? Seeing It Closer: 1. What persuaded you to become a Christian? 2. What must we do in order to be effective in our persuading men with the gospel? 3. What would help us to be consistent in our evangelism? Getting To It: Pray for one another that each of us would boldly preach the gospel of salvation and have it in our hearts to try to persuade men.

Evangelism, Boldness, and Tact

MONDAY

This week we are going to examine some crucial attitudes that need to be present continually within ourselves. Those of us who have participated actively in a college ministry will be able to relate greatly with the topic of this week's lesson. If you haven't had the chance to participate in a college ministry, you will greatly benefit from what a brother/sister can share with you that has participated in one. Prayerfully examine **2 Cor. 5:10-21**. Why would you try to persuade others about God's truth? Whose ambassador are you? What ministry has God given to us? On whose behalf are you speaking? Would this speech be bold and passionate, or weak and monotone? It is definitely something to be done with the Spirit! Write **Philemon 6** on an index card and memorize it. Realize that the more you share your faith, the more understanding you will gain of every good thing you have in Jesus. What kind of attitude do you think this understanding will produce? Thankfulness? Boldness? Humility? Call a brother/sister and set a time to go evangelizing with them this week.

TUESDAY

Many of us often forget and lose sight of the task at hand. We have been appointed to do a holy work for the rest of our existence on Earth. This holy task is to reach out and plead to others to be reconciled. Read carefully **Matthew 28:18-20**. What did Jesus command His disciples to do? What does Jesus command you to do today? Read **Luke 9:23-26**. What must you do in order to follow Jesus? What will happen if you are ashamed of Jesus? Being ashamed often has to do with low self-esteem. In Christ, our esteem is redeemed through Him and strengthened because of His Spirit. We belong to Him and He reassures us as His Sons (remember **Heb. 12:5ff**?). Write **Ephesians 1:7-8** on an index card and memorize it. Reflect on the things that God has lavished upon you. Look up "lavish" in a good dictionary. Share God's message of reconciliation with someone at work today.

WEDNESDAY

As you let God strengthen your heart and your confidence grows, you will notice the Spirit fervently moving you when you persuade people. Read **Romans 1:16-17**. Why was Paul not ashamed of the Gospel? What is the Gospel? (See **1 Co. 15:3-4**). Of what kind of importance is the Gospel? Why? Write **Proverbs 28:1** on an index card and memorize it. Pray for **boldness**! (See **Acts 4:29-31**). God will answer your prayers if you remain faithful to Him. Call a family member today (or plan to call them on the weekend) and share with them why you are so excited about the Gospel.

THURSDAY

In **John 12:49**, Jesus reveals that *how* you say something might be just as important as *what* you say. Read **Philip. 2:14-15**. What kind of attitude should you maintain in **every** situation? Why? Read **1 Peter 3:15-16**. How should you answer those that question you about your beliefs? Part of doing things tactfully comes from the attitude of sanctifying the Lord in your heart. "Sanctify" (holy) means "set apart." Having established a special dwelling for God in the heart, you should be ready always to give an answer to those who seek a reason for this hope. **2 Timothy 2:23-26** is packed with holy attitudes. List them all and rate yourself in each attitude listed. Pick a verse from the Bible, using a concordance, dealing with an attitude you need to improve in and write it on an index card and memorize it. Call your discipler **today** and share with him/her this verse and the reason why you chose it.

FRIDAY

Our task on this Earth is very exciting! Keeping the ministry of **reconciliation** in mind (The Gospel) always helps me focus on the task at hand wherever I am. This involves you extending yourself toward others; something that is not always comfortable. Read **1 Corinthians 9:20-23**. What did the Apostle Paul do in order to save some people? What are some things that you have done to save some people? Think about some ways in which you can extend yourself to reach some people that you come in contact with every day. Write **John 4:35** on an index card and memorize it. Open your eyes! Invite someone you meet during the day to listen to something exciting you want to share with them. Let them know how much God loves them through what you say and how you say it!

INSIGHT

In **Romans 1:1** we read, “*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus...set apart for the gospel of God.*” The Greek word for *servant* here is *doulos*, which means a *slave* or a *bondservant*. Paul understood his role as a disciple of Christ. He gloried in this title of *bondservant* of Jesus Christ. He knew he belonged to Christ, and just as Roman slaves had no rights, Paul saw himself as a man without rights; a man who was completely under subjection to the Lord, set apart for the Gospel of God. Paul was becoming like his Lord and teacher, Jesus Christ. (**Luke 6:40**).

Jesus himself took up the title of “servant”. **Isaiah 52:13** through **53:12** shows Christ as a *suffering servant*. We read in the New Testament Jesus fulfilling his role as God’s servant. He loved at all times, he walked in wisdom, he lived his life to please his Father, he sought every opportunity to do good, and was obedient even to the point of death, thus fulfilling his Father’s mission of redemption.

Jesus left this example of servitude for us to follow (**John 13:13-17**); that we too may live our lives as servants of God. It is interesting to note that after **Isaiah 53**, the word “servant” is never used in its singular. From this point on, Isaiah speaks of the blessings that the Servant’s followers will receive, calling them “*the servants of the Lord*” (**Isaiah 54:17**); “*his servants*” (**66:14**); and “*my servants*” (**65:8, 9**). Have you seen yourself as a bondservant of Jesus? Have you given up all your rights and placed yourself under the full control of Christ? Just as Christ came to serve, we too ought to serve rather than to be served. Seek to please God in every matter; seek every opportunity to serve. These are the kind of people Christ died for--people who are eager to do what is good! (**Titus 2:14**)

Becoming Like Christ Service With A Smile

Key Text: **Galatians 5:13**

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

Theme:

When Jesus came to earth, He came as a servant. He was a servant who would suffer and die for our redemption, as Isaiah clearly predicted (**Isaiah 52:13-53:12**; **Mark 10:45**). Even after His resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus still serves those who are His. **Hebrews 7:25** says that Christ *lives to intercede for us*. We need to follow our Master’s example, no matter how lacking in glamour it may seem. Just Jesus has taught us, the road to greatness is the road to servitude (**Mt 23:11-12**).

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Help out in the services: help with the chairs, songbooks, clean up, nursery, etc.
2. Whenever you see a brother or a sister in need, offer to help. Contribute to others’ needs (**Rom.12:13**).
3. Have the same focus as Christ. He came to serve, not to be served (**Mk 10:45**).
4. Seek every opportunity to do good. Always ask yourself, “What can I do to please the Lord?”
5. When you serve, do it with a willing spirit *and* a smile.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
The Servant of The Lord I. Christ the Servant A. The Attributes of the Servant Isaiah 42:1-4 - He is God's servant God gave him the Holy Spirit to enable him to the task set before him (<i>Isa. 61:1</i>) Goal: To bring justice to the nations -- He will accomplish God's work faithfully and without faltering: The Manner: In mildness - He will not shout or cry out - He will mend broken lives (<i>Isaiah 61:3</i>) --although he will expose sin, he will give them space to repent - This is being fulfilled in Matthew 12:13-21 Steadfastness: He won't give up until his assigned work is done (<i>Is 61:4</i>) --it was done at the cross (<i>John 19:30</i>) - Jesus fulfilled all that was written of Him in OT (<i>Lk. 24:44</i>) - By his death, we are saved. (<i>Col. 2:11-15; 1 Pt 2:24</i>) II. Conclusion Luke 6:40--Like teacher, like student - Just as Christ was a servant of God, we too are to be servants of God - Like our Master, we must live a life of labor and self-denial - Fulfill the goal set before us: - Serve to win the lost (<i>1 Cor 9:19</i>) - Serve to edify the church (<i>Rom 14:19</i>)	Warm-up: How does the business world define the term <i>supervisor</i>? How do people in authoritative positions usually act? See To It Matthew 20:25-28 - What is the way of the Gentile rulers? - How do these rulers view themselves as? - What is Christ's description of a true <i>supervisor</i>? - How is this different from the world's view of leadership? Read 1 Peter 5:1-4. What are those in leadership supposed to be? - Christ is given the title <i>Chief Shepherd</i>. How did he receive this title? Support your answer with Scripture. Seeing It Closer: - What ought to be our roles as disciples of Christ? - What does it mean to be a bondservant? Describe what it means to be a <i>slave</i>. - What is the purpose for serving one another? How does this benefit the kingdom? Getting To It: Pray for one another that we may truly be servants of the Lord and that each of us may place ourselves last and seek to serve rather than to be served.

Becoming Like Christ: Service with a Smile!

MONDAY

The message of the Gospel is a message of LOVE. The way God expresses His love is by **serving**. Jesus did not come to be served but rather to serve us; and serve us He did by taking God's wrath in our place! Read carefully **Matthew 20:25-28**. How will you become the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? What did Jesus come into the world to do? Write **Mark 10:45** on an index card and memorize it. Get together with a brother/sister and pray for a servant's attitude in all you do.

TUESDAY

In order to be effective servants, we need to have an attitude that is pleasing to God. Living to please the Lord is the first step in learning to serve Him, and therefore, serve each other. Read **Col.3:23-24** and **Eph. 6:7-8**. When you do anything, who is it that you should be doing it for? *How* should you serve or work? Write **Col. 3:23-24** on an index card and memorize it. When you wake up each day, pray that you may please the Lord in all that you do. Renew your mind with the Word and become a servant. Call a brother/sister who needs you to serve them and see how you can fill their needs.

WEDNESDAY

In order to be effective servants for God, certain attitudes need to be present in us. Humility and selflessness need to pervade our minds and thoughts. Read **Phil. 2:3-8**. Whom should you consider as better than yourself? Whose interests should you protect? Whose attitude should you have? What is that attitude? Write **Phil. 2:14-15** on an index card and memorize it. Believe that you can make a difference in this crooked and perverse generation. Get together with a brother/sister and pray to make a difference at your workplace to the glory of God. Do something for someone at your workplace / school who doesn't get along with you. Show them love by what you do and believe that the Lord is using you.

THURSDAY

As you serve the Lord through serving others an attitude to watch out for is that of thinking you *deserve* a reward for what you are doing. Remember that the Lord is watching over you and it is God that rewards whatever you do in secret. Read **Luke 17:7-10**. As Christ's servant, when you have done everything you were told to do, what should be your attitude? Write **Galatians 1:10** on an index card and memorize it. Convince yourself of these words and realize that whatever you do will be seen by the Lord. Glorify Him! Make yourself available to serve on a committee in one of the ministries in the church. Tell a brother/sister who usually heads a committee that you want to serve the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

FRIDAY

As you realized from Wednesday's quiet time, humility precedes service. Because our Lord is humble (look up this word in a good dictionary) He has no problems with serving us. To serve someone is a privilege, not a chore. Worldly greatness is associated with being served. Godly greatness is associated with serving others at your expense. Read **John 13:12-17**. What was Jesus trying to teach His disciples by washing their feet? How have you "washed" other people's feet? What attitudes have prevented you from freely giving yourself to serve your spouse, co-worker, family member, friend, brother/sister, children?

Learn to serve without being asked...as working for the Lord and not for men...

INSIGHT

Training in righteousness has a positive and essential place in the lives of God's people. This holds true in both the Old and New Testaments. God's people had to learn how to be obedient to His will, to become more and more like their Lord. This was accomplished through "*the discipline of the Lord*" (**Deut. 11:2** NIV). God deals with His people very much the same today, for "*the Lord disciplines those he loves*" (**Hebrews 12:6a**). Scripture teaches us "*God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness*" (**Hebrews 12:10b** NIV). As we can see from this passage, the *discipline of the Lord* produces **holiness**. Verse eleven goes on to say "*...it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*"

Discipline refers to the process by which one learns a way of life. A disciple was like an apprentice who was learning a trade or craft from a master. Such learning required a relationship between the master who knew the way of life (discipline) and a learner (a disciple). Within this relationship, the teacher led the learner through a process (the discipline) until the learner could imitate or live like the master. Jesus taught this very concept in **Luke 6:40**, "*A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*"

When Jesus called the twelve, it was to establish a master-learner relation with them. As they lived and worked with Him, Jesus disciplined them unto a way of life that was pleasing to God. Such discipline involved praise and criticism, affirmation and rebuke. Today, Jesus does the same, through His church. He seeks people willing to learn; people who are pliable and moldable unto His likeness. What kind of pottery are you? What's your shape?

Becoming Like Christ

Training in Righteousness: Being Pliable

Key Text:

Isaiah 64:8

Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Theme:

Being molded after the likeness of the Lord should be every Christian's focus. To be like Jesus in every way is the attitude and desire of every true believer. Jesus calls us to be His disciples. But this requires a special kind of heart--a willing and moldable heart that is pliable like soft clay. Our mind-set and response to discipline will determine the kind of "vessel" we will become. What type of clay are you? Moldable, or rigid and unyielding?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Make it your goal** to be like Jesus in all you do: whether at work, at home, or in dealing with opposition.
2. **Have this question in mind:** "What would Jesus want me to do?" This question will prove to be very helpful when facing decisions or course of action!
3. **Be open to discipline.** Do not defend sin, but rather hate the sin, and love the reproof.
4. **Ask your discipler** to point out areas in your life that need work. Request reproof and correction! Don't give them a hard time when they expose your sin.
5. **Memorize *Psalm 141:5*!!!**

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Pliability and Christianity I. A Lesson From The Potter A. Jeremiah 18:1-12 1. Jeremiah is sent to a potter's home. a. He is sent to receive a sermon already prepared by the Lord. b. Failure to shape the clay: -- skillful potter; faulty clay -- clay formed into another type of pot B. God's Lesson To Israel 1. He has supreme dominion and authority over us. -- Like the potter who shapes accordingly so does God shape us 2. Our composition determines our shape a. Punishment comes from our sin b. Solution: Be moldable --Return from sin --Reform your ways 3. Dangerous Attitude of Disbelief a. "It's no use..." --being obstinate in sin causes one not to be reformed b. Hopelessness was our former life (<i>Eph. 2:12</i>)--there is hope II. Conclusion Make Him Lord of your life each day, and your strength he will renew! (<i>Isaiah 40:30-31</i>).	Warm-up: Have you ever tried to correct someone because you cared for them? How do they usually react? Why do so many people react poorly to correction? See To It <i>Psalm 141:1-5</i> 1. From these verses, what kind of man was David? 2. What was the main focus of his prayer? How did he pray? 3. David was known as a man after God's own heart (<i>1 Sam. 13:14</i>). From these verses, how is this manifested? 4. What did David desire of his friends? 5. The world thinks of reproof as unkindness. Why did David see it differently? Seeing It Closer: 1. How are we to receive reproof? 2. Read Ecclesiastes 7:6. What is the meaning of these verses? How is this done today? 3. Why is the laughter of fools like burning thorns under a pot? What will eventually happen to the burning thorns as compared to those who are not disciplined? 4. On a scale of 1 -5, how opened are you towards correction? (1-very open; 5-least open) Getting To It: Pray a similar prayer like that of David in Psalm 141. Ask God to guard your mouth against evil and to have a willing, moldable heart that does not refuse the discipline of the Lord.

The Attitude of Christ: Humility & Pliability

MONDAY

A necessary factor to be able to serve in the Kingdom of God and grow to know the love of our Lord is possessing a moldable heart. The heart of a disciple of Jesus is one that is **pliable**. Look this word up in a good dictionary and write down the definition. It will be helpful to look back upon the definition of pliability as we continue throughout the week. Read **Jeremiah 18:2-6**. What do you think was the reason the Lord sent Jeremiah to the potter's house? How is it that we, like Israel, can be like clay in the Lord's hand? The desire to have a moldable heart comes from knowing that you are a sinner and in need of correction (**Ezekiel 7:20**)! When you heed correction is when you allow the Lord to mold you for His purposes. Write **Ephesians 2:10** on an index card and memorize it. Realize that you are God's vessel, His workmanship! Created to do and to walk in the ways of the Lord. Be like soft clay in His hands!

TUESDAY

The hardest thing to do when working on having a moldable heart is learning to accept correction. When someone tries to correct you, how do you respond? Do you show your annoyance at once (**Prov. 12:16**)? Do you turn away from discipline, or do you seek it (**Prov. 15:5**)? Read **Psalms 141:5**. Doesn't this make a good memory verse? This is the attitude of a disciple, one who seeks after the Lord's own heart. Maybe you should begin to seek good rebukes rather than empty praises! Write **Psalms 139:23-24** on an index card and memorize it. Remember, don't be angry at the one who corrects you, be angry at your sin! **During your mentorship meeting this week, tell your mentor how much you want to get rid of the sin that is holding you back, or that you're holding back, from the Lord. Be bold and let your brother/sister help you!**

WEDNESDAY

Even our Lord had to be tested and perfected! What do you think His attitude was throughout all this? Read **Hebrews 5:7-9**. How did Jesus learn obedience? What was the attitude He possessed that enabled Him to be heard by God? Why was it necessary for Him to be made perfect? The phrase "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" does not mean that Jesus was ever disobedient but rather that He learned through experience as a Man and through all His temptation and suffering what it meant to suffer and triumph in a way He did not experience before the incarnation. His humanity was in this sense "completed," which is the meaning of the Greek word translated "perfected" in this context. Would you have trusted in Jesus if He decided not to be pliable in the Lord's hand? Write **Isaiah 28:16** on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

When faced with correction, do you think about your will, or the will of God? Have you trained yourself to act upon the correction or do you just react to it? Do you want to get better or do you want to remain bitter? Read **2 Corinthians 7:10-11**. What do you think is the difference between the sorrow of the world and the sorrow that is godly? What does sorrow of the world lead to? What does godly sorrow lead to? What other godly attitudes does godly sorrow produce? Does worldly sorrow motivate you to be pliable? Write **Ecclesiastes 7:3** on an index card and memorize it. From the Believers Study Bible: *"Sorrow tends to produce a saddening reflection, while laughter may indicate a frivolous frame of mind. In a serious mood, one is more ready to think reflectively about life. From this comes the motivation for a purification of the heart."*

FRIDAY

You can be a servant of the Lord, only by having a submissive and pliable attitude. I quote Matthew Henry: *"Younger Christians are to submit to their elders, and to yield with humility and patience to God, and to be sober, watchful, and steadfast in faith..."* Read **1 Peter 5:5-9**. Why should we be submissive to the elder? Why should we serve one another? Let your anxieties about receiving discipline and correction drive you to God's throne in prayer, rather than giving the devil a foothold. Remember! The battle is against the evil powers that influence, not against the people who are trying to love you! Write **James 4:10** on an index card and memorize it. *"Submit yourself to God, for he is ready to do you good. If you yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow you; but if you put on the whole armor of God, and stand out against him, he will leave you. Let sinners then submit to God, and seek his grace and favor; resisting the devil. All sin must be wept over; here, in godly sorrow, or, hereafter, in eternal misery. And the Lord will not refuse to comfort one who really mourns for sin, or to exalt one who humbles himself before him."* -- Matthew Henry

INSIGHT

What comes to mind when you hear the saying, "The only thing you can be sure of is death and taxes". For most people, they get a feeling of fear and uncertainty. It is true that nobody is excited about paying taxes and most people are very much afraid of death; but thanks be to Christ, we can know the truth about death and the hope that lies behind it. When death is applied to the lower orders of living things such as plants and animals, it means the end of life. However, when death is applied to the human life, it does not mean the end of life, but rather a transition from one form of existence to another. Scripture teaches that man is more than a physical creature; he is also a spiritual being. The Bible speaks of death in a twofold way: physical and spiritual. The first physical death of a human recorded in the Bible is that of Abel, who was murdered by his brother Cain (**Gen. 4:8**). However, death itself, in both the physical and spiritual sense, is first mentioned by God Himself (**Gen. 2:17**). In the Genesis account of the Fall, both physical and spiritual death come as a result of sin (**Romans 5:12-21**).

Since all men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (**Romans 3:23**), everyone is spiritually dead and therefore separated from God, Who is the source of spiritual life. For this reason, Christ came to unite us unto God; and the goal of Christianity is to become more and more like Christ. When we became Christians, a conscious decision was made to die to self and the world.

Therefore, let us heed the words of this song: *On Sunday mornings, and weekdays too, people observe all you say and do. Let the life you live be a reflection of the man inside.* E. Robinson

Let Jesus take charge of your life in all you say, think or do. For those of us who have baptized have been clothed with Christ! (**Gal 3:27**) Amen!

Becoming Like Christ Dying to Self

Key Text: **1 Pet 2:24**

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Theme:

Becoming a Christian requires a renewing of the mind and death to one's old way of life. **Romans 6:4** says "we were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." Yet far too many Christians are allowing their old sinful life to control them. As disciples of Christ, we need to die to ourselves daily, and live for Christ.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Set your mind on things above and not on earthly things. Forget about keeping up with the Jones'.
2. Pray to become like Christ.
3. Read through the Gospels focusing on the parables that Jesus taught.
4. In all you do, ask yourself "Am I pleasing the Lord?"

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Dying to self I. Death to Sin A. Romans 6:1-4 1. We died to sin. 2. Buried with Christ. 3. Raised to live a new life. II. Resurrected Self A. Romans 6:5-7 1. United with Christ. 2. Body of sin is done away. 3. No longer slave to sin. 4. Dying to self=Freedom from sin. III. Our Hope A. Romans 6:8-10 1. We will live with Christ. 2. Christ has the victory over death. 3. Christ died for all. 4. Christ lives with God. IV. 4 Steps to Glory A. Romans 6:11-14 1. Count your self. 2. Do not let sin reign. 3. Offer yourself to God for righteous deeds. 4. Be determined to not let sin be your master. V. Conclusion A. Luke 9:23-25 1. Take up your cross daily - Self-denial, complete dedication. - It must be done daily. - We must lose our lives for Jesus.	Warm-up: If you wanted to get your body in shape, what would you have to do? What habits would you have to change? See To It Colossians 3:1-17 1. What should we be striving to set our minds on? 2. List 3 reasons why we should set our minds on things above. 3. From verse 9, what does Paul mean when he says <i>you have taken off your old self</i>? 4. What must we put to death? Why? 5. Read Phil 3:13-14. Why is “<i>forgetting what is behind</i>” such an important factor in a Christian’s life? Seeing It Closer: Romans 6:1-14 1. How does one die to self? 2. From vs 4, what does baptism represent? 3. What must happen to the body of sin? 4. From vs 13, what does “as instruments of wickedness” mean? 5. How can we offer our <i>bodies</i> to God? Getting To It: Go around the room and share with one another a struggle in your life that you need to die to and at the end of class have somebody close out in a prayer asking God to help us with these struggles.

The Attitude of Christ: Dying to Self

MONDAY

When we were baptized into Christ, we were baptized into His death and resurrection to live for righteousness and not for sin. Being baptized meant that the old self was no longer going to live, but to die. If our old ways are dead, then we have no reason to look back on our old life, since we have died to it. Examine **Luke 9:57-62**. In verse 62 Jesus says, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God.” What does Christ mean by “looking back”? If you’re plowing a field and decide to look back while plowing, would you still be able to plow a straight line? Now examine your own life. Is it possible to live a godly life and yet desire the worldly life you once had? Write **Matthew 6:33** on an index card and memorize it. Call a brother/sister and share with them how you are seeking first these things in your life.

TUESDAY

When we watch the news, there are many unfortunate cases of people dying painful deaths; from things like shootings to fires. In these deaths people are forced to be in pain and agony while they die. Most of us would say we would never want to die that way, yet far too many of us are dying that way in our Christianity. We are trying to hold onto our old way of life and still follow Christ. By holding on to your old way of life you make living for Christ a painful process, when it should be a joy to live for Christ. Examine **Phil 3:7-8**. What was Paul’s attitude about his old life? How did Paul feel about his knowledge of Christ? How do you view your Christian life? Are you proud to be a Christian? Paul clearly saw that it is better to be a Christian than be a sinner. Can you say the same thing about yourself? Write **John 17:3** on an index card and memorize it. See to it that you know your Savior! Get together with a brother/sister and pray to depend totally on God and not on anything in the world.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Eph 4:22-24**. From these verses we can see two main points. The first point being that the old self must be put off. The scriptures teach that our old self was corrupted by its deceitful desires. We need to treat our old self as old clothes that we are ashamed to be seen in. The second point is that the new self must be put on. **Romans 13:14** says to clothe yourself with Christ. What type of clothes are you wearing? Write **Isaiah 61:10** on an index card and memorize it. When you wake up each day and get dressed, take time to pray to God and ask him to clothe you with clothes that will help your light shine.

THURSDAY

In the Bible the cross was used as an instrument of death. With that in mind examine closely **Luke 9:23-27**. What does it mean to take up one’s cross? The taking up of the cross represents a total commitment of your life to Christ. Cross-bearing is a willingness to suffer and die for the Lord's sake. At the end of verse 23 it says, “and follow me”. This implies that Christ's death would be by crucifixion and by following Christ we must be willing die like Christ. Write **Romans 6:1-4** on an index card and memorize it. When you wake up each morning pray to God that you will have the strength to carry your cross today.

FRIDAY

What type attitude does an olympic athlete have in regard to obtaining a gold medal? What must he/she do in order to win? Examine **Phil 3:12-14**. As Christ servants we set our goals to be that of what Christ wants from us. We should let Christ direct our steps and not us direct Christ's steps. From verse 13 we can see that we need to forget about our sinful past and look forward to what is ahead. In the end, after pressing on toward the goal, we can all share in the reward of everlasting life. Write **1 John 4:17** on an index card and memorize it. Call a brother or sister and encourage them to press on towards the goal of love, just as Paul encouraged us.

INSIGHT

The sacrifices Israel offered to God were never intended to be a substitute for obedience, as they had become in eighth-century Israel (*Amos 5:22-25*), but were only effective for cleansing if they were brought with a sense of sorrow for sin and complete humility before God, i.e., an attitude of repentance. The idea, then, would be that although Israel brought offerings in the wilderness, they brought more than offerings: they brought repentant hearts, “justice,” and “righteousness” (v. 24).

The Messiah came also preaching a message of repentance (*Mark 1:15*). Stressing that all men needed to repent (*Luke 13:1-5*), Jesus summoned his followers to turn and become like children. He defined His ministry in terms of calling sinners to repentance (*Luke 5:32*). Moreover, He illustrated His understanding of repentance in the parable of the prodigal who returned to the father (*Luke 15:11-32*). Like John the Baptizer in *Luke 3:8*, Christ insisted that the life that was changed was obvious by the “fruit” that it bore (*Luke 6:20-45*).

Those who believe themselves to be God's people and who rely on the sacrifice for sin which God has provided (*Heb. 10:12*) have sometimes assumed that because their sins are dealt with, it does not matter how they live (*Rom. 6:1*). The Bible emphasizes that those who would live in fellowship with a holy God as His people must live in a way that reflects the holiness of God (*1 Pet. 1:16; 1 John 1:5*). “Mercy” (*hesed*, Heb.) is a rich word that includes the idea of faithful love in action (*Jer. 9:24*). Walking with God implies a manner of life characterized by gratefulness and obedience to God (*Isa. 38:15*). “Humbly” stresses that man must remember that he is man, and God is God. The proud people will find that God resists them, while the humble person will allow his attitude to be molded by his godly sorrow.

The Attitude in Christ Repentance

Key Text: **Isaiah 1:27-28**

Zion will be redeemed with justice, And her repentant ones with righteousness. But transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the LORD shall come to an end.

Theme:

Possessing a penitent attitude is a must when following Jesus. Throughout the history of Israel, God always called her to repent and come back to His ways. Even though we are all sinners, there's a difference between those that are convicted and change and those that are just convicted. The attitude the Lord looks for is one of repentance, not just remorse. It's not enough just to be sorry about what you do, say or think. The Lord looks for a radical change of heart, shown by the deeds that prove your repentance.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Make it your goal** to be like Jesus in all you do: whether at work, at home, or in dealing with opposition.
2. **Be open to discipline.** Do not defend sin, but rather hate the sin, and love the reproof.
3. **Ask your discipler** to point out areas in your life that need work. Request reproof and correction! And don't give them a hard time when they expose your sin.
4. **Have godly sorrow** about your sin. Don't just “feel” sorry, but be determined to show your change of attitude by a change of action!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Repentance Sacrifices were never meant to substitute obedience to the Lord. But a sacrifice offered up with a broken and contrite spirit is never rejected (<i>Ps 51</i>). I. A Lesson from David's Life (2 <i>Samuel 11-18</i>) A. Known as the greatest king of Israel - Background characteristics - Most prominent character of Scripture - Most famous ancestor of Christ -- Jesus referred to <i>Son of David</i> (<i>Mt. 1:1</i>) - His life was filled with noble deeds - High aspirations - Great accomplishments - Called the man after God's own heart - Yet he committed a great sin B. David's Sin - The Setting: David couldn't sleep (<i>11:1-2</i>) - He sees a beautiful woman and sleeps with her (<i>11:3-4</i>) - Adultery Committed - The woman is married (adultery) - She's pregnant (the fruit of adultery) - Lev. 20:10--the consequence - David Hides His Sin - Sends Uriah home, but David's plan fails (<i>11:8-9</i>) - Gets Uriah drunk, but still David's plan fails (<i>11:12-13</i>) - David places Uriah in front lines of army: success: Uriah dies! - David Becomes Penitent - David's Rebuke (<i>12:1-14</i>) - Sins forgiven but consequences (12,15,18) II. Conclusion Acts 26:20b	Warm-up: Have you ever done something foolish and then regretted it? Were you afraid of facing up to it before other people because of how they may react? See To It <i>Luke 15:11-32</i> - What attitude did the young man have toward what his father had given him? - What do you think caused him to come to his senses? - In which verses do you see the change of heart/mind happening? - When can we say that this man repented? - What was the Father's attitude toward his son? Why do you think he had this attitude? - What was his older brother's attitude? Do you think his older brother recognized his repentance? Seeing It Closer: - How does repentance begin? - Have you really repented if you go through with the actions but your heart is not in it? - How about if you're just sorry about it, but you don't want to change your actions? - How come these two approaches don't cut it? Getting To It: Go around the room and take turns sharing with each other how your attitude has changed toward things you were pretty adamant about before. Share how you had a change of heart and how the actions followed after that.

The Attitude in Christ: Repentance

MONDAY

The Message of Jesus is one that needs to be received with intent of letting it change your life. Jesus became like us so that we can, in turn, become like Him. This is the purpose of our Christian walk. Read **Ephesians 5:1-2**. Who are you to imitate? How are you to imitate God? Read **Matthew 5:43-48**. Who are we to be like? Is it possible to be perfect? What do you think Jesus means by v.48? Read **Phillipians 3:12-16**. Paul defines what “perfection” is all about in these verses. It’s about *maturing*. It’s about *vision*. It’s about *attitude*. The Greek word for “perfect” is *teleioo*. It means to complete, i.e. (lit.) accomplish, or (fig.) consummate (in character):--consecrate, finish, fulfill, (make) perfect. (*Strong’s Hebrew & Greek*) Write **Micah 6:8** on an index card and memorize it. Have you dedicated your children to the Lord? If you have kids, take some time out to *dedicate* them to God. Have a prayer with your household and dedicate each one to God.

TUESDAY

As we studied last week, in order to be able to please the Lord you must die to self. Dying to self involves *believing* that the message of forgiveness you heard has the power to change you! If your belief doesn’t affect your behavior, then why have beliefs? Read **Ezekiel 18:30-32**. How will you be judged? Does the Lord want you to live? What must you *do* to live? The problem is not God's unwillingness to save you, but rather your refusal to be saved! This is a masterful call to **repentance**. It is not divine grace or human freedom, but God's mercy and your **choice**. This is a call to those who have pushed God aside to awaken and *renew* themselves in faith in God. Read **Hebrews 12:1-2**. What must you do *first*, before you begin to run with endurance? Who are you going to fix your eyes onto? Why? Write **1 Peter 1:13** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

“Repent” is the translation of the Greek verb *metanoeo*, meaning “to have another mind, to change the mind”, and is used in the N.T. to indicate a change of mind in respect to sin, God, and self. A complete reversal. True repentance leads to change in behavior, which is what is expected from God. Read **Luke 3:6-14**. How did John recognize a true repentant attitude? What were the multitudes asking John? “There is no way of fleeing from the wrath to come, but by repentance; and by the change of our way the change of our mind must be shown. If we are not really holy, both in heart and life, our profession of religion and relation to God and his church, will stand us in no stead at all; the sorer will our destruction be, if we do not bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” -- *Matthew Henry*. Write **Acts 17:30** on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

The most difficult part about repentance is initiating a change of heart and mind. Once the heart and mind are in sync with the Spirit, changes in attitude and actions will follow. Read **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**. According to verse 9, does God intend for us to be sorrowful? Maybe you would like to go back to the study on pliability and look at Thursday’s Quiet Times about his topic. Does worldly sorrow produce fruits in keeping with repentance? So what is the difference between godly and worldly sorrow? Whenever there’s still any regret in your heart, you haven’t truly let go of your attitude -- you haven’t repented. When you let go of sin, the attitudes in verse 11 will be clearly manifested in your attitude and life. Notice also that in **Hebrews 11**, all these people were commended for their faith *because* they showed a change of heart and mind that lead them to action. Write **Hosea 14:1-2** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Jesus died for us on the cross that our sins might not be held against us as long as we are willing to repent. One of the most illustrative passages as to how we begin our act of repentance is **1 John 1:5-9**. What is the difference between walking in light and walking in darkness? What does walking in the light involve? The phrase “But if we walk” is suggestive of a life-style. The verb is in the present tense and denotes continuous action. John has in mind the practice and habit of life which is characterized by constant fellowship with God. Through the shed blood of Jesus, there is forgiveness and redemption from sin. The word “cleansing” (*katharizo*, Gk.) is in the present tense and denotes continuous action. The blood of Jesus “keeps on cleansing” from all sin. Therefore, walking in the light stems from having a mindset of renewal (**Rom 12:1-2**). Write **Acts 3:19** on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

In ancient Israel, watchmen were stationed on the highest parts of the city walls. Their responsibility was to inform the city's inhabitants of the progress of a battle (*1 Sam. 14:16*) or of approaching messengers or enemies (*2 Sam. 18:24-27; 2 Kings 9:17-20*). Israel's prophets saw themselves as watchmen warning the nation of God's approaching judgment if the people did not repent (*Jer. 6:17; Ezek 3:16-21; Hosea 9:8*). Vineyards and fields also had watchmen, especially during harvest time. Their responsibility was to guard the produce from animals and thieves.

The concept of *watchmen* remains for God's people today. The Lord's Church – called the *nation* of God (*1 Peter 2:9*), the *city* of God (*Hebrews 12:22-23*), the *field* of God (*1 Cor. 3:9*) and, by analogy, the vineyard of God (*Matt. 20:1-16*) – has watchmen appointed to encourage faithfulness to the Lord. Who are these “watchmen”?

1. God (*1 Cor. 11:32; Hebrews 12:1-11*). God disciplines us for our own good. The Lord's discipline prevents us from being condemned with the world (*1 Cor. 11:32*).

2. The Word of God (*2 Tim. 3:16-17*). The Word teaches, rebukes, corrects and trains us in righteousness.

3. The Church (*1 Thess. 5:14-15; Heb. 10:23-25*). We are called to patiently warn, encourage, and help one another. We are to spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

4. Your Mentor (*Matthew 28:19-20; Heb. 13:7,17*). Elders, ministers and mentors are there to teach you what is good; not to destroy you! They are there for your benefit – don't grieve them.

5. Yourself (*1 Tim. 4:7,8,16; 2 Tim. 1:7*). It is our responsibility to train ourselves to be godly. God gave us the power to discipline ourselves.

The Attitude in Christ Accountability

Key Text: **Ezekiel 3:17**

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me."

Theme:

Discipleship brings about maturity. When a father disciplines his child, it is out of love for the child – to bring him to maturity and righteousness. God disciplines us for our own good – to bring us to peace and holiness. We must not be afraid to acknowledge our wrongs and to welcome a brother's or sister's correction. Let us learn to repent and to accept a true friend's love for us!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

- 1. Repent** when you do wrong. Don't hold on to sin. Learn to hate sin!
- 2. Don't be difficult** when your mentor or anyone else corrects you concerning sin. He/She is trying to love you and help you. Regard him/her as a true friend!
- 3. Learn to love reproof.** It will make you wise! Read *Proverbs 15:31-32*.
- 4. Thank those who correct you!** Whether it is your relative, a church member, or a stranger!
- 5. Don't fight fire with fire!** Don't purposely point out your brother's sin when he is correcting you! Don't be spiteful! God sees right through that!
- 6. Pray** to the Lord to have a disciple's heart and meditate upon the Word daily!
- 8. Encourage** and correct with a genuine spirit of love, and not with a spirit of criticism!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Accountability I. Ezekiel (<i>God Will Strengthen</i>) A. Personality 1. He behaved very strangely (Ezekiel 4; 5)! 2. He was conscientiously obedient to the Lord B. Ezekiel's Call (3:16-21) 1. Sent as a <i>Watchman</i> a. Requires a total submission to the Lord b. Israel in a military state; exposed to enemies c. Watchmen are in peril from the enemy --kill the watchman, gain entrance --yet, watchmen are devoted to their general--in this case, the Lord d. Ezekiel's duties: --To take notice and to give notice --Preliminaries: 1)His answer is from the Lord (vs 17) --he ate the scroll-vs 1-3 2) He was going to people who understand (vs 5) e. Purpose: --we (all) are personally responsible for our own behavior --God wants to give life! C. The Church Today 1. We are under a military state, with the enemy, Satan, trying to destroy 2. A faithful watchmen: a. rejected by men if faithful b. rejected by God is unfaithful 3. Our duty as faithful Christians: a. Warn of the dangers of sin b. Assurance of the benefits of repentance II. Conclusion: 33:11 1. God does not take pleasure in judgment 2. He rather bestow life and blessing! 3. We are called to warn and to exhort! 4. Goal: Repent and return to the Lord <i>Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.</i> Proverbs 25:12	Warm-up: Have you ever been in a situation that was both hurtful and helpful – sort of a catch 22 situation? See To It <i>Ezekiel 33:7-20</i> 1. What was Ezekiel duty? Explain his job. 2. How was Ezekiel to speak to those who engaged in sin? What does it mean to <i>dissuade</i>? 3. Why would God hold Ezekiel accountable for not warning the wicked of his ways? 4. How does this apply to the Christian today? Who are considered the wicked? 5. How does these passages relate to the preaching of the gospel? What must be taught? 6. How do you we respond to those who feel their sin is too great and they are hopeless? Seeing It Closer: 1. How does verse 12 relate to us today? 2. What is God's goal for His people? What is the purpose for the warning? 3. How are we like Ezekiel? What is the duty of faithful Christians? Getting To It: Go around the room and take turns sharing with each other what these verses in Ezekiel have taught you. Pray for each other to be faithful watchmen: to encourage one another with a spirit of love, patience and sincerity.

Accountability = Discipleship

MONDAY

If you consider yourself a person after God's own heart you can probably be described as having the heart of a disciple. This week, as we look at what **discipleship** really means, you will be able to see for yourself whether you indeed have the attitude that leads to having the heart of a disciple. Read **Matthew 28:18-20**. As we *follow* Jesus we are to *make* disciples. How do we do that? (It's a two-step process) How long does it take to do step #2? Can you successfully accomplish step 2 if you yourself haven't paid much attention to it? This week we're not going to look at making other disciples. We're going to focus on making sure that you let Jesus' disciples make one out of you. You have been called to *follow* Jesus. Discipleship is **followership**. If you're going to call people to follow, you better be following Jesus yourself! A penitent (repentant) disciple is a follower; a follower of Jesus becomes a servant; a servant becomes a leader. This week talk to your discipler about what you see lacking in your followership of Christ. Pray for a disciple's heart. Write **Psalms 51:17** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

God calls all of us to be accountable to Him: read **Hebrews 4:12-13**. How does God's Word uncover our hearts? Does the Word teach you what kind of attitude you are to have? Can it point out to you when you have a bad attitude? How do you respond when you are being cut? Do you realize that it is God who is cutting, with and through His Word? What, then, is the vehicle that God uses to hold us accountable to Him? Should you then become very familiar with this vehicle, i.e., the Bible? Read **Hebrews 13:7,17**. Since you are called to *followership*, who are you to submit to? Why? Are you to imitate their faith? According to verse 17, what are your leaders held accountable for? Do you believe this? Your actions will be a testimony of your faith! Write **1 Timothy 4:16** on an index card and memorize it. Thank God for the leadership He has provided for you. See to it that you glorify God by respecting them as your older brethren in Christ.

WEDNESDAY

One of the most illustrative passages about discipleship is **Ezekiel 33:7-11**. What role is Ezekiel given? Isn't this the same role that your leaders have been given? What will happen to your leaders if they don't warn you about your sin? What happens to you if you listen to what your leaders warn you about? What happens if you don't listen? From verse 10, what effect does sin have on you? From verse 11, what does God desire for you to do? How is then, that God is going to use your leaders to benefit you? If your desire is to be accountable to God, understand that means being accountable to your leaders *and* to each other. We are our brother's keeper! If your desire is to repent and turn to the Lord, then hold yourself accountable to your brother/sister! Remember, repentance begins with confession! Write **James 5:16** on an index card and memorize it. Make a list of the things you want to repent about before the Lord. *See to it* that you hold yourself accountable to these things with your discipler.

THURSDAY

Accountability is a word we tend to shy away from. Why do you think that is? Is it because it requires you to make a commitment...to *see to it* that your attitudes reflect Jesus'? Read carefully **Romans 14:12-13**. Will you be held accountable collectively or individually? From verse 13, are we to work toward helping each other out with our accountability? How do you think this can be accomplished? It is obvious from this passage that judging one another is not the way to hold each other accountable to God. If you continue reading **15:1-8** you will notice that you are to accept your brother and be at peace. You are to edify and encourage with the Scripture. As **2 Tim. 3:16-17** says, you are to use the Word to teach, correct, rebuke and train in righteousness. Discipleship is not a forum for judgment, but for training in righteousness out of love for each other. Write this last scripture on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Since being held accountable involves being taught, corrected and rebuked, always keep in mind that these things come from the Lord. Read **Hebrews 12:5-16**. Verses 5 - 9 speak about how the discipline of God is manifested and why it is given. Verses 10 and 11 speak of the purpose of the Lord's discipline. Verses 12 and 13 are an exhortation to not give up. His discipline is not given to burden us, but rather, to set us free from the burden of sin (remember Ezekiel 33:7-11?). Verses 14 and 15 summarize what accountability is all about. There goes that phrase again: *See to it*... That means: hold yourself *accountable*! Today's memory verse is challenging! Write **Eph. 4:11-13** on an index card and memorize it. Isn't God's plan awesome?!

INSIGHT

The term *resurrection* deals with the teaching, event and act of persons being brought from death to unending life at the close of the age. Jesus' preaching included the doctrine of the resurrection. Opposition by the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, gave Jesus the opportunity to assert His own thought on the matter (**Mark 12:18-27**). John's Gospel presents Jesus as the mediator of the resurrection who gives to believers the life given Him by His Father (**John 6:53-58**).

It is every true Christian's hope to see Jesus and to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. The power of Christ, His sovereign power, is summed up in this phrase: "*I am the resurrection and the life.*" (**John 11:25-26**). It is an unspeakable comfort to all true disciples that Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life; and will be so to them! *Resurrection* is a return to life; Christ is the author of that return and gives the life that effects that return.

This promise of eternal life in Christ is given to everyone who believes in Him. **Mark 16:15-16, John 8:31-32, Acts 2:26-42, Romans 10:9-17 and Revelation 2:10b** gives further insight on what it means to believe in Christ. The Lord Jesus did speak of a resurrection of the wicked and the righteous. He says in **John 5:28-29** that all who are in the grave will hear His voice. To what shall they be raised? Some to life and some to misery. Those who have died in Christ will be resurrected to live forever. They will be admitted into the presence of God with their new bodies--that is life! But those who lived outside of Christ shall be resurrected to eternal damnation – shut out from the presence of God, that is death! The Bible unquestionably affirms the doctrine of resurrection of all persons from the dead. We all have a corporate destiny to encounter just and divine response to faithfulness and unfaithfulness (**Acts 24:15**). Are you in Christ? Have you been born again? (**John 3:3-5**)

The Attitude in Christ Readiness

Key Text:

Titus 2:11-13

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior"

Theme:

Heaven and the happiness of it is emphatically called *the blessed hope* because it is the great thing we look for; and a *blessed hope* because it is the great thing we look for; and a *blessed hope* because, when we attain it, we shall be completely happy for ever. As Christians, it is our duty and desire to look forward to the coming of Christ. Are you ready to meet Jesus? Are you looking for that blessed hope? Our response to this question will determine our readiness!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Read** scripture pertaining to Christ's return and Heaven.
2. **Get involved** in the kingdom of Christ. Be determined to be found working for Jesus and living for God!
3. **Encourage** members of the church with the hope and joy of heaven and the return of Christ (**1 Thess. 4:16-18**).
4. **Share** the blessed hope of eternal life and the return of Christ with those who do not know Jesus.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Readiness I. The Blessed Hope A. Effects of Christ's Return 1. Be Watchful a. No time established for his appearance (<i>Matt 24:42</i>) -- Some try to speculate -- The emphasis is to be ready to receive Him b. Parable of the 10 Virgins (<i>Matt 25:1-13</i>) -- foolish ones slept and missed the groom 2. Motivation To Work a. This hope causes a believer to strive to live a pure and blameless life (<i>1 John 3:3</i>) b. Parable of the Talents (<i>Matt 25:14-30</i>) 3. Motivation To Encouragement a. This hope is for our encouragement (<i>1 Thess. 4:13-18</i>) B. Our Heavenly Home (Rev. 21:1-5) 1. No more struggles, immense happiness Conclusion: This Hope Is Given Freely <i>He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. Rev 21:6</i>	Warm-up: Have you ever been caught unprepared for a situation that you knew was going to happen well in advance? See To It <i>Matthew 25:1-13</i> This parable employs the pageantry of an Oriental wedding. Several observations will aid in the understanding of the parable. Eastern weddings were set for a given day, but Orientals have never been as bound by precision of starting or ending times as are those in western culture. The bridal party was to be ready. Sometime after sundown, members of the groom's party, bearing lamps on poles, would depart from the home of the groom and proceed through the streets in a gala procession. They would join with the bridal party, and the two would wind back through the village to the place designated for the ceremony and the wedding feast. The ten virgins of the parable are part of the bridal party. 1. What was the difference between the foolish and the prudent virgins? 2. Did this difference have to do with their attitude towards being prepared (ready)? 3. Why did the bridegroom miss the foolish virgins? 4. Did these virgins still want to be part of the wedding feast? 5. Why weren't they allowed to come in? Seeing It Closer: 1. Are you holding a lamp only to run out of oil because of your attitude? 2. Notice that all the virgins fall asleep at one point. When they wake up is when they meet the challenge of preparedness. What does this mean? Getting To It: Are you a Christian in heart, soul, mind and strength? Share how your beliefs and convictions are shaping your attitude of preparedness.

Readiness: The Hope of Eternal Life

MONDAY

All the topics we've been studying lately do not make any sense and have no value unless we consider the reason behind the motivation for studying them. The reason is the **resurrection** of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was sent to die for our sins and to give us a hope beyond this life by His resurrection. If He had only died on the cross and then buried, He would not have been any different from any other martyr. What declared Him Lord and Savior of all men was the fact that He arose on the third day (**Romans 1:4**). Read carefully **John 3:13-16**. What is Jesus trying to establish in verse 13? The account Jesus is referring to in verse 14 is found in **Numbers 21:4-9**. What parallels can you draw between the account in the desert with Moses and the crucifixion of Jesus? What was the purpose in lifting up the snake and the Son of Man? Why was this done (vs. 16)? Notice that **eternal life** is the key word in these passages! What's the other side of the coin? Write **John 3:36** on an index card and memorize it. Share this great hope with your co-workers this week.

TUESDAY

To have eternal life means more than to live forever. The stress is more on the quality than on the quantity, though both are affirmed. Furthermore, John reveals it to be not only future possession but also a present reality. This is the life Jesus offers to the world. Read **John 5:24**. What are two qualifiers for eternal life? What does it mean to believe Jesus' word *and* to believe the One who set Him? Does Jesus say that you *will have* eternal life as in the future, if you believe, or does He say that you *have* it *now*, as soon as you accept these things (obeying the gospel)? There's obviously some commitment involved in the qualifiers of eternal life. Read **John 6:61-69**. Notice the exclusivity in vs. 65. Many had and still have a hard time with that. Why? What kind of attitude did the apostles have considering the rejection of other people? Doesn't vs. 69 contain the qualifiers of eternal life we read in the previous passage? Write **John 12:25** on an index card and memorize it. Have you let go of your worldly life?

WEDNESDAY

Appreciating what God has given you involves understanding and knowing His will. Read **1 John 5:20**. Reflect on this passage for a while and pray after you've read it once and then read it again carefully. Rely on the Spirit God has given you to teach you about this conviction the Apostle John has. What did Jesus come to give you? Why has He give you this? Toward whom does this understanding lead you? What, or should I say Who is God and eternal life? Does the understanding of this passage lead you to believe that your walk in Christ is an exercise in self-control with a reward at the end, or a blissful commitment to an eternal relationship with your Lord and Savior, your Bridegroom? Your conviction on this one can be shown by how much of your present life you entrust to God. Read **Mark 10:23-30**. How much have you entrusted to your Lord? Write **John 17:3** on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

You want absolute, exact proof that you will rise again? Do you want to be sure that you will partake in the resurrection of the righteous? Read **Romans 6:3-12**. What happened when you were baptized, if indeed you have been baptized (vs. 3 and 4)? So why should you, or anyone, be baptized? So baptism is a means to an end, right? To what end (vs. 6, 7, and 8)? Look at verse 7. Count yourself *dead* to sin but *alive* to God! This is eternal life folks! You have received it! You have been raised from the watery grave to **LIFE**! So if you have united yourself with Him like this (being baptized [Acts 2:38]) in His death (baptism is a simulation of death), you will **CERTAINLY** be what??? Praise the Lord!!! Write **1 Peter 3:21** on an index card and memorize it. What is it that makes this baptism effective? Share this great news!

FRIDAY

This has been an exciting week, hasn't it? On and on the Lord continues to assure us and encourage us with the plans He has prepared for us. I'm going to ask you to dwell on a long passage: **1 Corinthians 15:35-58**. Notice the parallels between Adam and Jesus, which are a reflection between our former selves, born like Adam and fallen, and our new selves, raised to life in Christ by the Spirit. What's going to happen to you if Jesus comes back before you die? Verse 57 is the attitude of thankfulness in all things and verse 58 is the motivation to continue in our earthly struggle, because, we have some incredible things to look forward to in our relationship with God! Write **1 Peter 2:9** on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

Forgiveness has both divine and human dimensions. In the divine relationship, forgiveness is, first of all, the gracious act of God by which true believers are put into a right relationship to God and transferred from spiritual death to spiritual life through the sacrifice of Jesus. It is also, in this divine dimension, the ongoing gift of God without which our lives as Christians would be “out of joint” and full of guilt. It is through this divine act of God’s grace that true believers are released from being accountable for sins they confess. In terms of a human dimension, forgiveness is that act and attitude towards those who have wronged us which restores relationships and fellowship. Jesus spoke of the human dimension of forgiveness. A firm condition for the receiving of God’s forgiveness is the willingness to forgive others. Two places where we see this is in the Lord’s Prayer when Jesus says, “*Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors*” (**Matt. 6:12**) and in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (**Matt. 18:12-35**). Jesus clearly indicated such is the case: “*But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins*” (**Matt. 6:15**). The forgiven life is the forgiving life.

Human forgiveness reflects our experience and understanding of divine forgiveness. We cannot know the Christ of the Cross if we refuse to forgive. Love is what governs forgiveness. Those who love are born of God and know God (**1 John 4:7**). Jesus powerfully demonstrates this teaching on the cross, as He asked for forgiveness for His executioners (**Luke 23:34**). Paul reminded the church at Ephesus of both the grounds of their forgiveness and the basis on which they must forgive one another when he said, “*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*” (**Eph. 4:32**).

The Attitude in Christ Forgiveness

Key Text:

Matthew 6:14

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Theme:

The fifth petition in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6 includes the clause “*as we also have forgiven our debtors.*” Here, our Savior shows us the necessity and importance of forgiveness and how to sustain it in the Lord. God forgives us our wrongs relative to the way we forgive those who wrong us. When we pray for pardon, we must be conscious of how we pardon! If we are to seek mercy from God, we must be ready to show mercy. Why should God forgive the thousands of talents we owe Him, if we don’t forgive the hundreds of denarii others owe us? Christ came as Peace-Maker – not only to reconcile us to God, but to one another. Let us, therefore, not make light of the matter of personal forgiveness. For God forgives us relative to the way we forgive others.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Do not slander** your brother! Instead, go to him, in private, and humbly speak to him, showing him his fault.
2. **Be ready** to forgive any grievances! We desire spontaneous mercy from the Lord! Therefore, do the same!
3. **Forgive** unconditionally. Conditional forgiveness is not true forgiveness. Learn to simply say “I forgive you!”
4. **Be sincere** in your forgiveness. God wants us to *forgive from the heart!*

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Forgiveness I. The Cross Is Forgiveness A. Its the basis of Christianity 1. His blood shed for <i>forgiveness</i> (Mt. 26:28) 2. His message is <i>forgiveness</i> (Luke 24:46-47) 3. Belief in Him brings <i>forgiveness</i> (Acts 10:43) 4. Jesus is all about <i>forgiveness</i>; His people ought to be all about forgiveness too! B. The Prodigal Son's Brother (Lk 15:25-32) 1. The parable in its context a. Directed to the Pharisees --The Father: God, the common Father --The brothers: mankind b. Older brother--reserved and educated c. Younger brother--impulsive, fickle 2. The older brother's disposition a. His envy and complaining --he boasted of himself and his virtue --he complained of his father --he was irritable towards his brother C. The father's disposition towards the oldest son a. He came out when the son wouldn't go into the house b. Very controlled, patient, and pleading --His love was even evident towards this sour, irritable kid --He encouraged him to come in --He reassured His love for him --He gives him a good reason for the joyous celebration II. Conclusion 1. Seek to reconcile as the father did 2. His children shall be with him for ever 3. All that is His is ours (Rom. 8:17) 4. Be ready to forgive!	Warm-up: Have you recently been in a situation where you were hurt by another person and the result was anger and avoidance? See To It <i>Matthew 18:21-35</i> 1. Looking at verses 21-22, what is Jesus teaching Peter about the nature of forgiveness? How should we forgive? 2. What prompted Peter to say, "up to 7 times?" What does this say about our nature regarding forgiving others? 3. What is the overall theme of this parable? Read Matthew 6:12 for further insight. 4. What major teachings do you see here in this parable? 5. What is your insight to verse 34? Does this mean that punishment is temporary? Explain with Scripture. Seeing It Closer: 1. How does the ten thousand talents and the hundred pence (denarii) relate to us today? 2. What should be the basis of our need to readily forgive our debtors? What would help us to be a people of forgiveness? Getting To It: Go around the room and take turns sharing with each other what this parable has taught you. Pray for each other to be a people filled with compassion and mercy. 100 pence (denarii) is approx. \$15.00 1 Talent (of silver) is approx. \$1,600.00 10,000 talents is approx. 16 million dollars

The Forgiving Life

MONDAY

This week, we will be focusing on forgiveness from the human perspective. We will be looking at four people and their remarkable display of forgiveness. Friday's quiet time will deal with you personally, as we conclude on living the forgiving life. Let us look at the story of Joseph, Israel's devoted son. Read **Genesis 37,39-45**, focus especially on chapter 37, which deals with Joseph's brothers and their mistreatment of him and chapter 45, which deals with Joseph's act of forgiveness towards his humbled brothers. What caused Joseph's brothers to hate him so much? Write down all their reasons for hating Joseph. What plans did his brothers have for Joseph? What did they do him? From chapters 39-43, what do you notice about the kind of man Joseph was? Why did the Lord bless him? From chapter 45, what do you learn about Joseph's attitude towards his brother who mistreated him? How is Joseph like Christ? Write **Matthew 6:12** on an index card and memorize it. Be made aware of how you forgive. Will you be like Joseph, your brother?

TUESDAY

Today, we will be looking at Stephen, a true servant of the Lord. Read **Acts chapter 6**. What was happening within the growing church? What did the apostles propose to the church to solve this problem of favoritism? Why did the church choose Stephen to be one of the overseers to the daily distribution of food? What does this chapter tell you about Stephen's reputation? Write down his characteristics. It is interesting to know the name "Stephen" signifies *a crown*. Now read **Acts chapter 7**. What else do you notice about Stephen? Was he afraid of defending the Gospel? Write down the godly qualities of Stephen from chapter 7. Why were the Sanhedrin moved to rage? How did Stephen respond to his raging executioners? Does Stephen's statement sound familiar? Who said a similar statement? You may want to resort to a concordance for help. Write **Matthew 6:14** on an index card and memorize it. Will you be like Stephen, your brother?

WEDNESDAY

Today, we will be looking at a father's attitude towards his bitter son. Read **Luke 15:11-32**. How did the older brother behave towards the welcoming his younger brother? What did the father do when he learned that his son was angry and out in the field? Whom did the older son boast about? Do you think that this older son has never sinned against his father? Do you think he was being completely truthful in his claims of himself? Although the older son was negative towards his brother and dad, how did his father respond? How would the world respond to such disrespect and bitterness? How would you respond to such disrespect and bitterness? Who is this 'father' figuratively representing? Write **Ephesians 4:32** on an index card and memorize it. Will you be like God, your Father?

THURSDAY

Today, we will be looking at the Lord's attitude towards his merciless executioners. Read **Luke 23:26-34**. Sounds familiar? Remember Tuesday's lesson? Well, now we know from where Stephen got his forgiving attitude in **Acts 7:60**! Rightly did Jesus say in **Luke 6:40**, "*A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*" What was the first statement that came out of Jesus' mouth after He was fastened to the cross? Who was He praying for? When was the last time you prayed this way for those who have wronged you? When was the last time you pleaded with God for mercy on behalf of your debtors? How have you reacted towards those who have verbally or emotionally crucified you? Write **Colossians 3:12,13** on an index card and memorize it. Will you be like Jesus, your Lord?

FRIDAY

This has been an challenging week, hasn't it? Forgiveness is what Cross is all about. Look up in a concordance the word "forgiveness" and you will see Jesus, His blood and His message (the gospel)! Read **Matthew 18:21-35**. In verse 22, what is Christ teaching here regarding forgiveness? What does this tell you about God's mercy towards you? Who does the "king" represent? Who are the servants? The thousands of talents represent what? How about the hundred denarii (pence)? Which debt is the greater? Why did God call the servant wicked? How does this relate to you? Can the debt of sin ever be paid in full without Christ? Therefore, what does verse 34 mean? Does this mean his punishment is only temporary? What is the wages of sin? How are we to forgive our brother? Are you like the king or like the unmerciful servant? Read **Matthew 6:12**. Write **Matthew 6:15** on an index card and memorize it. Will you be as this King?

INSIGHT

The word *edification* literally has to do with “building up”. It is every Christian’s duty to be a person of edification because it strengthens faith, especially those who are weak or discouraged. All faithful men of God were ministers of edification. Moses encouraged the Israelites not to be afraid of the pursuing Egyptians. For Moses reminded them of the Lord’s promise to deliver them from their captors. The result was a saved people (**Exo. 14:10-14,30-31**). Nehemiah, the noble statesman, encouraged the people of Israel not to grow weary in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. He reminded them of God’s awesome power to complete the task in them. The result was a completed wall (**Neh. 4:10, 14, 15; 6:15, 16**). God, Himself, through the prophet Isaiah, encouraged the Israelites not to be dismayed; He reminded them of His nearness and promised them strength (**Isa. 41:10**). Jesus, Himself was an man of encouragement as He reminded the apostles of their heavenly home (**John 14:1-2**); and even He needed encouragement during His hour of trial (**Luke 22:41-43**).

The kingdom of God, the church of Christ, is all about encouragement (**1 Thess. 5:11**). It is all about building up one another with encouraging words (**Eph. 4:29**). It is all about the demonstration of love towards one another, and not just talk; for *knowledge puffs up, but love builds up* (**1 Cor. 8:1b**). It is all about righteousness, peace and joy of the Holy Spirit! (**Romans 14:17**) As to God, it is *righteousness* for the Lord loves righteousness (**Ps. 33:5**). As to our brethren, it is *peace* – to live in peace and love with them. Christ came into the world to be the great peace maker. Finally, as to ourselves, it is the *joy of the Holy Spirit*; to delight ourselves always in the Lord! Surely, we serve a great Master, who makes peace and joy so essential to our faith! Be a source of encouragement!

The Attitude in Christ Edification

Key Text: **Romans 14:17-19**

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

Theme:

True Christianity is called the *kingdom of God*. It is intended to rule us. It is not about foods, but about righteousness, peace and joy of the Spirit. It is in these things we serve Christ and are pleasing to God. For those who truly love the Lord will pursue the things of the Lord. How are we to promote righteousness, peace and joy? Paul tells us how: it is by *mutual edification*. Are you pursuing the things that lead to righteousness, peace and joy? Are you known for your edifying spirit? Are you a source of encouragement?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Greet** your brother or sister with a loving hug! Hug visitors too! For there is no law against hugging! And I haven’t met anyone who hates a hug!
2. **Get to know** your new brethren. Make yourself known to them as Christ made himself known to you!
3. **Call** a brother or sister, especially when they are down or discouraged. Pray with them over the phone, if possible.
4. **Invite** brethren into your home, especially those who you do not know you well. (**Rom. 12:13b**)
5. **Write** letters and cards of encouragement!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Edification I. The Church A. The Threefold Purpose (Rom 14:17) 1. Righteousness--God (behavior) 2. Peace--Brothers (ministering) 3. Joy--Self (salvation) B. Edification: The Propellant For Success 1. Eph. 4:11-13--Christ's Goal a. Building of His church --prepare the saints (Gk: <i>perfecting</i>) i) bring into an orderly spiritual state those who were disjointed by sin ii) advance them towards works of service (Gk: <i>ministry</i>) iii) for the building up of the body 1. maturity in Christ 2. addition of new members C. Example from Nehemiah 1. Setting: The Rebuilding of Wall a. Jerusalem lies in ruins after Babylonian captivity. b. Rebuilding of wall unto like the church 1. Nehemiah's prayer and fasting (1:4f) i. Nehemiah's concern and desire ii. Nehemiah's prayer of humility 2. Nehemiah's sacrifice to accomplish a great work (2:5) 3. Cooperation of the people (2:17-18) 4. The work begins (3) 2. Difficulties Encountered (4:6-15) a. Spiritual hindrances b. Nehemiah's Encouragement 3. Completion of the wall (6:15) II. Conclusion 1. Jesus needed encouragement to complete His task to which he was called! (Lk 22:41-43) 2. We need encouragement to complete our task -- Be a ministering angel!	Warm-up: Have you ever succeeded in a task that was directly linked by the encouragement of others who believed in you? See To It Nehemiah 2:1-8; 4:1-14; 6:15 1. Read Neh. 2:1-8. What was Nehemiah's request? Why was he sad? 2. What kind of relationship did Nehemiah have with this king? What kind of reputation should Christians have with outsiders? 3. Read Neh. 4:1-14. What happens when a good work is in progress? What happened here? 4. How did Nehemiah overcome these hindrances? 5. Read Neh. 6:15. What eventually happened? How was Nehemiah instrumental in the success of the rebuilding of the wall? Seeing It Closer: 1. How does the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem relate to the church today? 2. How can we be like Nehemiah? How can we be instrumental in building the church? Give some examples. Getting To It: Pray for each other to be a people eager to labor in the building up of the church of Christ. Pray that we all can be a people of encouragement, determined to finish the wall of the kingdom!

Edifying One Another

MONDAY

The purpose of the Body of Christ is to provide an environment for you to grow up in the way of God. You need a holy haven here on Earth that provides nourishment and strength to your soul so that you can keep persevering in the work of the Kingdom. The fourth and fifth chapter of Ephesians provide much insight into the attitude you must have as a member of the Body so that God can use you to encourage and build each other. Read *Ephesians 4:11-13*. Our older brethren are put in these positions for what purpose? What must we be united in? Can you trace the path to maturity as described in this passage? Notice the purpose of the Body is for growth towards attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Tall order, isn't it? If you are not growing, changing and putting off your old self, you will not be useful in the Kingdom! Write *Proverbs 11:19* on an index card and memorize it. Growth is shown through what you say and how you say it! Make a list of people in the church you want to edify. Throughout the week, call them or write them an encouraging letter, from the heart!

TUESDAY

As a person who has been called out of the world and into the Kingdom of God, the way you treat your brothers and sisters must be *holy*. Read *Ephesians 4:22-27*. What are you taught to put off in Christ? What must be made new? Deception and superficiality are popular worldly attitudes. What must your new attitude reflect when you speak to your brothers and sisters? Anger leads to separation and destruction when sin is combined with it. Verses 26 and 27 teach you that anger must be dealt with immediately. By speaking truthfully to each other, your anger can be used to **edify** rather than to tear down. *Ephesians 4:15* teaches you to speak the truth **in love**. The purpose is for building each other up, not causing others to have an attitude. Write *2 Timothy 2:21* on an index card and memorize it. Be holy as He is Holy! Who have you called or written to?

WEDNESDAY

Many times I have spoken because I want to be listened to – I want to be considered wise, bold and mature. These next passages teach me that what must come out of my mouth should be only what builds other's up. Whether I feel comfortable or not is not the case. Neither is what I would like to say, or what I feel like saying. What must come out should reflect benevolence, compassion and maturity. If there is disagreement, I need to promote **peace**. Read *Ephesians 4:29-32*. Notice what the goal of your speech should be. What we say and how we say it needs to be towards the purpose of **building**. Who will you grieve if you cannot keep your tongue under control? (*James 3:7-12*) Would you like to be attached to someone who continually grieves you? Verse 31 contains a list of things that grieve the Spirit and your brothers, while verse 32 has a list of things that encourage and edify all. **Forgiving each other as Christ forgave you!** Learn the difference between the two kinds of wisdom: read *James 3:13-18*. What characteristics does Heavenly wisdom have? This is the wisdom that brings edification! Write verse 17 on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

If you don't give yourself for the purpose of edification, you are in danger of being cursed and in the end, burned. Read the following analogy the Hebrew writer has given in *Hebrews 6:7-8*. Who is the land? What is the rain? Who are "those for whom it is farmed"? What does it mean by thorns and thistles? As you can see, resistance to the molding hand of God will make you worthless in the Kingdom. You don't want to be worthless! God wants you in the Kingdom so you can be useful in His hands! Read *2 Timothy 2:15-16*. List the characteristics of an approved *workperson*. What does such a person avoid? In the previous verses we have seen, godly talk and godless chatter have been contrasted. List some examples of godless chatter. If you have partaken in some of this with someone, call that person and apologize for grieving them. Write *2 Corinthians 2:14* on an index card and memorize it. How sweet is your aroma?

FRIDAY

I believe that the ultimate expression of edification is when we speak and teach each other with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. This expression comes out of a joyful and thankful heart—a submissive heart, as Paul reveals in *Ephesians 5:1-4* and then in *Ephesians 5:19-21*. Notice that the focus of the theme we have looked at this week is found in verses 1 and 2. According to these verses, what was so fragrant (pleasing) about Jesus' actions? Verses 3 and 4 contain a list of things that are not "fragrant" to God. Can you see yourself abandoning these things and making your attitude new by putting on your "new self", made in the image of Christ? Your new attitude in Christ should show encouragement, thankfulness, and submission. This will be a fragrant aroma! Write *2 Corinthians 2:15-16* on an index card and memorize it. What kind of aroma are you?

INSIGHT

One of the most familiar and important forms of energy is *light*. Nothing is visible to humans when light is totally absent. Light penetrates and dispels darkness. It also sustains life on Earth. Without it, all living creatures would be unable to survive. However, apart from the physical light which God created (**Gen. 1:3**), there is a greater form of light: that light is God! In **Psalm 27:1**, David says, "*The Lord is my light.*" In **Psalm 104:2**, the psalmist testified of the Lord who "*wraps himself in light as with a garment.*" In **John 8:12**, Jesus, the God-man, said, "*I am the light of the world.*" The Apostle John says that "*God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*" (**1 John 1:5**)

Such expressions make at least two things abundantly clear. First, the origin of light rests with God. Second, in some sense God Himself is the very essence of light. Such statements do not suppose that God is light and nothing more, but they do stress that God is the ultimate source of all knowing and understanding. To this end **Psalm 119:105** informs us that God's Word is a "light" to one's path. Here the concept of "light" lies upon the perception and understanding gained when darkness is dispelled and light revealed. This concept is more clearly understood in **John 3:19**: "*men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*" Light, in the spiritual realm, exposes and provides understanding and purity, while the opposite of light (or darkness) is designed to obscure, deceive, kill and harbor wickedness.

Jesus came to give life. And that life was the light of men (**John 1:4**). Just as He is the light of the world (**John 8:12**), He calls us to be the light of the world (**Matt. 5:14**). He calls us to be reflectors in a darkened world, transmitting through our lives the true light of the eternal Son of God! It is our duty to shine forth, so that all men may see the glory of Christ! Let the life you lead be a lamp unto men's paths!

The Life in Christ *The Light Of The World*

Key Text: **Acts 13:47**

"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

Theme:

The life in Christ is a shining light! A lively faith that triumphs in God and rejoices in His holy name! David was called by his subjects the lamp of Israel (**2 Sam. 21:17**) and he was indeed a burning and a shining light! But he knew the light he gave off was like that of the moon--borrowed light. The light that darted upon him was God. For this reason he says "*the Lord is my light!*". Are you a burning light, reflecting the light of God in your life? Do men see the light of the Lord in you?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Be a positive influence** to those around you! Be like a lamp in a dark place, offering the light of encouragement and hope!
2. **Be used by the Spirit!** Pursue the things that glorify God! Read and apply the teachings of the Spirit to your life in all circumstances! Let Him work through you!
3. **Call** a brother or sister and encourage them! Pray with them over the phone.
4. **Tell** others of the Good News of Jesus! Be the light of salvation Jesus calls you to be!
5. **Ask** the Lord to shine through you in all you say and do! Ask Him to make you an instrument of His love.
6. **Let** your love for Jesus be evident to all, especially to those in the kingdom!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
The Light Of The World I. Light In The Physical Realm A. Sustains life 1. God created light (<i>Gen 1:3</i>) 2. Living creatures created after (<i>Gen 1:20</i>) 3. Biological truths a. Creatures depend directly/indirectly on light (sunlight): plant, animal, man b. We learn by what light reveals to us c. Affects us psychologically 4. In spiritual realm: John 1:4,5 a. It gives life to the penitent sinner b. It teaches truth through revelation c. Affects those who “see” the light B. King David: The Lamp of Israel! 1. 2 Samuel 21:15-17 a. His reputation came from: i) his devotion to nation of Israel --He was old and still went to fight against the Philistines ii) he was loyal to the Lord is his testimony and worship: he was never an idolater iii) his acknowledgment of God as his source of light (Ps 27:1) C. The Christian: The Lamp of Christ 1. Matthew 5:14-16 a. We are the light, illuminated by Christ! b. The sign of an active faith is the example (light) we set forth in all occasions! -- A city on a hill will be seen -- A bright beam will penetrate the darkest of night! c. Lk. 11:35--See to it that you are not a dark light II. Conclusion: Faithful lamps never fade! <i>Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. Daniel 12:3</i>	Warm-up: Would you ever buy or use a light bulb that is either blown or painted black? Why? What would be the outcome? What would you do with such a bulb? See To It Luke 11:33-36 1. Why is it foolish to hide a shining light? What is a shining light used for? 2. Read John 1:4-5. What does the light of Christ bring to mankind? Who is this “light” and what is this “light”? 3. What does the phrase “<i>the light shines in the darkness</i>” mean? And the phrase “<i>but the darkness has not understood it</i>”? 4. Go back to Luke 11:33. What do you think the following terms in verse thirty-three represent? a. The lamp? b. The light? c. The stand? Seeing It Closer: 1. How does verse thirty-three relate to Jesus? What was his purpose for “shining forth”? What should be our purpose for “shining forth”? 2. Read Luke 11:34-36. Will everyone respond favorably to the “light”? Therefore, should we expect everyone to respond to us if we shine? 3. How is it that your “<i>eye is the lamp</i>” of your body? What does Jesus mean by “<i>your whole body also is full of light</i>”? 4. What is Jesus’ concern for us today? What kind of <i>light</i> should we be? Getting To It: Pray for each other to be lights shining in dark places. Pray that the light of the Lord will shine through us in any and every circumstance!

Let your light so shine...

MONDAY

Being a disciple of Jesus, a Christian, means living a dynamic life—possible only by and through the Holy Spirit we received at baptism. It means putting His teachings into practice. Not just nodding or saying “Amen!” during the sermons on Sunday, or agreeing with your discipler about what you need to do, or being humble and submissive in front of the church. Those convictions that are forming within you need to be **expressed** by your deeds. The Lord needs to be glorified by **what you do**, not just by what you say or believe. Read *James 2:14-18*. Is it enough just to know what to do? Is it enough just to intellectually believe? What happens if your faith is not accompanied by deeds (actions)? How is your faith manifested before men? Remember Noah! His conviction was evident because of the ark he built. That ark was the testimony of his faith. Write *Ephesians 2:10* on an index card and memorize it. Remember: we are not saved by faith *plus* works, but by a faith *that* works!

TUESDAY BEING A LIGHT AT WORK...

“Our light must shine, by doing such good works as men may see. What is between God and our souls, must be kept to ourselves; but that which is of itself open to the sight of men, we must study to make suitable to our profession, and praiseworthy. We must aim at the glory of God.”—Matthew Henry You probably believe you have a profession of some kind. Perhaps you are a laborer of sorts, or a teacher, a doctor, lawyer, secretary, accountant, or a student. But did you ever think of yourself as “good news carrier”? A messenger of God? Isn’t that what you really are when you become a disciple? Read *Matthew 5:16*. What are these good works? Do you make an effort to share these good works with those you work with? What is the purpose of sharing these good works, to glorify yourself? Write *Romans 13:12* on an index card and memorize it. Don’t just stick to doing your job at work; remember to do the Lord’s work at your job! Get to know someone at work (school) that you haven’t met before. See to it that your light shines to guide them to the Lord.

WEDNESDAY BEING A LIGHT TO STRANGERS...

As you go about your daily business, you come across a lot of people. At work, at the grocery store, at school, on the road, and even on the internet you deal with many people. How can you make an effective impression upon these people? Do you impress yourself upon them or do you impress Jesus upon them? Check out *2 Corinthians 4:5*. Make yourself their servant! How many people do you know say they want to be *your* servant? Remember Jesus came to serve, not to be served! Read *1 Corinthians 9:16-23*. What were Paul’s motives when preaching the gospel? Find out what compelled Paul to preach in *2 Corinthians 5:14-15*. How did Paul attempt to win people to the gospel? Do you think Paul was out to make associations with people or did he set out to make and have relationships with people? Getting involved with people at work, or with strangers you meet, takes a lot of effort and time. Be patient and serve!

THURSDAY BEING A LIGHT AT FELLOWSHIPS...

Don’t you have a great time at fellowships? Isn’t it great to be in such a wonderful family as the family of God? It is a great blessing to be in such a caring environment. The care we have for one another and the love we show for each other is the most brilliant light that can shine in this dark, dark world. Read *John 13:34-35*. *“The whole world is to distinguish Christ’s disciples not by mighty acts, but in the kind of love Jesus exhibited as seen in His disciples’ acts of love and concern.”—Believer’s Study Bible*. Sometimes, however, attitudes flare up because of selfishness. The light is dimmed, or becomes cold (like a fluorescent light) because you want to be served or think you are above others. Read *1 John 2:9-11*. Can you possibly be in the light and hate your brother? Keep in mind that hate is the opposite of love (See *1 Corinthians 13:4-7*). See to it that you are walking in the light! Write *1 Thessalonians 5:5-6* on an index card and memorize it. Have you encouraged someone today?

FRIDAY BEING A LIGHT AT HOME...

The test of true discipleship is how your light shines at home. You might live with unbelieving parents, or an unbelieving spouse, or children; or you might live with a believing spouse or brethren. Whatever the situation, these people see you in your best and worst moments. If it’s tough to be a disciple when you are A-OK, imagine, then, when you’re not feeling well?! How do you carry your “lighted” self when you’re sick? When you’re depressed? When you’re angry? When you’re stressed? Read again *Matthew 5:14-15*. Jesus’ first compares you to a city on a hill, a light for those who are far away, to attract them to the Lord. Next however, He compares you to a light that someone uses **in a house!** In your house, put that light on a lampstand! Make sure it’s a real light too. Read *Luke 11:35-36*. Are there any dark parts in a light? Are there any dark parts in you? (Remember *1 John 1:7-10*!) Write *Psalms 37:6* on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

In ancient times, salt was so valuable that it was used for money. In fact, our modern word *salary* is derived from the word salt. The Latin word *salarium* means “salt money” and referred to the allowance of salt that was paid to Roman soldiers. Even today, in some parts of the world, salt is one of the most prized commodities. Salt is valued because of its properties as a condiment and preservative, along with its essentiality to the body.

In Biblical times, salt took on a religious significance. Apart from it being used as a seasoning for food (**Job 6:6**), salt had an intimate connection with the idea of a covenant or binding relationship. Called the “*salt of the covenant*”, salt was used in all the offerings (**Lev. 2:13**) and was a symbolic “preservative” of covenants (**Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5**).

Jesus calls His disciples to be *the salt of the earth* and lights of the world. The Old Testament prophets were the salt of the land of Canaan; but Christians are called to be salt of the whole earth, for Jesus said *go into all the world and preach the good news*. How can a few people effect such a large region as the world? By working silently as salt with the gospel of Christ! Just as a handful of salt disperses its taste throughout food, so the teaching of the gospel disperses far and wide, penetrating and reaching the hearts of men (**Acts 2:37**). The *salt* of the gospel cleanses the soul and preserves it from spiritual decomposition. It is an everlasting covenant between God and true believers.

Just as salt was required in all sacrifices, so are Christians required to be “salty,” to be *salt of the earth*. Mankind lies in ignorance and wickedness, in need of Jesus! For this reason, Christ sends His believers to season the world, through their lives and teachings, with the knowledge and grace of the gospel! To render those who would believe the gospel acceptable to God! Be the salt of the earth!

The Life in Christ *The Salt Of The Earth*

Key Text: **Matthew 5:13**

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”

Theme:

Christianity is the salt of the earth, diffusing the hope of the gospel into the hearts of men! Faithful believers are a great blessing to the world because through them, the world is seasoned with the message of eternal life! Christians are called not only to teach the gospel, but also to live lives worthy of the gospel (**Col. 1:10**). Are you salted with the grace and goodness of the gospel? Is grace and goodness flowing through you in what you say and do? Do men see Christ living in you? Are you the salt of the earth?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Be a source of encouragement!** Be known as a person who edifies, both in the spiritual and secular realms.
2. **Pray for wisdom!** Ask the Lord to shine through you in all you say and do, that His name will be glorified in your life!
3. **Read the Word!** Grow in the knowledge of the Lord and apply God’s teaching to all circumstances!
4. **Test everything!** In all you do, do it to the glory of God! Let all your decisions be to the praise of Jesus!
5. **Share the gospel.** Part of being the *salt of the earth* is us spreading the “taste” of the gospel to others and to preserve the souls of men through the hope of the cross!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
The Salt of the Earth! I. Properties of Salt A. It Preserves 1. Prevents corruption a. Good antiseptic b. Keeps away harmful microbes 2. Maintains purity a. Preserves original form b. Has a cleansing effect c. Removes harmful ice, snow 3. Preserves balance, unity a. Maintains integrity b. Is a neutral solution B. It enhances flavor 1. Salt makes your taste buds dance! 2. Makes you want more of something 3. Creates a craving C. It is influential 1. It will always be salty 2. You can count on it! 3. It dissolves and permeates thoroughly 4. It will be noticed II. How salt's properties can be exhibited in us: <i>As God makes you salty you will be salt...</i> A. By Preserving the Word <i>1 Timothy 4:16</i> <i>2 Peter 1:4</i> 1- God has set you aside (made you holy)! 1. Prevent being corrupted by the world <i>James 1:27</i> 2. Transform yourself by renewal <i>Rom 12:1f</i> B. By Preserving Peace <i>Romans 14:17</i> 1. In your deeds 2. In your speech <i>Colossians 4:6</i> 3. In your thoughts and attitude C. By Influencing your surroundings 1. With your zeal for good deeds <i>Titus 2:14</i> 2. Your desire for holiness <i>2 Cor. 7:1</i> 3. Be authentic! <i>Mark 9:50</i>	Warm-up: Would you season your food with a spice that is totally flavorless? Why? What is the purpose for using spices? See To It <i>Matthew 5:13-16</i> 1. What is the nature of salt? What does it do? 2. How are <i>light</i> and <i>salt</i> similar? How are they different? Explain in secular and spiritual terms. 3. Why are Christians the salt of the earth? What does it mean to be <i>the salt of the earth</i>? 4. How does New Testament Christianity differ from Old Testament Judaism in terms of verse thirteen? 5. Explain what Jesus meant by salt losing its saltiness? Seeing It Closer: 1. Chemically speaking, can salt (sodium chloride) lose its saltiness? What do you think? 2. What are the characteristics of those who truly love Jesus and His church? 3. How are we to be the salt? Give a modern application of a Christian being spiritual salt. 4. How can we become tasteless or "saltless?" Getting To It: Pray for each other to be spiritual salt, dispelling the knowledge and grace of the Lord to a dark and lost world. Pray that each of us would never lose our saltiness and thus become useless to God.

You are the Salt of the Earth!

MONDAY

Jesus compares us to two things that are very influential: light and **salt**. Whatever these two things touch cannot ignore their presence! You can always count on them too; they will never fail to do what they're supposed to do, unless of course, they are not the real thing. This week you will learn how to be the salt Jesus says you are, if indeed the Spirit lives in you. Read **Matthew 5:13**. What are some characteristics of salt? What is salt good for? How is it influential? "*Mankind, lying in ignorance and wickedness, were as a vast heap, ready to putrefy; but Christ sent forth his disciples, by their lives and doctrines to season it with knowledge and grace. If they are not such as they should be, they are as salt that has lost its savor.*"—Matthew Henry. Since salt was associated with permanence, the expression "covenant of salt" was used to emphasize the binding or permanent nature of God's laws (**Numbers 18:19**). Write **Psalms 19:8** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

Salt is a preservative. It prevents corruption from taking place. Read **Romans 12:1-2**. Are you to conform to (be like) the world in what you do? How are you to transform? Just like salt transforms everything that it touches, so are you to transform (influence) yourself and others. What is the purpose of transformation? Can this purpose be accomplished without transformation? Read **2 Peter 1:4**. Notice how you escape corruption by partaking of God's divine nature. Your saltiness is a reflection of this nature in all you do: When you speak to your brethren, and to other people; what you read, what you watch on TV, the music you listen to, etc... Write **James 1:27** on an index card and memorize it. Are you striving to keep yourself from being corrupted by the world?

WEDNESDAY

Since salt prevents corruption from taking place, it has a purifying effect. Read **2 Kings 2:20-21**. What effect did the salt have on the water? Why symbolism did the salt have in this miracle that the Lord did through Elisha? *Think about the purifying effect of God's command, its influence and its permanence.* In the same way the Lord purifies you: **Titus 2:14**. List the adjectives of God's people from this passage. What the salt did to Elisha's water God does to you: purifies and makes you fruitful; zealous for good deeds! How will the zeal for your good deeds be like salt? Write **2 Cor. 7:1** on an index card and memorize it. Does your personality reflect reverence toward God? Is it a salty personality? Are you striving to *perfect* your holiness?

THURSDAY

Being salt not only involves keeping yourself pure from the corruption of the world but also keeping God's doctrine pure in your heart, mind and soul. Read **2 Timothy 2:15**. Being salty means being able to use God's Word adequately. You want to be salty enough so that people see something different in you. Think of potato chips. You can't just have one! Now imagine if the potato chips were incredibly salty—would you keep eating? Read **2 Timothy 2:2**. Being salty means being reliable in the Word; ably qualified to teach others God's Word, not your own word. Salt preserves. That means it keeps things pure by making sure nothing gets into it and corrupts it. Write **1 Timothy 4:16** on an index card and memorize it. Are you a zingy, salty potato chip, or a greasy flavorless one?

FRIDAY

Salt's influence is very powerful; just like light's influence on darkness. No matter how little there is of it in something, its presence is felt and noted. Its effects are not overcome or diminished even though there might only be a small quantity. Read again **Mark 9:50**. Is it possible for salt to lose its saltiness? Can salt be robbed of its saltiness? Is it authentic salt if it indeed loses its saltiness? Notice that being salt involves preserving peace. Write **Colossians 4:6** on an index card and memorize it. Knowing how to speak to someone involves being able and willing to preserve peace and grace. Insipid, corrupt, or obscene speech does not edify. It insults, creates discord and opposes peace. Is your speech salty or bitter? Does your lifestyle reflect the saltiness Jesus speaks of, or does it reflect the corruption of the world? Do people see something different in you than what they see in others?

INSIGHT

When we consider the godly men of the Bible, we can't help but to notice that many of them have had moments of despondency in their lives. Moses, a man considered to be an extremely humble man (**Num. 12:3**), had his moments of despondency. We read in **Numbers 11:4-15** how he became so overwhelmed by the constant complaints of the Israelites, that he asked God to lift the burden, even if it meant his life. Joshua, a man known for his deep trust in the Lord and as "a man in whom is the spirit" (**Num. 27:18**), also had moments of despondency. In his prayer in **Joshua 7:7a**, he says, "Ah, Sovereign Lord, why did you ever bring this people across the Jordan to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us?" Are these words of humble men? Are these attitudes of men in whom the spirit dwells? And the list goes on: Elijah (**1 Kings 19:4**), Jeremiah (**Jer. 15:10**), Job (**Job 10:1**), King David (**Ps. 42:6**), the disciples (**Lk. 24:17**), and even Paul and Timothy (**2 Cor. 1:8**). Apparently, everyone undergoes moments of weakness and discouragement, even the best of God's servants. But despite of the discouragement and hardships, their ultimate faithfulness to the Lord has proven to be effective in bringing each of them safely through their trials!

We all undergo moments of discouragement in our lives. We all, at some point in our lives, experience health problems, financial problems, relationship problems, loneliness, or other personal struggles--all of which will bring upon depression. But in God, there is hope. Although we may experience troubles in this life, we can overcome depression through faith and hope in the good news of Christ. Active faith in the Lord is the key to overcoming depression! Paul said in **Philippians 4:8-9** that peace comes through setting our minds on things that are positive and through the practice of those positive things in the kingdom!

The Life in Christ **Overcoming Depression**

Key Text: **Philippians 4:8-9**

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."

Theme:

Christianity has never promised absence of problems. In fact, Jesus makes it clear that in this world we will have trouble (**John 16:33**). But how are we to overcome? The solution is to have an active faith in the One who overcame the world--Jesus Christ! Paul, in the spirit of Christ, encourages us to meditate upon and practice the things of God. This will certainly bring peace to our lives in the strength and hope of Christ! Is this not how we overcome depression in this life?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Seek prayers from the saints!** Pray and have others pray for you to overcome personal struggles you are currently undergoing.
2. **Seek advice!** Seek input from faithful Christians when faced with difficulties.
3. **Seek fellowship!** Be in the company of other Christians. They will be a source of encouragement to you!
4. **Get involved!** Share the gospel and pray for studies; do your quiet times; call a sister or a brother; practice goodness! It helps!
5. **Trust in God!** Believe that He is able to see you through any circumstances in your life!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Overcoming Depression! I. Elijah, The Prophet A. Prior Events 1. 1 Kings 17 a. Israel cursed with a bad king--Ahab! --He was so bold to sin b. Israel blessed with a great prophet! --He was so bold to reprove --He didn't taste death --He accompanied Christ in transfiguration --Other prophets prophesied & wrote - Elijah prophesied and acted --He was a prophet of miracles! c. Elijah predicts drought (vs1) --God provides thru ravens (v2-6) --God provides thru widow (vs 7-9) 2. 1 Kings 18 a. Reform in Israel --exposes Ahab's idolatry (vs 16-18) --He proves God is God (vs 30-39) --destroys false prophets (vs 40) --rain returns (vs 45) 3. 1 Kings 19 a. Elijah runs away --Jezebel seeks his life --Elijah's depression (vs 3-9) b. Overcome by God's provision --He encouraged him to eat --He put him to work (vs 15-17) to reform Israel again B. Our Role In Helping Others Overcome 1. We are called to minister a. Take time to encourage with a call b. Take time to encourage with letters c. Take time to gladden a heart with - a hug, smile or just an encouraging word --Prov. 14:13; 17:22 C. Conclusion: Get actively involved! Phil 4:8-9--practice goodness and receive the peace of God	Warm-up: What has recently got you depressed? How was your response during your depression? How did you overcome it? See To It 1 Kings 18-19:1-18 1. Read chapter 18. What was Elijah sent to do? 2. How did God work through Elijah? 3. What was Israel's attitude toward Elijah after the proof that the Lord was God? 4. Read chapter 19:1-18. Why was Elijah's afraid? 5. List the attributes of Elijah's depression. Seeing It Closer: 1. What do we notice about the Elijah of chapter 18 and the Elijah of chapter 19:1-5? 2. What did Elijah need to get out of his depression? 3. How should we handle depression in our lives? Give an example. 4. How can we help others who are depressed? Getting To It: Pray for each other to be kingdom-minded people. Get involved in spiritual activities such as fellowships, prayer, evangelism, reading God's word, etc., thus enhancing the peace of Christ and the focus of the cross in your life!

Handling Crises & Depression...

MONDAY

David was a man who endured many crises. Wandering in the depths of despair caused him to always remember the greatness of God. He used his state of depression to affirm the greatness of God in his life. Read **Psalm 139**. From verse 3, who is it that can truly understand and empathize with your struggles? From verses 6-10, does David feel like removing himself from his immediate surroundings? What does he conclude about that? Verses 19-22 show what the source of David's depression was. Did he justify his feeling of hatred or did He seek the guidance of the Lord? Throughout this crisis, who always remained at the center of David's thoughts? Did David seek out to accomplish his own will? Who is in control of every step you take? Write **Proverbs 3:5-6** on an index card and memorize it. Walk by faith and not by sight! Don't depend on your limited foresight! Call a brother/sister who seems to be immersed in depression. Pray with them over the phone or in person. Make the Lord the center of your focus in your encouragement.

TUESDAY

"God designed His creation to have a dependency upon Him. Even the ordinary decisions of a day need the counsel of God, who instructs His creation to consult Him about even the most minute details, whether in the spiritual or secular realm." Jeremiah was a prophet who experienced many discouraging situations. He preached the word for many years, yet no one wanted to listen. Everyone rejected him and the word of God. Read **Lamentations 3:21-26**. What was it that gave Jeremiah hope? What is it that is renewed every morning? What was Jeremiah's conclusion about the *compassion* of the Lord (verse 24)? Did Jeremiah get upset, or anxious, or annoyed with his situation? Did he stop preaching and serving God? NO! He quietly submitted to what the Lord was giving him at the moment. He waited *quietly* for the salvation of the Lord. This is the kind of attitude that promotes peace. Write **Jeremiah 29:11** on an index card and memorize it. How reassuring and caring is our Lord!

WEDNESDAY

Jesus teaches us how to deal with crises and stress: SEEK HIS KINGDOM---SEEK HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS! Read **Matthew 6:33-34**. What does the Lord promise? Do you believe His promise? What do you usually seek first when crisis or discouragement hit you? Do you seek to please yourself, or do you seek the kingdom and righteousness of God? **KINGDOM**=church, brethren, fellowship, edification, discipleship (physical & emotional support). **RIGHTEOUSNESS** =Bible, instruction, edification, correction, training, discipleship (spiritual & emotional support). Honestly now, are these the things you seek in anxiety?? With a promise like the Lord gives you, is there anything to worry about? The apostle Paul also encouraged the Phillipians to continuously meditate on the things dealing with the Kingdom and righteousness. Read **Philippians 4:8-9**. These things that you meditate on must be the things that are practiced and the result will be peace. Write **Isaiah 40:31** on an index card and memorize it. Hoping in the Lord and not in what we desire to happen is what gives us strength to carry on.

THURSDAY

Do you sometimes feel like no one is on your side? Like there's a conspiracy against you? The devil is relentless in his attacks towards you but you need to remember who's side you want to be on. Even though the Apostle Paul often felt desponded (**2 Co. 4:8-9**) he knew that nothing could separate him from God's love. Read **Romans 8:35-39**. Is there something, according to this passage, that can separate you from God's love? Even if you are against God He is on your side. He is fighting for you, not against you. Do you believe this? Can you believe then, that everything that happens to you, whether you perceive it to be good or bad, is ultimately for your own good—if you love the Lord? Write **Romans 8:28** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Stress, anxiety and depression come from a lack of perspective of Who's in control, Who's providing and Who's protecting. **Psalm 23** sums up these qualities of our Lord beautifully. David paints for you a picture of unwavering trust. What is the Lord to David? What is the job of a shepherd? What did David see himself as? It is this perspective that is lacking when anxiety or depression rule our lives. The fact that God is providing for us and protecting us. Constantly accompanying us wherever we go. Did David have anything to fear? Are you afraid of something in this life (other than the fear of the Lord)? Verses 5-6 shows how David saw himself as a recipient of God's lovingkindness (mercy). He saw himself as belonging in the house of God, not just as a guest-for-a-day. The Lord was his Father and David was just so thankful and blessed to be in His presence and at the center of His attention. Is this how you see yourself? Write **Hebrews 12:28-29** on an index card and memorize it. Be thankful!

INSIGHT

Everyone experiences affliction in their lives. The Bible relates how people and nations experience suffering in various ways for a variety of reasons. Evil is everywhere in this fallen and sinful world, and because of this, suffering is bound to follow. Scriptures present multiple perspectives on the cause of suffering. It can be brought upon as a form of punishment for sins against the divine moral order. The wicked would surely suffer for their evil ways (**Ps. 7:15-16**), even though they might prosper for a time (**Job 21:28-33**). Also, affliction can be caused by straying away from the God's Word (**Mal. 3:7-15**).

When we see the righteous suffering, we must consider God, who sent His Only Son into an evil world. The writers of the New Testament incorporated the trials of Christ into their own lives. The purposefulness and necessity of suffering in the life of the Son of God (**Matt. 16:21**) helped them in coping with their own. Early Christians recognized the inevitability of their suffering. As Christ suffered, so would they (**Acts 14:22; 1 Peter 4:12-13**). Continuing in the mission of Christ, they would incur tribulation (**Mk 13:12-13**) because the world hates the disciples as much as it did their Lord (**John 15:18**). Suffering for His sake is counted as a privilege by those who love Jesus (**Acts 5:41**).

The New Testament also teaches of other types of suffering than that incurred by Christian living. These kinds of trials are meant to develop maturity in faith (**James 1:2-4**). We ought to patiently endure the trials we face because God is working His purpose out in His children's lives (**Rom. 8:28-29**). We grow stronger spiritually through trials (**Heb. 12:11**). Therefore, be patient in your affliction (**Rom. 12:12**), for no present suffering compares with the rewards that await the faithful follower of Christ (**Rom 8:17,18**). Let God's perfect power work through you in all trials! Amen!

The Life in Christ Rising Above Affliction

Key Text:

1 Peter 1:6-7

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Theme:

Christianity has never promised a trouble-free life on Earth. We must all undergo various trials during our lives in this world. But keep this in mind: Our trials are not designed to destroy us, but to strengthen us. They are designed for the testing of our faith. Tried faith is much more value than tried gold. Gold will eventually perish in the flames, but faith that is refined will never fail! Allow your faith to be the kind of faith that endures and results in praise, honor and glory after it as been refined! For Christ will come soon to bring us to eternal peace! In this, we greatly rejoice and eagerly await His coming! AMEN!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray at all times!** Be faithful in prayer when faced with various trials! Pray that the Lord may have the victory in your situation!
2. **Fellowship!** It is important to seek encouragement from the saints. Let God use His people to help you through your trials!
3. **Give thanks to the Lord!** Give God the praise in all circumstances.
4. **Trust in God!** He cares for you! Put all your circumstances in His hands!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Rising Above Affliction!

I. Job, The Faithful Servant

A. The Setting

1. Chapter 1:1-5
 - a. He was an upright man
--He feared God and shunned evil
(see Prov. 16:6)
 - b. He was prosperous
--He had a great family
--He had a great wealth
--Family of merriment

B. The Test

1. Chapter 1:6-12
 - a. Enters The Accuser
--Satan accuses Job of being motivated by material gain
--Satan accuses Job a hypocrite
 - b. God allows Satan to try Job's faith
2. Chapter 1:13-20--Test 1: Take possessions
 - a. Enemies kill servants and steal livestock
 - b. Other servants and livestock killed by fire
 - c. Other enemies kill servants and steal livestock
 - d. His oldest son's home broken by a desert storm, killing all his children
 - e. Job upset but remains true to God
3. Chapter 2:1-10--Test 2: Take health
 - a. Boils from head to toe: OUCH!
 - b. Wife tells him to *curse God and die*
 - c. Job understood he must take the good with the bad
4. Chapter 42:12f
 - a. Job rewarded for his faith: proven to be pure and refined

II. Conclusion

James 5:10-11

- Stand firm and wait for the Lord!
- Look unto Job's attitude and the result of his faith in trials

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Have you ever lost a relative, job, or anything else that has turned your life upside down? Explain what happened and how you felt.

See To It

Job 1-2; 42:12f

1. **Read chapter 1.** What kind of man was Job? Describe his person, life and family.
2. What did Satan accuse Job of?
3. Why did God allow Satan to torment Job? What was the purpose?
4. How did Job respond to the taking away of his sons, daughters, servants and livestock?
5. How was his relationship with God?
6. **Read chapter 2:1-10** What did Satan accuse of now?
7. How did Job reason out his plight?

Seeing It Closer:

1. **Read chapter 42:12-17** What did Job gain from this terrible experience?
2. How does this relate to the Christian today?
3. How are we to approach trials and tribulations?
4. What does Satan want you to do when you go through various trials? God?

Getting To It:

Pray for each other that our faith, when tested, will be proven to be genuine. Pray that each of us can praise the Lord in all circumstances, trusting in Him to see us through all of our afflictions!

Rising Above Affliction...

MONDAY

Afflictions are an inevitable fact of human existence. You can either become embittered by them by focusing on their negative impact, or rise above them and become a better servant of the Lord. Jesus teaches you to rise above them by using afflictions as stepping stones toward joy, hope and a mature faith. This week's Quiet Times will deal with three things you always should keep in mind concerning afflictions in your life: (1) God sees, knows, and delivers you from afflictions (*Psalm 31:7-10*) (2) It is only temporary (*2 Co 4:17; Psalm 37:23-24*) (3) It keeps our focus on things eternal (*Psalm 119:67-73; 2 Co 4:16-18*) Write *Psalm 34:19* on an index card and memorize it. Call a brother/sister whom you know is going through some affliction and help them with your own experiences. Let your speech be seasoned with grace and wisdom.

TUESDAY

The Apostle Peter summarizes *Isaiah 53:3-8* when he encourages the brethren in *1 Peter 2:20-25*. Jesus is your model Sufferer. As your Lord and Overseer of your soul, He calls you to follow in these areas concerning affliction: (1) Don't retaliate; don't threaten. There's no need to return evil for evil (*1 Peter 3:9-12*). (2) Entrust yourself to the Lord's care (*John 14:1-3*). (3) Bring healing and comfort to those who are suffering in your affliction (*Matthew 25:34-46*). Write *1 Peter 2:21* on an index card and memorize it. Have you ever helped a stranger in need? Have you visited those in jail? Have you encouraged and helped out someone sick or in need? Be sober in spirit and salty in your actions—get out there and MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

WEDNESDAY

Jesus was controlled by God's love, not by the circumstances around Him. He glorified God by using His life to make a difference in other people's lives—He was not used by life. Read *Romans 12:12-21*. To rise above trials and afflictions as a Christian you need to: (1) Always pray (2) Reach out to those you see in affliction (3) Persevere in patience by trusting the Lord (4) Cultivate a positive attitude of joy, in hope and humility; not revenge and bitterness. These things can be accomplished in you let the Counselor (*Gk: Parakletos*: comforter, advocate) within you comfort you and guide you (*John 14:15-18*). Write *Romans 8:28* on an index card and memorize it. "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."—Romans 12:21

THURSDAY

Entrusting yourself to God requires you to look beyond the physical clamor that surrounds you and focusing on the spiritual reality that permeates and transcends space and time. Your afflictions can only affect your physical dimension. Don't let them affect your spiritual one. Read *Hebrews 4:15-16*. Why is it that you are able to approach God with confidence? Have you been willing to entrust yourself to such a caring friend as Jesus is? Read *2 Corinthians 4:16-18*. Compared to Jesus' afflictions, how do you rate yours? Will you lose heart (grow weary) if you focus on the fact that you are being renewed inwardly (spiritually)? Will focusing on your external circumstances cause you to grow weary? Why? Does your idea of being joyful have to do with being physically comfortable or do you rejoice in the fact that you will have an eternal glory that will blow away any trouble or affliction you suffered on Earth? Write *James 1:12* on an index card and memorize it. Call that brother/sister whom you called on Monday. Encourage them with today's Quiet Time.

FRIDAY

David was a man who went through many trials and afflictions in his lifetime. Read *Psalm 94:19-22*. He always remembered the Lord in his trials and was greatly comforted by the fact that he could entrust himself to the Lord's care. Jesus, your Lord and Master, endured the cross (*Hebrews 12:2-4*) because His desire was to give you the hope of eternal life. If you have been comforted by His ultimate promise of life everlasting you will probably have no choice but to desire to comfort those who are hard pressed and afflicted. Read *2 Corinthians 1:3-7*. This passage speaks of the Christian who has allowed God to mature him/her through trials and tribulations. Write *Psalm 119:50* on an index card and memorize it. If your comfort truly lies on God's promise, your joy will overflow and comfort those around you.

INSIGHT

It is encouraging to know that in Christ, we have mercy. Many times we may feel hopeless in our struggles. We may even say statements such as, "How can God forgive me?" or "God probably won't forgive me." Mind sets such as these can only lead to despair and discouragement, thus giving Satan the victory! But thanks be to God, who is rich in mercy (*Eph. 2:4*), gives us victory over guilt through the blood of Christ! It is a matter of confessing and acknowledging sin! Confession is a significant element in the lives of believers. It can be divided into two primary responses: the confession of sin (*1 John 1:9*) and the confession of faith, that is, the acknowledgment of Christ as Lord of our lives (*Romans 10:9,10*).

Confession of sins is an aspect of both individual and corporate worship. At the Jordan, John's followers were baptized, confessing their sins (*Matt. 3:6; Mk. 1:6*). Christians are reminded that God faithfully forgives the sins of those who confess them (*1 John 1:9*). James admonished his readers not only to pray for one another but also to confess their sins to one another (*James 5:16*). It is by our coming to the Lord and trusting in His mercy that we are released from all guilt! But we must believe! We must trust and have faith that He is able to forgive! If we doubt, then we are saying God can't forgive! In order for us to receive, we must first believe. For Scripture says, "...without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him" (*Heb. 11:6*) and "...when he asks, he must believe and not doubt..." (*James 1:6*).

Belief (faith, or trust) and confession are two sides of the same coin. If we truly believe He is able to pardon, then He will forgive our sins when we confess them. God does not lie. He is faithful to His Word!

The Life in Christ Relying On The Blood

Key Text:

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Theme:

Penitent confession and acknowledgment of sin are the means of deliverance from guilt. It is encouraging to know God will have mercy on us, if we seek His mercy. Our brother John says, in confidence, that He *"will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness!"* God is faithful to His word. He has promised forgiveness to penitent believing confessors. Therefore, trust Him who is full of mercy and grace! Trust the cleansing power of the blood. For He will pardon and cleanse you from the guilt of all unrighteousness! AMEN!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Have the right mind set!** Hate sin! Do not take sin lightly. Hate it with a vengeance.
2. **Confess your sins!** We see that the Bible teaches us that confession of sin leads to pardon. Confess your sins before the Lord and seek His mercy. He is faithful to forgive and purify a contrite believer's heart!
3. **Seek prayers from the saints!** Scripture also teaches that confession should be made to one another (*James 5:16*). Seek out loving brothers and sisters to confess your sins to. Let them help you, pray for you, and remind you of the grace of the Lord!
4. **Trust in His blood!** God truly loves you and wants to forgive you. For this reason, Christ died for you! He have an awesome God who graciously forgives us through His Son's blood! Confess and believe!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE
Relying and Trusting The Blood! I. Jesus, Our Priest--Hebrews 7 A. Perpetual Priest--7:18-21 1. Law was weak and useless a. Law is holy and good (<i>Rom 7:12</i>) b. Unable to make right for those who sin c. Cannot perfect us 2. We have hope in Christ a. Brings us into the presence of God b. Hope of salvation and pardon c. Hope from a sworn oath by God (<i>vs 21</i>) B. Perpetual Intercessor--7:22-26 1. He is our Guarantor a. A better covenant: The Gospel --it makes right through His sacrifice --it perfects us through His sacrifice b. He intercedes always -- on behalf of the debtor (us) -- He promises mercy -- His blood cleanses us from guilt (<i>Heb 10:22</i>) c. He meets our needs -- Our need of pardon -- Our need of salvation -- Rescues us from the consequences of sin II. Conclusion 1 John 1:9--Trust God that He will forgive when you confess your sins.

SMALL GROUP STUDY
Warm-up: What is the purpose of insurance? What does the insurance do in case of a default on a loan? See To It Hebrews 7:1-3,18-26 1. Who was Melchizedek? How was Christ like him? List some attributes. 2. Why were the regulations of the Law weak and useless? How does Law differ from the hope of the Gospel? 3. How is the priesthood of Christ differ from the Levitical priesthood? What does it mean when the Hebrew writer says, "<i>others became priests without any oath</i>"? 4. As our Priest, what does Christ guarantee? Seeing It Closer: 1. What does verse 25 mean when it says, "<i>He is able to save completely</i>"? Explain. 2. Read 1 John 1:7-9. What two things promote pardon? 3. What does this tell you about the nature of God? 4. What does tell you about those in Christ? Getting To It: Pray for each other that we may become people of confession. Not only confessing Jesus before men as we share the gospel with the lost but confessing sin in our lives. Pray that we would trust in the cleansing power of Christ's blood as we confess our sins to God and to one another!

Relying on the BLOOD...

MONDAY

The precious blood of Jesus, shed on Calvary two thousand years ago, is what brings peace between you and God. Nothing else in Heaven or on Earth can reconcile you to God except your faith in Jesus Christ--faith in the gospel (good news) that He came to bring you--trusting that He can and will save you from eternal Hell if you believe Him. Read *Colossians 1:19-23*. What brings reconciliation? How can that reconciliation be applicable to you (vs. 23)? Now read *Titus 3:4-6*. Why did God save us? Was it because of something we did? This verse speaks of the renewal that occurs when you have initially been purified by Jesus' blood. How is this renewal succeeded? When you rely on the kindness and mercy of God three things happen: (1) You are justified, (2) You are sanctified, (3) You are glorified. Write *Ephesians 2:13* on an index card and memorize it. Prepare yourself for each day by thinking about God's kindness toward you and praying to be kind to everyone.

TUESDAY The blood of Jesus justifies... delivers us from sin's penalty...

God's loving kindness, expressed graciously by Jesus' sacrifice, provides a righteous standing before God for those who believe in what Jesus Christ has done for them. Read *Romans 3:24-27*. How does justification reach us? Look up *justify* in a good dictionary. Why did God sacrifice Jesus? How is God's justice effected in those who have faith in Christ? Ans: God's justice is to justify those who have **faith** in Jesus; those who rely on His sacrifice for cleansing and not on themselves. Through Jesus' blood you become blameless in God's sight! Just like if you have never sinned!!! AMEN! Our righteousness is "borrowed" from Jesus' sinless blood that was poured out to clean us! Read *Romans 5:9-11*. Here's where trust comes in. Paul reasons with you: If God has justified you, will He not save you from the coming wrath? The gift of reconciliation (to be made one) comes as a result of relying on the blood to justify us before God. Write *Galatians 2:20-21* on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY The blood of Jesus redeems... delivers us from sin's power...

Read *Ephesians 1:7-8*. How does redemption come about? What else comes with this redemption? Notice how God *lavishes* these gifts on you! Because He is gracious (kind, loving)! (Look up *lavish* in a good dictionary). The reason why redemption can occur (renewal of our minds and spirit despite sin's presence) is because your conscience can be cleansed by Jesus' blood. Read *Hebrews 9:14-15*. Your clean conscience can only come as a result of believing in the power of Jesus' blood, not on your own acts. What do your acts usually lead to? Because you are a sinner, you need to continually approach God's throne with a sincere heart: read *Hebrews 10:19-22*. How is it that you can enter Heaven's throne (by prayer)? Should you enter the throne confidently or with fear? How does your heart need to be when you enter God's throne (vs. 22)? Write *Psalms 130:7-8* on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY The blood of Jesus glorifies... delivers us from sin's presence...

Since we are redeemed by the blood of Christ expressed through the grace of God in Jesus' death on the cross, our purity needs to continue on the basis of faith in the resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Jesus was raised and glorified gives us faith and hope in God. Faith that God has sanctified (purified) us and hope that we will be delivered from sin's presence when we see Jesus face to face! Read *1 Peter 1:18-23*. Because of the value and expectation of your glorification, imitate the loving kindness of your Savior. Let this love express itself as sincere love for your brothers. Remember that your hope is not in what is perishable, but in the imperishable riches of Jesus Christ! Write *Revelation 12:11* on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

How marvelous is the kindness of our God! We are so weak that He continually reassures us of His ever-present love in the promises described in the Word. People, this is why we need to continuously feed our minds with His Word, letting His Spirit renew our thoughts and rely on Jesus blood to cleanse us from sin and guilty consciences. Read *1 John 1:7*. What does walking in light mean? (Hint: "as He is in the light") Walking denotes a life-style based on deeds by faith. We don't "sit" in the light, we walk in it (*Colossians 3:12-14*)! The verb here also denotes continuous action. Do you sin even if you walk in the light? How is this sin taken care of? The word "cleanse" (Gk. *katharizo*) is in the present tense and also denotes continuous action. Isn't this an awesome gift that God has given us!!! Write *Ephesians 2:8-10* on an index card and memorize it. Today's memory verse summarizes in a nutshell this week's venture into the amazing blood of Jesus. Share this great and exciting news!!!

INSIGHT

There are three words that mean so much to the true believer: *Redeem*, *Redemption* and *Redeemer*. Redeem: to pay the required price to secure the release of a convicted criminal. Redemption: the process involved. Redeemer: The person making the payment. These three words describe what Christianity is all about: you and I (the convicted criminals), the blood shed on the cross (the process involved), and Jesus (the One making the payment). For the true disciple of Christ, the saying is true: *"My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you - I, whom you have redeemed"* (Ps 71:23) because he or she has come to an understanding that *"...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus!"* (Rom 3:23-24)

The New Testament centers redemption in Jesus Christ. The Scripture says He purchased the church (the congregation of the saints) with His own blood (Acts 20:28), gave His flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51), as the Good Shepherd laid down His life His sheep (John 10:11) and demonstrated the greatest love by laying down His life for His friends (John 15:13). The purpose of Jesus in the world was to make a deliberate sacrifice of Himself for human sin. He did something you and I couldn't do for ourselves: He brought hope by providing redemption from sin and fellowship with the Eternal Father. As a Suffering Servant, His was a costly sacrifice: the shameful and agonizing death of a Roman cross. New testament redemption thus speaks of substitutionary sacrifice demonstrating divine love and righteousness. His sacrifice causes the true believer to have a Father-son relationship with God (John 1:12), a new life (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom 6:4), continual mercy through the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7-9; 2:1), a call to humility (James 3:13), and a future home in heaven (John 14:1-2)! **Amen!**

The Life in Christ *The Redeemed Life*

Key Text: **1 Peter 1:18-19**

"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

Theme:

The consideration of our redemption ought to be a constant and powerful influence to holiness and the fear of God. Neither silver nor gold, can redeem so much as one soul. They are corruptible, and therefore cannot redeem an incorruptible and immortal soul. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only price for our redemption. The design of Christ in shedding His most precious blood was to redeem us, not only from eternal misery, but from the ways of this world. Have you been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb? Are you living the sanctified life?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray daily to God!** Relationships are built with communication. Keep an open channel of communication between you and God. Speak to Him daily!
2. **Let God communicate with you!** Communication is a two-way street. God wants to speak to you: Read His Word daily and apply it to your life!
3. **Thank God for salvation!** The scriptures teach us to be thankful in prayer (Col 4:2). Thank Him everyday for redeeming you!
4. **Tell others!** What good is it if you keep the love of Christ within? Therefore, share the wonderful redemption story with others so they too can know of God's saving grace!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

The Redeemed Life

I. The Redeemed

A. Mephibosheth--2 Samuel

1. Son of Jonathan
 - a. Belonged to a royal line but made crippled by a fall (4:4)
 - b. Lived in exile, remembered because of a covenant (1 Sam. 20:14-17; 2 Sam. 9:3,4)
 - c. Exalted by the merits of another (9:5,7)
 - d. Given a glorious inheritance (9:9)
 - e. The only concern was to see the king (19:30)

B. The Saved Sinner--Eph 2

1. Crippled by sin
 - a. We were dead in our sins (vs 1)
 - b. We lived in exile from God (vs 12)
 - c. Because of Jesus (Son of David)
 - We have been exalted (vs 6)
 - We have been given a glorious inheritance, salvation (8)
 - Our only concern: His return

II. Conclusion--John 3:18

1. Those who believe are not condemned
2. Those who don't believe are condemned
3. Solution: Be found in Jesus!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

How would you feel if someone whom you avoided and feared gave you a great inheritance?

See To It *1 Sam. 20:14-17; 2 Sam 9:1-9*

1. Who was Jonathan? What agreement did David and Jonathan make between each other?
2. Long after Jonathan's death, what did David sought to do? What made this inquiry unusual?
Hint: Read 1 Sam. 18:6-9; 19:1-2,11)
3. Who was Mephibosheth? How did you think he felt about David prior to meeting him?
4. What do you think went through Mephibosheth's mind as he was en route to see the king?
5. What did David do? What was Mephibosheth's first response towards David's kindness?
6. On whose merit did Mephibosheth receive such great blessing?

Seeing It Closer:

1. How are we like Mephibosheth?
2. How is God like David in this story?
3. On whose merit do we receive such glorious blessings as mercy and eternal life?
4. To whom does God give His glorious grace to?
5. What will be the outcome of those who receive God's blessing through Christ?

Getting To It:

It is vital for us to always remember our former condition: lost, hopeless, and condemned people! It was the kindness of the Lord that has saved us through the precious blood of Christ! PRAISE GOD! WE HAVE BEEN SAVED!

The Redeemed Life!

MONDAY

"**Redemption**" (*apolutrosis*, Gk.) carries the idea of liberation at a great cost to the one who liberates. Redemption is linked with the price paid, and that price is "paid in full" ("it is finished," *tetelestai*, Gk.; cf. *John 19:30*) with the death of Christ. This week you are going to explore what it means to be redeemed. Remember that redemption comes through being justified by the blood of Christ, like you studied last week. To appreciate this redemption, you need to take a look at what you are redeemed from. Read *Col. 1:13-14*. What have you been rescued from if you have been justified by Christ? Is it possible to be redeemed outside the Kingdom of God? What is redemption equated to in verse 14? Is it possible to be redeemed without being forgiven? So if you indeed have been forgiven, have you been redeemed? Write *1 Co. 1:30* on an index card and memorize it. Let him who boast, boast in the Lord!

TUESDAY

Redemption is re-unification, intimacy with God...

Read *Gal. 4:4-7*. What is the outcome of being redeemed according to verse 5? Is the relationship between a father and son supposed to be distant? How does the Spirit that God gives you relate to the Father? "*Abba*" is the intimate Aramaic word for "father," being equivalent to the English "Daddy," or "Papa." Thus, the intimacy of the relationship between God and men, His sons through Christ, is emphasized. Since you are a son, what else has God made you according to verse 7? Look up this word in a good dictionary. Read *Ephesians 1:7-10*. What is redemption equated with again in verse 7? As in an intimate relationship, God reveals to us the mystery of His will. His good pleasure is to make these things known to us in due time. How intimate are you in revealing yourself to your Heavenly Father? What kind of relationship did you have with your earthly father, if you were blessed enough to have one? (Cf. *Heb. 12:9,10*) How do you view your relationship with God in light of your relationship with your father (parent)? Does something need to change? Write *Rom. 8:15* on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

Redemption is reconciliation...

Look up *reconcile* in a good dictionary. List all the synonyms of reconcile the dictionary gives you. How do you see your relationship with God in light of these definitions (synonyms)? Read *Rom. 5:10-11*. When were you reconciled to God? How did this reconciliation come about? What does this reconciliation lead to? What was your state of mind when you were reconciled? Read *Col. 1:19-24*. Reconciliation is possible through peace. How did God make peace with you? Who initiated the peace? Who paid the price for peace? Notice how the reconciliation through peace came about according to verse 22. According to this same verse, why did God choose to reconcile you? Does your holiness come about by what you do or the kind of person that you are? How does holiness come about? According to verse 23, what is the only thing that your continued state of holiness depends on? (Cf. *Heb. 6:19-20*) Write *Heb. 9:12* on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

Redemption effects change...

Let's go back to *Col. 1:19-24*. What was your state of mind before reconciliation according to verse 21? What did you engage in? Remember that any deed or thought that does not come about by faith is evil! Any attempts to try to be justified by any act you do, even if it is considered good, is evil to the Lord (*Mat. 7:22-23*)! A child of God turns the hostility the world has cultivated in him/her into reconciliation and peace. Because of our changed relationship with God we have been made into peace-making people (ministers of reconciliation--*2 Co. 5:18-21*). Our redemption enables us to rejoice in suffering for the sake of our brethren and those who need to be redeemed. Read *Mat. 5:23-24*. Should you worship the Lord without resolved hostility between you and someone else? Who should be the initiator of peace? If you cannot experience peace in your heart it may be due to some outstanding hostility in your mind. Make it your goal to let the redemption of the Lord effect a change in your mind toward peace within you, so there may be peace around you--despite external circumstances. Write *Psalms 119:165* on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Brethren, redemption from the corruption of the world is a great privilege that comes through the incredible gift of justification by Christ's blood. Read *1 Peter 1:18-20*. He makes it clear that we have been redeemed from an "empty way of life". Life without Jesus is empty because there is no hope; no rescue from the downward spiral of corruption and deception. Since this redemption can only come about a willing desire to work with the Holy Spirit on your weaknesses I urge you, along with the Apostle Paul, not to receive this grace, this opportunity for closeness and intimacy with God, in vain. See *2 Co. 6:1*. These changes in your mind and life are preparing you to meet your Lord face to face. As a child of God these changes will come through an attitude of sacrificial love and discipline. Write *Romans 8:17* on an index card and memorize it. Our sonship through redemption is a fellowship in Christ's sufferings as well as in Christ's glory. Just like marriage vows teach us that an intimate relationship is in good times and in "bad" times--times of suffering.

INSIGHT

Everyone who has been baptized into Christ has become a child of God (*Gal. 3:26-27*). A loving child is characterized by his desire to please his parents. In the like figure, a child of God seeks to please his heavenly Father and will therefore submit to His will! This attribute comes from a true understanding of the cross and its saving power for the penitent believer.

Romans 8:14 says, “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” True believers are guided by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit (*Eph. 6:17*). Jesus said those who abide by His teachings are His true disciples (*John 8:31-32*). This is because the true child of God will want to walk in the steps of his Lord.

Divine favor rests on such! **Proverbs 16:7** says, “When a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.” A Christian's goal is to live by the Spirit of Christ; he will be reap the benefits of peace with even his enemies. It is the duty of every true disciple to live a life pleasing to his Creator, Savior, Lord, Teacher and God!

Christ is the greatest example of a life pleasing to God! **Matthew 3:17** quotes the Father saying to Jesus, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Jesus said in **John 8:29**, “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” Christ had the confidence in knowing that the Father was always with Him because He did what pleased His Father. For He loved His Father and His Father loved Him! God's children may expect God's presence with them when they choose and do those things that please Him because they love Him! Let your faith in God be made evident: Seek to please God in all you do! Love Him by keeping His commands (*1 John 5:3*) and do good to those around you (*Heb 13:16*). Praise God for His unspeakable love! AMEN!

The Life in Christ *A Life Pleasing To God*

Key Text: **1 Thessalonians 4:1**

"Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more."

Theme:

As children of God, we are called to live a life centered on pleasing God. The jobs we take, the work that we do, the things that we say, the things we ask for, and the reasons why we do should all be for the sake of Christ and to the glory of God. The design of the gospel was not only to teach us what we should believe, but also how we should walk! The Christian's life is not a walk of the flesh, but rather a walk of the Spirit. In all you do, let it be done to the glory of God!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Be at the assemblies of the saints!** Do not let any minor circumstance stop you from being at services! Be willing to take the train if you can't get a ride to services or meetings!
2. **Let God be in all your decisions!** Get into the habit of saying “What would Jesus do?” or “What would be pleasing to God?”
3. **Let kindness reign in your life!** God is pleased with those who show kindness and generosity (*Heb. 13:16*). Be known as one who possesses such a spirit!
4. **Pray for everyone!** God is pleased with those who take the time to pray for those in the world (*1 Tim. 2:1*). Pray for the church, for those in authority like the president, the government, etc.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

A Life Pleasing To God

I. Jacob

A. Before Meeting God

1. Son of Isaac
 - a. Crafty--*Gen. 25:29-33*
--Cheats his brother out of his birthright
 - b. Deceptive--*Gen. 27:18-29*
--Tricks his aged father into blessing him instead of Esau
 - c. Reaped what he sowed--*Gen. 27:42-43*
--forced to flee from his brother's rage

B. After Meeting God

1. God calls him through a vision
 - a. Becomes a new man (*Gen. 28:10-21*)
--he acknowledges God's presence
--he vows to make God his Lord
 - b. Seeks God's in prayer (*Gen. 32:9-12*)
--alarmed by his brother's coming
 - c. Peace made between him and his brother Esau (*Gen. 33:1-4*)
--He has an affectionate meeting with his brother (*Prov. 16:7*)
 - d. He was part of the Honor Roll of Faith (*Heb. 11:21*)

II. Conclusion--Hebrews 11:6

1. Walk with God: let your faith be active!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

If you were (or are) a parent, what would make you very proud of your child?

See To It

Hebrews 11:1-16

1. Explain the definition of faith in light of the gospel. What is hoped for and what is unseen?
2. Why was Abel more pleasing to God than Cain? Explain with Scripture.
3. What kind of man was Enoch? We don't have much detail about Enoch's life, yet what was he known for?
4. Why is Enoch's example important for the Christian? What is God teaching us?
5. How did Noah's life reflect a life pleasing to God?
6. How did Abraham's life reflect a life pleasing to God?

Seeing It Closer:

1. **Read verse 13.** What is meant by the phrase "...they did not receive the promised things; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance"?
2. **Read verses 14-15.** How does this apply to the true child of God? What should our attitudes be in Christ?
3. Who does God prepare a city for? Who does God call His children?

Getting To It:

Pray that we always seek His will in all circumstances. That our faith will be the result of a genuine love for God. Encourage one another to live a life pleasing to God--a life of faith, seeking that which will glorify the Lord!

Living To Please God

MONDAY

Many seek pleasure for themselves in this life only to fill themselves with bitterness, anger and disappointment. Let's see what we can learn from the Master about living to please the Lord. Read **John 4:34-38**. What did Jesus want to fill himself with? From verses 35-38, what do you suppose is the work God wants us to finish? Did Jesus put the work of God (will of God) on the backburner? Let's see how Jesus accomplished completing the will of the Father. Read **John 5:30**. Could Jesus do it on His own? The confidence Jesus radiated lied in the fact that He sought the Father's will and not His own. Write **John 6:40** on an index card and memorize it. God's will for you is to *believe* in Jesus; to look toward His example and way of life. Make Him your Lord!

TUESDAY

Submission in humility and dependence on God's grace shows a life that is pleasing to God. We see these qualities in action at the Garden of Gethsemane on one dark and gloomy night. Read **Mark 14:32-36**. In verse 36, what was the first thing Jesus acknowledged? Since God is in control and everything is possible for Him, doesn't it make sense then to surrender everything to Him? Even though Jesus made a plea for Himself, He remained subjected the will of the Father. He willingly pleased God by experiencing alienation from God to save our souls from eternal condemnation. Since He subjected Himself to the point of spiritual alienation (beyond death) God affirms His pleasure in Jesus by pointing you toward Him: LISTEN TO HIM! (**Mat. 17:5**) Write **Heb. 10:38-39** on an index card and memorize it. Since Jesus didn't shrink back for our sake let us imitate Him by walking in a way that pleases the Lord-----> by FAITH!

WEDNESDAY

During the rest of the week we are going to examine several attitudes and accompanying actions that must be present in a life that will be pleasing to the Lord. Spend some time carefully reading **Eph. 5:15-21**. Take in carefully each of the pointers that Paul gives as to how you should live. Here's a brief outline on Understanding God's will (Living wisely): (1) Be a good steward of time/make the most of the opportunities God gives you (2) Don't get drunk on the spirit of the World/Don't conform (**Rom. 12:1-3**) (3) Be filled with God's Spirit! Renewed in mind! Controlled by the Spirit! (**Rom. 8:6-8**) When you are filled by the Spirit it shows by your **humility in singing, thankfulness, and submission to each other**. I have a tough time believing that someone claims to be filled with the Spirit of God and yet refuses to sing! That is not humility! Don't make it your goal to please yourself, make it your goal to please Him! (**2 Co.5:9**) Write **Heb. 11:6** on an index card and memorize it. Seek a life, an attitude, a language, habits, etc. that please the Lord! He saved you!

THURSDAY

Acknowledging God in the way you think and speak is a testimony toward a dedication to please Him. Read carefully **James 4:13-17**. How does James teach that you should acknowledge Jesus' Lordship in your life? Why does he call it boasting and bragging when you say, "I'm going to do this and that..."? (See **1 Co.10:1-6**) Is your manner of speaking tainted with your arrogance? Are you full of yourself when you give advice or speak to someone? Maybe you need to be listening more! (**James 1:19**) "Lord willing" should not become a *cliché* in your vocabulary but a testimony of your faith. It will be shown for what it is by your actions. Look up in your concordance all the instances where in the New Testament the writers used the phrase "if the Lord is willing...". Next to each verse that you find, write down the attitude you felt the writer expressed by that statement. Write **Heb.13:15-16** on an index card and memorize it. See to it that you purify yourself!

FRIDAY

Finally brethren... can you sum up what it means to live a life pleasing to God? Read **1 Thess. 4:1-5**. According to verse 3, what is God's will for you? What is *sanctification*? (Ans.: self-control, or actually, God-control. Not lust-controlled!) Living in passionate lust is equated to not knowing Who? Are you craving anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ right now? Do you desire something material that you don't have, or a kind of relationship you can't have at this time? Be honest with yourself, now! Learn to control your body by seeking the Lord through these passionate moments. Superimpose His will over your own. Do not be controlled by your desires or by your body, unless you want to make yourself miserable! And if you are miserable, WAKE UP! Have you not been washed in the blood? Have you been given grace? Have you shed blood? Give thanks for what you have!-----> **Col.1:10-12**. You are living in the light!-----> **Eph.5:8-12. BE DEEPLY ROOTED IN THE WORD OF GOD!!!** Write **Psalms 19:14** on an index card and memorize it. Your words and your heart will reflect what you put in them! God bless!

INSIGHT

When Jacob was fleeing to Haran because he was afraid of Esau, (Gen. 27:41-45) he stopped to rest in a certain place because it was sundown. Before the dream, the place had only been a stopping place reached by sunset, but when he awoke it had become a holy place.

"Surely the Lord is in this place--and I did not know it! ... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. 28:16-17 NRSV).

The holy presence of God had penetrated into ordinary (profane) space in a way which had aroused the awareness Jacob. This experience transformed Jacob into a God-fearing man, concerned with pleasing God and not himself.

"The sacred (holy) and profane are united in the experience of **worship**. The English word *worship* was originally spelled "worthship" and means to acknowledge the worth of the person or object worshipped. We should acknowledge God's worth in spirit (in contrast to material ways) and in truth (in contrast to falsehood)."

—*Holman Bible Dictionary*

There are several Greek words that are translated as *worship* in English. The one that captures the kind of worship God seeks in *John 4:23* is *proskuneo*. The word is derived from two Greek words that depict the image of a dog licking its Master's hand. This imagery reveals the attitude necessary to worship God. He seeks those who worship Him in Spirit and in Truth.

Worship-centered living is the conviction of knowing Who is Lord of your life. You show this by your dealings with people, responsibilities and relationships. Stewardship, timeliness and accountability are qualities that are also affected when you live a transformed life-----> your spiritual act of worship! *Rom 12:1-2*

The Life in Christ *Worship-Centered Living*

Key Text:

Romans 12:1-2

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Theme:

In order for you to be able to worship God in a manner that is pleasing to Him you **must** allow for transformation to happen by the renewing of your mind through the Holy Spirit. Conformity to the world does not allow you to judge what God's will is. In order to live a worship-centered life your mind and thoughts must be yielding to God's Word. Your life and actions must be pliable to God's will. Your goals, wishes and dreams must be in accordance with God's will. Without being deeply rooted in the word and without a strong conviction and commitment to be transformed by the Spirit in order to please your Lord, there is no worship taking place in your life!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray daily to God!** Be open about the areas in your life that need to change. Ask for wisdom and willingness on your part to allow God to change you.
2. **Let God communicate with you!** Read the Word often, as if God is speaking directly with you because He is! Take what you read as His advice, personally applicable to your life!
3. **Seek and Take Advice!** When your brothers/sisters advise you take it as a godly thing. The Lord is answering your sincere prayers! Don't treat with contempt their advice!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Worship-Centered Living

I. The Transforming Mind—Living Sacrifices Romans 12:1-2

1. Your Spiritual act of worship
 - a. The offering of your body.
 - b. Needs to be a holy body, pleasing to God.
2. How you offer your body as a living sacrifice?
 - a. Be effective & productive
 - e. Put to work the abilities God has given you
3. To offer your body your mind must be transformed

II. The Upward call—Spiritual Maturity Hebrews 5:12-14; 6:1-13

1. What milk accomplishes
2. What solid food accomplishes
3. The Lord expects productivity and usefulness
 - a. Worship-centered living allows for a transformation that expresses itself as productivity
 - b. Maturity is the attitude that allows that transformation to take place and glorify God

III. The Elements of Fruitful Growth 2 Peter 1:3-11

1. These elements are given to us by divine power
2. We can choose to put them to use or bury them
3. In increasing measure, they make you useful and productive!
4. Your knowledge of the Bible is to be put into action!

IV. Conclusion: The example of Josiah 2 Chronicles 34, 35

1. Josiah did not conform to evil practices
2. Josiah reformed and transformed
3. His life was worship-centered
4. He regarded with reverence the Laws of God
5. He was a man of action
6. He turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength—2 Kings 23:25

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Look at the people in your class. Focus on the person to your left. If you know them well list the talents you see God has given them.

See To It

Matthew 25:14-30

1. Who is the Master (the man who went on a journey)? Who are the slaves?
2. What did he entrust to the slaves? How did he distribute his wealth? Why wasn't the wealth evenly distributed? v.15
3. When did the slave who received the five talents put the talents to work? What did the third slave do?
4. From verse 21, why the Master call his slave good and faithful? What did he mean by *faithful*? Why do you suppose that he treated the second slave the same way?
5. The third slave had a certain attitude about the Master. What attitude do you suppose this was, in light of what he told his Master? Did the first two slaves need to come up with some excuse when they presented their talents to their Master?
6. How did the Master respond to each of the three slaves? What was the justification given in the parable for each response?

Seeing It Closer:

1. Are you eager to multiply the gifts God has given to you?
2. Do you battle with any negative attitudes that have at times prevented your fruitfulness in the Lord? (I.e. not trusting, lack of faith, worrying, negativity, etc.)
3. Are you eager to enter into the joy of your Master?

Getting To It:

Reflect on how you are preparing yourself for the daily challenges that you face. Do you seek to live a worship-centered life? Are you awaiting your Master's return?

Worship-Centered Living

MONDAY

In order to take a good look into your life, to see if you are allowing transformation (maturity) to take place, we are going to look into four parables that illustrate worship-centered living. The first one is in *Luke 12:42-48*. **The Parable of the Shrewd Manager**. Look up the word *shrewd* in a good dictionary. How can you justify the definitions of the word *shrewd* in light of what the faithful and good manager does? What has this kind of manager been put in charge of (v. 42)? What do you think the food represents? What else is this kind of manager put in charge of (v.44)? Could it possibly mean *material* possessions? Notice that verses 46 & 47 depict the manager that is unfruitful and unproductive (unfaithful). What are some characteristics of this manager? Does he manage God's blessings well? How about the way he treats his brethren? What will be the end for this manager? From verse 47, what does the manager have to know? You, being the manager, how are you going to know your Master's will? God expects you to be fruitful with what He has given you. **BELIEVE AND BE TRANSFORMED!** Write *Psalms 29:2* on an index card and memorize it. Are you mismanaging some blessing God has given to you? Don't be surprised if it is taken away unless you have a change of heart!

TUESDAY

The parable of the talents and the parable of the minas are very similar yet teach two different viewpoints you need to have about the spiritual supplies God has blessed you with. Read *Luke 19:12-27*. To each servant the Lord gives one mina, totaling ten. A mina is a Greek monetary unit, equivalent to a three-month salary. What is the commission given by the nobleman to his servants in verse 13? What was the response of his subjects? Could it be that they didn't want to work hard? Could it be that they didn't want to earn their responsibility? There were at least two servants that didn't respond negatively. Describe what these servants did. What do you think their attitude was? Look at the Master's response. What does he call the servants who earned more from the solitary mina they were given? Notice he describes them as trustworthy! (Look up *trustworthy* in a good dictionary) What does He call the servant who just simply returned the mina? What was the attitude of this servant? Are you expected to produce, or what? Write *Psalms 100:2* on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

The parable of the talents is found in *Matthew 25:14-30*. Notice that each slave receives talents according to his/her abilities, in contrast to the parable of the minas in which each servant receives the same amount. This could be that the mina stands for the life which God gives each of us to live, where the talents represent the gifts/abilities that God gives each of us and make each of us different. In tonight's class you will discuss this parable extensively. For now, meditate on the abilities you know you possess. Think about the blessings God has granted to you. Make a list of them and next to them write how you are worshipping God with this ability/gift (could be a material gift (possession)). Do you realize that depending on how you *manage* these things that God could take them away from you or put you in charge of more things and/or bless you with more (better) abilities? Do you believe this? Don't you know that what the Lord has given is holy?! (Even the relationships He allows you to have!) Don't treat them with contempt! Write *Psalms 99:9* on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

The parable of the sower focuses more on the maturity aspect of growth. The same also applies to the previous parables. Without the desire to grow and mature in and through God's Spirit you couldn't be a good manager in the affairs of God. Read *Luke 8:4-15*. Four soils are described. One was able to be fruitful. If you were the farmer, would you be pleased with soil that does not bring forth a crop? Why not? What would you do with the thorns? What kind of soil are you? If you are doing this study you probably are not the path. If you have received the word with joy you are one of the last three soils. If you are not deeply rooted in the Word and/or are worried by the things of the world (not trusting in God) then you are not the good soil. What three things characterize the good soil? The seed on good soil lets the Word change and mature them so they can produce! Write *Luke 8:15* on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Let's look at Josiah for a minute. Let's examine his attitude. He was a man who worshipped God with all his heart, soul and strength. You will be reading from *2 Chronicles 34 & 35*. According to verse 2 in chapter 34, did Josiah seek to follow his own way, or the ways of his father? According to verse three, what caused Josiah to begin reform throughout Judah and Jerusalem? What was Josiah's response when he heard the Word of God (v.19)? What was God's response (v.27)? From verses 31-33, would you say that Josiah was a lazy servant of God? Do you think that his convictions were heard throughout the kingdom? Do you think that he let worldly ways influence him? What kind of revival happened due to renewed commitment? (35:18)? Did the people miss him when he died (35:24,25)? What kind of mindset did this servant have? Do you think he put his talents (mina) to work? Write *2 Kings 23:25* on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

When an expert of the Law asked Jesus which was the greatest commandment, He replied: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*" (Matt. 22:37-40)

Jesus summarizes the whole teaching of God in one action word: *love!* How do we love God? By keeping His commands (John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 5:3). How do we love our neighbor? By being selfless, kind, generous and compassionate to those around us, whether it be a fellow believer, family member, stranger or enemy.

Love requires going beyond the comfort zone. The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit. Galatians 5:17 says, *"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other..."* In order to love God and those around us, we must be willing to go beyond that which is convenient. Jesus taught the concept of sacrificial love in His parables and teachings. Is it comfortable to love your enemies and to pray for those who persecute you and others? (Matt 5:43-48). Is it comfortable to be patient when dealing with difficult people and situations? Is it comfortable to act with kindness and gentleness when being opposed? (1 Cor. 13:4) Is it comfortable to keep anger under control? Is it comfortable to forget the wrongs of those who hurt you? (1 Cor. 13:5) Is it convenient to go out of your way to help someone who is destitute? (Luke 10:30-37; Matthew 25:34-40) Living the Christian life isn't always convenient and comfortable! We must meet our challenge to go beyond the comfort zone!

The Life in Christ *Going Beyond The Comfort Zone*

Key Text: **1 Corinthians 9:26-27**

"Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

Theme:

We all know that those involved in a race run for a prize. In the Olympics, all the runners in a race run, but only one can receive the gold! This is not so with the child of God. For all true believers who run the spiritual race will receive the gold, the crown of life! But he or she must keep to the path of duty prescribed: to go beyond the comfort zone! Just as those in a race discipline their bodies to endure the hardships of the race, so must the child of God discipline his body. For the body must be kept under submission, beaten black and blue, because the teachings of the Spirit are contrary to the desires of the flesh! (Gal. 5:17) Make sure the Spirit is shining through you! Love beyond the comfort zone! Live beyond the comfort zone! Go beyond the comfort zone!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Get to know the unknown!** There are people within the church you don't know well. Get to know them.
2. **Invite others to your home!** Make your home a place of fellowship!
3. **Seek opportunity to do good!** Take a look around. Be aware of your surroundings! Do what is encouraging!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Beyond The Comfort Zone

Introduction

1 Cor. 9:26-27

--rival: the body

I. The Summary Of God's Word

Matthew 22:37-40

1. Love God (*1 John 5:3*)
 - a. Love intensely
 - b. Love beyond the comfort zone
 - love *with obedience*
 - love *with dependence (faith)*
 - love *seeking His will*
 - love *seeking answers in Him*
2. Love you neighbor--fellow human
 - a. Love intensely
 - b. Love beyond the comfort zone

II. Love your neighbor

1. Love beyond inner comfort
 - a. *1 Cor 13:4-6*
 - easier to be impatient
 - easier to unkind when provoked
 - easier to envy and to boast
 - easier to hold grudges
2. Love beyond the physical comfort
 - a. Parables: *Matthew 25:14f*
 - vs. 14-30: Borrowed talents
 1. What are your talents?
 2. How are you using them?
 3. What will He find?
 - vs. 31-40: Tested service
 1. Whom have you fed?
 2. Whom have you invited?
 3. Whom have you clothed?
 4. Whom have you visited?

III. Conclusion

Jesus--He went beyond comfort zone

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Were you ever involved in some type of competitive sport? What does it take to be a successful athlete?

See To It

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

1. What type of freedom was Paul referring to when he said, "*Though I am free..*"? What type of slavery was he referring to?
2. What was the purpose of his giving up his personal "freedom"?
3. Explain the verse "*To the Jews I became like a Jew.*" Did Paul violate his own teachings (Galatians 5:3-4) regarding the law of Christ and the law of Moses?
4. **Read vs. 21-22.** How do you think Paul became like *those not having the law* (Gentiles) and those who are *weak*?
5. **Read vs. 23.** Paul gave up his freedom so he can share in the blessings of the Gospel. What kind of blessings does it offer?

Seeing It Closer:

1. How can we apply the concept of becoming all things to all men today? Give some examples.
2. What does Paul compare Christianity with? How is Christianity like an athletic event?
3. What does strict training involve? Is it easy? What does it accomplish?
4. What gets in the way of Christian service? How do we "*beat*" our bodies?

Getting To It:

Encourage each other to become all things to all men. Pray that we will not seek what is comfortable, but that which will promote salvation and edification of souls!

MONDAY

This week's Quiet Times will touch again on an attitude necessary for maturity and growth. Read the incidence in **Matthew 12:1-8**. What did the Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of? Here's some background on the matter: People were not supposed to do work on the Sabbath. It was intended for men to rest from their work and turn their minds to the Lord and what He provides. (*Exodus 20:10; Deut. 23:25*) Some, however, got carried away by their hearts and turned God's grace into something they had to earn by following the law. What two instances did Jesus call their attention to? Background for David's situation: Twelve cakes, made of fine flour, were placed in the Holy Place in the Tabernacle each day on the table that stood opposite the lampstand. The old bread was eaten by the priests. It was this bread that David requested of Ahimelech, the priest, for himself and his men. The priests who worked on the Sabbath were not blamed for breaking the Law for they had to take care of the Temple, which is the second example Jesus uses. Now look at verses 6 & 7 of Matthew 12. Jesus is calling the Pharisees to something higher. What is it? Write **1 Samuel 15:22** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

In **Micah 6:6-8** the prophet arrives at the nature and purpose of sacrifice. What is it that truly pleases God? Actions without heart? A heart without actions? "Teaching people to obey the Bible's rules in order to find deliverance and peace is exactly backward to the biblical method. The Gospel message begins with the declaration of what God has done to set us free. Then, as we respond, God matures us into worship, understanding of the will of God, and fruitful obedience." —*Dr. Rubel Shelly* Today's memory verse, **Psalms 51:16-17**, shows us David's mindset. He knew what it took to please God. A trusting, obedient heart. A moldable heart that understands compassion. Sacrificing can become a meaningless ritual. Compassion is a daily exercise of obedience to God's will. Write that verse on an index card and memorize it. Has your weekly contribution become a ritual by which you measure your righteousness or justification?

WEDNESDAY

It is possible that you can become comfortable with your life before God. Comfortable with your actions, attitude and productivity. As we learned last week, however, all such comfort that could come from this is deceitful. The devil wants you to believe that you are OK with yourself all the time. Instead of measuring your status before God by what you are doing or not doing, be assured of your position by what God has already done for you-----> Salvation! Read carefully **Hebrews 10:5-18**. To what is Jesus referring to in verses 5 and 6? How does Jesus respond to His own question? How does this response fulfill the requirements of the Law and please God at the same time? Explain Paul's interpretation of Jesus' statement at the end of verse 9. What is the result of a willing and obedient heart (verse 10)? Now let's look closely at the rest, especially verses 16-18. How is it that God's Laws are transferred from the tablets of stone into our minds and hearts? Notice that this second covenant brings us into a deeper, more personal relationship with God. It is still very much a covenant of faith and trust, only now we have been delivered from sin and its consequence--eternal damnation--instead of being delivered from our earthly struggles. The earthly struggles remain to strengthen our faith; to help us lean on the everlasting arms! Write **Isaiah 66:2** on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

Here we are. Back in **Romans 12:1-2**. Notice! In view of what does Paul urge you to offer your bodies as living sacrifices? Why is it so important to keep that view? Does it make sense to be sacrificial without having been delivered? Deliverance by the grace of God is what gives us the bearing to offer up ourselves as living sacrifices--> removing ourselves from the comfort zone of laziness and ignorance. Deliverance always precedes obedience as a reminder of the holy life that we are called to live. "Be holy as I am Holy" declares the Lord. Our comfort in Christ needs to come from the fruitfulness of our actions done in faith. Write **Jeremiah 7:22-23** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Read **Philippians 2:1-4**. Notice the challenge! If you truly can see what you have been saved from, then you will be moved to act out of compassion, not just to be considered righteous! You will not be selfish, or vain, or concerned about your material wealth or possessions, because you will realize that they are God's anyway! Notice Paul's attitude about his worldly gain; materially or socially, in **Philippians 3:7-11**. In verses 7 and 8 Paul describes his view on worldly gain. The result? Peace of mind through the knowledge of righteousness gained by faith, the desire to know the sufferings of Christ, and the hope of the resurrection. Instead of being focused on the comforts of the world, you will be focused on the comfort in Heaven and willing to suffer to secure your salvation in Christ. Isn't suffering necessary to have a contrite and broken heart? Write **Proverbs 21:3** on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

When the demon-possessed man was saved from the power of Satan, he desired to go with Christ. But Christ would not allow him to go with Him because He had other work for him to do: he must go home to his own and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him (*Mark 5:18-19*). This man was called to be a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ! God's people in the Old Testament were called His *witnesses* (*Isaiah 43:10*). This holds true for the New Testament Christian. We are called to testify about the saving grace of Christ! The apostle Peter understood this when he spoke to Cornelius and his household saying, "*He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*" (*Acts 10:42-43*)

It is our duty as faithful disciples of Christ to share the gospel with the lost. In Luke 12:8, Jesus said, "*I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.*" Christ assures us that those who confess Him before men, He Himself will acknowledge them as His people in that great day before the angels of God! Christ's purpose was to save people from their sins (*1 Tim 1:15*). For this reason He was given the name "Jesus" (*Matthew 1:21*). He calls us to continue His work in bringing souls to His kingdom. This is the meaning of the parable of the ten minas in Luke 19:12-27. He calls us to *occupy* (KJV) or "to get busy" until He comes. Are you busy??? Remember, the gospel saves (*Romans 1:16*)! How can sinners believe in the gospel if the message is not told to them? (*Romans 10:14*) You are the light and the salt! Fulfill your purpose!

The Life in Christ

A Life of Proclaiming Christ

Key Text:

Psalm 145:10-12

"All you have made will praise you, O Lord; your saints will extol you. They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, so that all men may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom."

Theme:

Just as a beautiful building praises its builder or a well-drawn painting praises its painter, so do the saints praise their Lord! God's people speak of the greatness of His kingdom and testify of the mighty deeds He has done through Christ! We are called to proclaim the saving message of the gospel! Have you telling others about Jesus? Have you been sharing the love of God with the lost?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Carry church cards with you!** Keep a fresh supply of church cards with your name, number, and church information on them. Invite people to church. Those who are opened to the invitation, give them a church card.
2. **Carry pamphlets with you.** Hand out Gospel pamphlets to those who are willing to accept them. Do not waste them on those who are not interested!
3. **Tell others of Jesus!** Share with the lost the saving message of the gospel! Let them know that Jesus loves them, died for them and wants to save them. Exchange phone numbers and set up studies with those interested in knowing more of God's grace!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE	SMALL GROUP STUDY
Proclaiming Christ I. A Former Lesson of A Sinful People 1. Sodom and Gomorra (<i>Gen. 18:20-19:29</i>) a. Men of Sodom were wicked b. Lord determines to destroy the city --Willing to spare for the sake of few righteous men (compassion) --Lord deals patiently with Abraham c. Lot was a righteous man (<i>2 Peter 2:7-8</i>) --Was he distressed by the filthy lives of the Sodomites --He was tormented by what he saw and heard --Did he not preach to them??? d. God destroyed with fire 2. Christians' Task (<i>2 Cor 5:10-11a</i>) --Remember the judgment --Persuade men II. Conclusion (<i>2 Tim 1:7-8</i>) 1. God did not give us a spirit of timidity 2. Do not be ashamed to confess Jesus	Warm-up: Did you ever ignore a warning just to wind up getting into trouble or problems? Explain. See To It Luke 17:24-30 1. What is the day of Christ compared to? Explain this comparison? 2. What happened in the days of Noah? What was Noah's role? See 2 Peter 2:5. 3. What was the response of the people? Who wound up escaping death? 4. What happened in the days of Lot? What kind of person was Lot? See 2 Peter 2:6-8. 5. Did you think Lot shared the Lord with these people? Explain. Seeing It Closer: 1. How is the world like Sodom today? Give some examples of what's going on today? 2. How can we make a difference in the lives of people today? 3. How does the story of Noah and Lot motivate us to proclaim Christ? 4. Read verses 32-33. What must we remember about Lot's wife? How does her example apply to us today? Getting To It: Next time you sit in a stadium, picture how judgment will be like for all of those spectators. Be motivated to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the lost! Be the light!!!

Proclaiming Christ

MONDAY

This week's Quiet Times will touch on the need to confess Christ before men. Read **Matthew 10:32-33**. The word "acknowledge" is also translated as "confess." What is your Christian duty? What assurance is Christ offering you here? **Read verse 33**. By not "confessing" or "acknowledging" Christ, what are you, in fact, doing? What may "confessing Christ" expose you to? What specific things has prevented you from confessing Christ to each person you meet? Have you spoken to anyone about Jesus today? Would you speak to others about Jesus more often if you were encouraged by a brother or sister? Call you discipler and ask him or her to challenge you in this area. Pray now to the Lord to empower you to the task! Write **1 John 4:15** on an index card and memorize it. Put this task to work today. Invite people to church today and tell them of Jesus!

TUESDAY

Read Mark 5:18-20. What kind of attitude did this man have after his deliverance? Why did Jesus object to his following Him? What did Jesus call him to do? Why did Jesus tell him to do this? What did this man do as a result of Jesus' instructions? To whom must you confess Christ? **Read Matthew 5:13-16**. Have you "salted" someone with the gospel today? How has your "light" been shining today? If we don't confess Christ, we become as lamps under a bowl. It is a foolish thing to purchase a lamp just to hide it under a bowl. Its purpose is to give light in a dark place! Keeping the gospel hidden is like darkening a lamp! How foolish that is! Have you invited anyone to church or to a bible study today? Have you told your physical family members about the gospel? When was the last time you spoke to your family about Christ? Have you given up on them? Are you like the demon-possessed man--eager to do what the Lord calls you to do? Speak of Christ to the first lost soul you see today! Write **2 Timothy 1:8** on an index card and memorize it. Invite people to know Jesus today!

WEDNESDAY

It is important for the Christian to see people as they really are--walking corpses, without God, destined to burn in hell because they know not Jesus as Lord! This is a terrible image, but it is reality! When this image escapes our thoughts, then the need to confess Christ before men becomes an unimportant thing! Noah, the prophets, Christ, and the apostle acknowledged the need to tell others of the coming judgment. **Read Acts 24:24-25**. What did Paul speak to Felix and his wife about? What three things did his message include? Why did you think Felix became afraid? Will the gospel be accepted by everyone? What must you teach people when confessing Christ? **Read 2 Corinthians 5:10-11**. What must others need to know when we share the Lord with them? What is the motivation to tell others of Christ? Is it a serious matter for others to know? Why? How motivated are you in telling others of Jesus? Write **James 5:20** on an index card and memorize it. Speak to someone today about the hope of the gospel! Invite them to church!

THURSDAY

The Bible often describes the character of the true child of God. For example, Hebrew writer says that those in Christ are not those who shrink back and are destroyed but of those who believe and are saved! (**Hebrews 10:38-39**) The psalmist speaks of another characteristic of the true child of God! **Read Psalm 145:8-12**. Describe the person of God as taught by the psalmist? Why are His saints excited in the Lord? What great things has the Lord done for you personally? What mighty acts has He done in your life? How has He been gracious to you? How has He been compassionate to you? How has He been patient with you today? How has He richly loved you? Why is His kingdom unlike any other? Have you shared the Lord with a lost soul today? Write **Psalm 145:10-12** on an index card and memorize it. Tell someone today about the kingdom of Christ and of His marvelous deeds!

FRIDAY

Well, we've finished the segment on *the Life of Christ*! I hope this week has been an encouragement to share the Lord with the lost! Keep in mind: it is also important for you to keep faithful to the reading of the Scriptures. We must allow the Word of God to spiritually feed us. Encourage spiritual maturity in your life! Study the Word! Seek insight from older brothers and sisters. Participate in Bible class and pray for wisdom and understanding! The Lord is gracious! Read **1 Peter 3:15**. What does it mean to *set apart Christ as Lord*? Notice the challenge! What should we always be ready to do? How can we prepare ourselves to answer those who question our faith? Write down some ways you can prepare yourself for this task? How should we answer everyone? Are you familiar with what to say when speaking about the gospel? Do you have a working knowledge of evidences for God and the Bible? Are you prepared to deal with atheists, agnostics, and people of other "faiths"? Are you praying for wisdom? Don't be lazy! Be diligent! Write **1 Peter 3:15** on an index card and memorize it. Tell someone about the saving power of Jesus today, tomorrow, and always--until He comes!!!

INSIGHT

When you became a Christian you entered into a marriage (covenant) relationship with Jesus Christ. We are called to be faithful to Him and put no other before Him. When we sin we are being unfaithful to Jesus. Spiritually, we are committing adultery. God's heart is broken when we prostitute our souls to other lovers (i.e. idolatry, immorality, jealousy, cowardice, fits of rage, etc.). The Lord clearly illustrates this to us through Hosea, the prophet. Hosea is commanded to take an unfaithful wife who will commit adultery and prostitute herself to other lovers. She will bear children of unfaithfulness conceived in sin. This unenviable task is a wake-up call to Israel and to us. God loves us so deeply! How do you think it makes Him feel when we chase after other lovers (sin)? What does it do to God's heart when He sees us committing adultery? How would you feel if the tables were turned?

Perhaps the greatest pain one can experience is to love someone deeply, to commit themselves wholeheartedly to another only to have them chase after someone else. Have you ever experienced the pain of unfaithfulness? Have you ever loved someone deeply only to have them leave you for another? How did it make you feel? It crushes and devastates the heart! Then you can begin to understand the hurt that God feels and how His heart is pained when we sin. You can also begin to appreciate how great and awesome God's love is, because despite the devastation He feels because of our adulterous ways, He still loves us!! God is always faithful and welcomes us with open arms when we return to Him!

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Imitate the faithfulness of the Lord!

The Heart of God God's Greatest Desires

Key Text: **Hosea 11:8-9**

"...My heart is changed within me; all my compassion aroused. I will not carry out my fierce anger, nor will I turn and devastate Ephraim. For I am God, and not man - the Holy One among you. I will not come in wrath."

Theme:

The heart of God is filled with compassion and clearly He does not treat us as our sins deserve (Psalms 103). Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, it was always God's desire to see her repent and return to Him. How does He do this? Well, He is God - the Holy One among us! His holiness is shown in His ability to forgive even though we don't deserve it.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Give thanks to the Lord!** Thank God for not treating you as your sins deserve, and remember that when dealing with others.
2. **Appreciate the Lord's compassion!** God's compassion is not human - it is holy. Imitate His holiness and share it with those who do not know the Lord!
3. **Understand all sin is adultery toward God!** When we sin we are committing adultery against our faithful husband, Jesus Christ.
4. **Repent with great eagerness!** Hosea 14:1 says "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall!"

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

God's Great Desires

Introduction

1 Timothy 2:3-4

God wants everyone to know the Truth and be saved.

I. God's Great Desire to Forgive

Ephesians 5:2

1. Jesus gave Himself up for the Church.
 - a. The ultimate expression of His love for us and His desire to forgive us of our unfaithfulness.

II. God's Great Desire to Deliver Us

Ephesians 5:3-11

1. God desires to deliver us from our sinful ways.
2. God calls us to live in the light.

III. God's Great Desire for His Bride

Ephesians 5:25ff

1. The Church is the bride.
2. His desire is to prepare her (you and I) for the great wedding day.

IV. God's Desire Fulfilled at the Wedding Day

Revelation 21, 22

1. God is preparing the bride for her husband (*Rev. 21:1-2*).
2. The bride is beautifully dressed (*Galatians 3:26-27*).
3. After the wedding - celebration! (*Rev. 21:3-7*).
4. The bride eagerly awaits her husband (*Rev. 22:17*).

V. Conclusion

God's desires show His faithfulness and love for us. Likewise, let our desires show our faithfulness and love for the Lord!

Revelation 22:12

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

What was the worst job you ever had to do in school, work, or at home? Why was it so unpleasant?

See To It

Hosea 1:2; 3:1-3

1. How would you feel about taking a spouse like Gomer to be your own? Why?
2. What did the Lord want Hosea to do? Why do you think He wanted him to do this? What was the purpose?
3. How would you feel if the Lord asked you to marry Gomer?
4. If your spouse committed adultery and left you, how would it make you feel? Would it be easy to take them back if they returned? How would you be able to take them back?
5. How did God view the Israelite's sin? What were they committing?

Seeing It Closer:

1. How are you like Gomer?
2. How is God like Hosea?
3. How do you feel when you realize God is affected by your sin?
4. Are you eager to be a more faithful spouse to the Lord? Why?

Getting To It:

Encourage each other to become a more faithful spouse to the Lord. Pray that we may all grow to be more like our loving husband - Jesus Christ.

MONDAY

This week we will be reading the book of Hosea in order to gain insight into the heart of God. There will be more reading than usual, but the impact of these lessons on your life will be well worth it!! We will be looking at the way in which our behavior affects the Lord and examining His greatest desires! Let's begin by reading **Hosea, chapters 1-3**. As you read chapter 1, think about Hosea's relationship to Gomer and how it applies to our relationship with God. What were the people of Israel guilty of in verse 2? This is how God feels when we are unfaithful too. Read Chapter 2. From verses 5-8, what was Israel doing to God? How did it make Him feel? Despite how He felt, what was His desire for Israel? Was it to divorce her, or to reconcile? Read chapter 3, and dwell on your relationship with God. How does your sin make Him feel? Seek to understand how you are affecting the heart of God.

TUESDAY

Read **Hosea, chapters 4 and 5**. As you read chapter 4, what type of spirit was leading the Israelites (from verse 12)? What were they doing to cause God to view them the way He did? As you read chapter 5, consider how Israel's immorality and unfaithfulness caused God to feel (see verse 15). Write **I Corinthians 6:18** on an index card and memorize it. Think about how these quiet time passages go together. God's heart aches when we sin because He knows how it hurts us.

WEDNESDAY

Today we will be reading **Hosea, chapters 6 and 7**. As you read chapter 6, consider how Israel responded to the Lord's rebuke. Israel's words were good, but how about their actions? What does God compare Israel's love to in verse 4? Why? As you read chapter 7, consider the results of sin. What was Israel "hot" for? What were the results of having these "hot" desires fulfilled? Read verse 13 and think about the heart of God. What did God long for? Write **Hosea 6:6** on an index card and memorize it. Dwell on God's desire and pray to make it your own!

THURSDAY

Read **Hosea, chapters 8-10**. Read chapter 8 and think about how ludicrous idolatry (putting anything before God) is. What is the result of idolatry? How does it make God feel? Why is it so offensive to Him? In chapter 9, Hosea rebukes Israel. What does he say will happen to them in verse 17? Read chapter 10 and seek to understand why God was provoked to anger by Israel's behavior. What were the things they were doing? Apply this to your life and your relationship with God. How do you think your behavior makes God feel? "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and *find out what pleases the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:8-10).

FRIDAY

Today we will be finishing our study of the book of Hosea. Read **chapters 11-14**. What happened to Israel when things were going smoothly and they were well fed (see chapter 13, verses 4-6)? Describe their focus. How did this make God feel (see verses 7-9)? According to Hosea 14:4, did God stay angry at them forever? Why? What do you see as the strongest desires in the heart of God? What is our tendency when things are going well in our lives? Have you been thankful for the difficulties you face? Can gaining a better understanding of the heart of God help you appreciate your life in Christ? Write **Hosea 14:9** on an index card and burn it into your hearts and minds. Praise God, for He is wise and discerning and full of mercy!!!

INSIGHT

Do you know the story about the frog who was in a pan of water above the stove? The temperature in the pan of water was increased ever so slightly that the poor frog was cooked without ever trying to escape! The frog was insensitive to the slight increase of temperature. As Christians, we are in a similar situation. The devil is continuously trying to cause you to stumble and fall. He knows you probably won't walk into an obvious trap so he always tries to trick you with subtleties. *"The incremental acceptance of obscenity and violence has elevated our tolerance for evil"*—Dr. Rubel Shelly. If we continue to ignore the warning signs of our conscience and guilt, we will quickly find ourselves deeply involved in moral impurity. The deeper you sink into the mud, the harder it will be for you to come out clean without any major battle-scars.

This series we will be getting into, *"The Heart of God"*, will take us through the core of what makes God the Holy Being that He is: **LOVE**.

I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

(Lev 11:45 NIV)

Morality begins with the person and nature of God. In order to follow and obey Jesus, we must worship Him as the Creator and be aware of His presence and magnificence. Learning about Him through the Word should be an event fulfilled by your desire to know your husband, not a ritualistic exercise.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

(Rom 15:4 NIV)

As we look into the moral code given by God at Mt. Sinai, we look into an eternal moral code that reveals the will of God for His people. This Law remain the basic moral framework for the church of God. We are expected to rise above it (Matthew 5, 6, 7). Rather than being people who *do* or *do not*, Jesus calls us to have the *be-attitudes*. He calls us to *be* like Him. To *be* transformed. To *be* holy, as He is holy. Not just to *do* holy things.

The Heart of God

Deliverance Precedes Obedience

Key Text:

Romans 5:8-9

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Theme:

Before God calls us to follow and obey Him, He paves our way to Him by delivering us from the slavery of our sins. Obedience to God is not the basis for our deliverance. Rather, it is always the reverse. Gospel before demand, grace before law, God's sacrifice before people's sacrifice. Nonetheless, in the freedom granted to us by God He calls us to be holy, obedient and righteous. Justification precludes obligation and commitment to God. As a matter of fact, justification demands it! Our obedience and commitment to God must be expressed out of the gratitude and thankfulness of our heart, accompanied by reverence.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray daily to God!** Be open about the areas in your life that need to change. Ask for wisdom and willingness on your part to allow God to change you.
2. **Let God communicate with you!** Read the Word often, as if God is speaking directly with you because He is! Take what you read as His advice, personally applicable to your life!
3. **Seek and Take Advice!** When your brothers/sisters advise you take it as a godly thing. The Lord is answering your sincere prayers! Don't treat with contempt their advice!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

A CASE HISTORY OF ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE

I. Before Knowledge there must be respect

1. Israel was in sin because they didn't recognize God.
2. Their lack of morality eventually enslaved them

II. Before Gratitude there must be Recognition

1. They had to recognize that God chose them
2. They had to see the might of God in action
3. They had to witness the love of God for them in the fact that they were exempt from His fury

III. Before Obedience there must be Deliverance

1. They were saved without anything asked of them in return.
2. They were given the choice to follow God
3. They were expected to obey in order to enter into a covenant relationship with their Savior
4. Those who were fearful were grateful in their obedience.

IV. The New Testament Analogy

1. We are the new Israel
2. We were enslaved by our passions and desires
3. We failed to recognize God
4. We have been delivered from our sins
5. If we want to continue in our covenant relationship we must obey out of gratitude in our heart.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

How did the movie "The Ten Commandments" change your view of God? If you haven't seen the movie I suggest you rent it and watch it.

See To It

Matthew 5:17-48

1. What did Jesus come to do with the Law?
2. What does Jesus say about the permanence of the commands of God?
3. From verse 20, what is the focus or attitude Jesus wants us to have toward the Law or commands of God?
4. How are we to surpass the righteousness of the Pharisees?
5. Does Jesus quote all of the Ten Commandments? Why not?
6. Why is He expanding on each of the commands He quotes? What kind of change is He looking for? A change of action or a change of mind and heart?

Seeing It Closer:

1. How is expanding upon each of the commands help us learn more about God's heart and His will for us?
2. How does looking at each of the commands help us learn about our sin and our need for deliverance?
3. How does looking at each command make us aware of God's holiness and our need to be holy and revere Him?

Getting To It:

Reflect the commands and on the way Jesus used them to make us aware of God's holy nature and His expectations for us, His covenant people. Pray that we may, as a church, be holy and blameless before the Lord.

Deliverance Precedes Obedience

MONDAY

From last week's Quiet Times, you learned how God yearns for His Church; how He regards the Church as His bride. As a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, it is our duty to submit to, and obey our husband. Read **Ephesians 5:22-27**. Now look at verse 22. What is the apostle Paul using as a frame of reference when he addresses husband's and wife's attitudes toward each other? From verse 25, how is the husband going to learn to love his wife? How can wives learn to submit to their husbands? As a church, we learn submission to the Lord by recognizing what He does for us. Likewise, the husbands have the task of learning the amazing love Jesus has for His church so they can reciprocate this love to their wives. Read verses 25-27 again. Who was the initiator in our relationship with God? Holiness is mentioned at the beginning and at the end. His desire is to make us **holy**. How? Washing & regeneration (**Titus 3:5-7**). By His Word and His Holy Spirit in us. Gee! God has done it all! Write **1 Samuel 12:24** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

In order for us to learn holiness as the church of God, we need to know the will of the Lord. Read **Matthew 7:21-23**. In these verses Jesus seems to be pointing out two extremes. There are two groups of people He speaks of. He addresses the first group in verse 21. How will these people approach Him? Do they approach Jesus with actions of faith, or just words: "Lord, Lord!"? How about the second group (verse 22)? How do they come to Jesus? How do they want to be justified? Are they trying to be justified by what they did or by what God did to them? What is the right attitude to have then? What do you have to know? **Romans 12:1-2** is the continuous exercise for our minds, that we may become familiar with God's will, as our husband. His good, pleasing and perfect will! Here in Romans, Paul echoes the "Spirit aspect" of holiness in our lives, like you read in Ephesians yesterday. What about the "Word aspect"? Write **Psalms 19:9-10** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

The apostle Peter was very straightforward about where and how the Word of God comes into play in making us holy before the Lord. Read **1 Peter 1:22-23**. How are we purified (made holy)? How can we learn to have sincere love for our brethren? Notice that loving one another deeply, from the heart includes overlooking fault, sins, and offense. This can only happen when we're imitating God's holiness; when we're obeying the truth! Peter reminds us that this obedience must be the result of our deliverance (verse 23). We have been born again of imperishable seed! HOW?? Through the Living and Enduring Word of God!!! How can His Word be Living and Enduring in YOU? Write **Proverbs 1:7** on an index card and memorize it. Has your relationship with your spouse been affected yet by what you've learned?

THURSDAY

The apostle Peter has much more to say in respect to fearing God and obeying His commands. Read **1 Peter 1:14-25** and **1 Peter 2:12-25**. Think about the following: 1) Deliverance precedes obedience 2) Being holy 3) Fearing God. These are the three themes touched on by Peter throughout these chapters. Being delivered causes us to fear (revere, respect) God which promotes obedience and produces holiness. Read **Ecclesiastes 12:13-14**. This is the whole point of the book of Ecclesiastes (the name of the book comes from the same word in Greek that is translated as "church" in the NT). Spend some time reading portions of this book throughout the next couple of weeks. Write **Ecc 12:13** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

As a result of being delivered and desiring obedience, we will be looking at the commandments God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai during the following weeks. These commandments, known as the Ten Commandments, represent the basic moral framework for the church of God. As we look into each commandment we will learn about God's will for His people and about God's holiness. We also will learn much about how our sins get in the way of our relationship with God. Much of the material for this lesson and the ones to follow will come from Rubel Shelly's "Written in Stone: Ethics for the Heart". Although Rubel has taken a liberal stance on the Scriptures today, this book is firmly grounded in Scripture. I urge you to purchase it and use it as a tool for the renewal of your heart.

INSIGHT

All religions acknowledge that humanity suffers from some form of bondage. The forerunners of religious movements apart from the Bible have beckoned “freedom” through series of steps toward “liberation” or some form of “enlightenment” to bring one’s self out of bondage. How different is Biblical religion! Since the beginning, God has always shown and reminded His people that He is their Liberator and Justifier, and that He alone can bring them out of bondage. Our Lord is the only Being in existence that can give us freedom from sin.

I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high. Lev 26:12-13

Biblical religion is also unique in its exclusivity. God, and God alone can save. He is the very center of our salvation. He calls us to walk beside Him. To walk as He does; to be holy as He is holy. He defines the perimeter of our walk with Him and teaches us accountability.

No wonder that the practice of other religions and/or beliefs have no effect on the human heart! Other religious ideologies are completely powerless because they preach liberation by your own merit. They say that salvation and the knowledge to freedom is within you.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6

Jesus is the ONLY way to salvation, even to a personal relationship with God. No other religion even imagines a personal relationship with deity except for Biblical religion. Mohammed never said that he was the way; Buddha always told his followers that they had to find the path to enlightenment themselves; and other so-called religious preachers and teachers pervert the gospel with rules and regulations to freedom. Jesus always made Himself the very issue of His teachings. He calls us to *abide in Him*, to *follow Him* and to *hope in Him*. He teaches faith and grace. He is the reason for our singing, our praying and our persevering. He is the reason to live!

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

Acts 4:12

The Heart of God: The First Commandment God as Center & Circumference

Key Text:

Exodus 20:3

"You shall have no other gods before Me."

Theme:

The first commandment sets the stage for the attitude necessary to understand the nine that follow. If God is truly God, then all that He says is true and is to be obeyed. If God is truly God, then we are safe within His dominion and parameters. All who belong to Him and consecrate themselves as His covenant people are safeguarded from evil. The first commandment is not only first in sequence, but also first in priority. The Lord, God, our deliverer, does not accept a peripheral role in our lives. He won't serve as an occasional troubleshooter or bail us out of trouble only to be forgotten when things are "going good". He is everything to us, or nothing at all. "He neither seeks nor will He accept a position short of sovereignty in our lives."

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray daily to God!** Submit every aspect of your life to the Lord. Let Him work wonders in those difficult areas of your life!
2. **Surrender your desires & demands!** Make God's desires and demands the center and circumference of your life! Know your Lord!
3. **Be dazzled by God!** Begin each day with a prayer to be in sync with the Spirit. Let God amaze you by what He accomplishes through your devotion to Him. Be thankful and content with everything!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you! Make Him the focus and center of your everyday activities!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Making God our Center & our Circumference

To make the Lord our Circumference we first need to make Him the Center of our lives

I. The 1st Commandment demands our attention

1. God has never held back from you *Romans 8:32*
2. What are you holding back from God?

II. The 1st Commandment demands our focus *Philippians 3:8-9*

1. Where is your focus? What are your dreams?
2. Do you see yourself as part of God's plan or do you have your own plan?
3. How much have you given up for the sake of knowing your Lord? What's getting in the way?

III. The 1st Commandment demands our zeal *Romans 12:9-21*

1. The commitment needs to be die-hard
2. The integrity needs to be consistent
3. The desire for Him needs to be always fresh

If the Lord is the center of your life, then your perimeter is God's Kingdom—Everything will revolve around it!

IV. Circumference is Discipleship *Luke 14:25-35*

1. Going beyond rituals
2. Going beyond consumerism
3. Our conscience always needs to be exposed and be self-corrective. 2 Tim 1:7

V. Circumference is Total-Life Obedience *1 Corinthians 15:58*

1. Changing our viewpoint from having religion to being religious.
2. Making God the shelf and our desires and goals the knick-knacks.
3. Have you realized where you are and what you've been called to?

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

When you gather on Sunday for assembly (services), are you always filled with a sense of awe about your spiritual surroundings? How do you view your surroundings? Are you always aware of the presence of the Lord?

See To It

Hebrews 12:18-29

1. What is being used as a point of reference in verses 18-21? See *Exodus 19:16-25; 20:1-21*
2. What made the Israelite encampment at Mt. Sinai so terrifying?
3. How is what we have now better than what the Israelites experienced? How is it different experience? How is it a similar experience?
4. Verses 25 -29 contain an admonishment (warning). If you were an Israelite in the time of Moses, how would you have taken this warning and your experience of the Holy God?
5. Do you believe that the Earth will be shaken once more? How can we prevent ourselves from being shaken and destroyed when that happens?
6. How are we to acknowledge the fact that we are in an unshakable Kingdom? (verse 28)

Seeing It Closer:

1. What kinds of things distract you from picturing the description of the Kingdom in Hebrews 12?
2. Do you at times have difficulty accepting the fact that you are part of Heaven's awesome plan? What kind of things do you doubt?
3. Do you sincerely believe that you are walking the narrow and difficult path? How do you know this?

Getting To It:

Pray that we may be open to weeding out anything that may get in our way of devotion to our One and Only True God!

God as Center & Circumference

MONDAY *AS OUR CENTER, GOD DEMANDS OUR ATTENTION...*

Read **Matthew 22:37-38**. What must you do to make God the center of your life? Your heart, soul, mind and strength is to be used to love God. Do you demand anything less from a spouse? Our emotions (heart), soul, thoughts (mind) and physical nature (strength) is to be focused on our love for God. Does God love us with anything less? Read **Romans 8:32**. Has God held anything back from you? Write **Romans 14:9** on an index card and memorize it. Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God!

TUESDAY *AS OUR CENTER, GOD DEMANDS OUR FOCUS...*

Read **Phillipians 3:8-9**. Have you abandoned your dreams for the sake of knowing Jesus? Have you stopped looking after material gain for the sake of knowing your Savior? Have you gotten rid of situations, jobs or other distractions that get in your way of knowing Jesus? Read **Luke 8:14**. What is preventing this seed from maturing? Can you identify times in your life when distractions hindered you from maturing in your faith and thus hampered your growth in Christ? Can you identify the particular attitude or distraction you had? Now read **Matthew 18:7-9**. What attitude does Jesus teach you to have about things that cause you to loose your focus? Isn't this a radical way of looking at things!!!!? But isn't this the same thing that Paul is saying in the first passage you looked at today? Write **Phillipians 3:8** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY *AS OUR CENTER, GOD DEMANDS OUR ZEAL...*

People who are married understand that the commitment in their relationship is 24-7. I don't think that you would consider a potential mate who's pledge to you would only cover five days of the week. When you get married you promise to have no other spouse, no other commitment, no other distraction from your mate. You are to dedicate yourself to each other through good and bad. When the Lord says: "*You shall have no other gods before Me.*", He expects the same wholehearted zeal from you. Consider King Asa in **2 Chronicles 16:6-13**. From verse 8, was Asa accustomed to relying on the Lord? What happened later on in his life? What happened to his zeal? Look at Hanani's point in verse 9. Check out **Romans 12:9-21**. These encouraging snippets all come from a heart that is fully committed to the Lord—not lacking in **zeal** (verse 11). Our zeal and devotion to Jesus must be consistent! See **Luke 9:62**. Write this passage on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY *AS OUR CIRCUMFERENCE, GOD DEMANDS DISCIPLESHIP...*

Yesterday's memory verse touched upon the importance of keeping your focus on Jesus to be able minded for God's Kingdom. Not only has God saved you but now He prepares you to serve effectively in His Kingdom. His desire for you is to have no other distraction than being of service to the Kingdom in every way God enables you to be. "Jesus calls you for more than mere following; He asks you to imitate His unreserved commitment to the Kingdom of God." —Shelly Read **Luke 14:25-35**. The events surrounding the next scene seem to happen because of the great multitudes following Jesus. It is interesting to see here that Jesus was not just interested in numbers, He wanted committed people. He wanted people who were going to be committed to Him from the heart. People who would make Him their Lord. The discipleship that He seeks goes beyond superficial religious ritual and consumerism. Jesus desires for your discipleship to be a continuous examination of your consciences in light of how you are loving your brethren, even our enemies. Verse 33 again depicts the importance of having no distractions aside from God Himself—"You shall have no other gods before Me." Write **Mark 8:34** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY *AS OUR CIRCUMFERENCE, GOD DEMANDS TOTAL -LIFE OBEDIENCE...*

Discipleship in Christ cannot take place during your own time. You cannot fit God's plan for you within your schedule. As your center and circumference, God recruits you for His plan and demands your life as a worker in the Kingdom. The God of the Bible is too big and too all-encompassing to be sitting in your shelf of life. You need to view yourself sitting on God's Shelf—His Kingdom. The Hebrew writer painted the picture of reality that is the Kingdom of God in **Hebrews 12:18-29**. What a picture!! What a sense of awe! Can you not see that the same God who spoke from Mt. Sinai to the Egyptians is the same God that has rescued you from eternal damnation?! Even though your physical eyes can't see the legions of angels in joyful assembly, your spiritual eyes should be able to appreciate and see the majesty of God's grace. What new appreciation and respect have you learned from the first commandment?

INSIGHT

When the Israelites were camped at the base of Mt. Sinai, they waited for Moses to come back to them...

When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him." Exo 32:1

As people who have finite knowledge we are quick to stray from that which we do not understand. We want things that are easily categorized, easily understood, *packageable*. We are used to packaging the uncontainable, predicting the unpredictable and trivializing the sublime. What we do to our God is not far from what the Israelites did that day at Mt. Sinai. They did not understand God, or what Moses wanted to do and so their trust and faith waned...

He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods", O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." Exo 32:4

Although initially we might assume that Aaron clearly lost his mind and violated the first commandment, a closer look at what they did reveals to us that this is not the case.

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, "Tomorrow there will be a festival to the LORD." Exo 32:5

You see, when Aaron called the people to a festival to the Lord, he used God's covenant name, YAHWEH. He wasn't just celebrating a feast to an image of a God, but he was telling the people that the golden calf was an image of the God of Israel! They couldn't handle the vastness and sublime nature of God; they couldn't comprehend God's holiness and love. They wanted something predictable, *packageable*, explainable and visual. They wanted to be able to see their god, touch their god and understand their god. We are the same! Anytime we attempt to define God according to our understanding, we are worshipping an idol, not the God of the Bible. God has revealed Himself to us not so much so that we can understand Him, but to believe Him and trust Him in all that He does and says. To want to represent Him or His Word with anything other than the Bible's teachings applied to our life is against God's will.

^a or "This is your god..."

The Heart of God: The Second Commandment Trivializing the Sublime

Key Text:

Exodus 20:4-5a

"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God..."

Theme:

In both Hebrew and Greek, the word *jealousy* refers to "single-minded devotion" to an object. In neither has good or bad connotations. The jealousy of the Lord is much nobler than the jealous love of a man and his wife. God is not jealous *of* His people but *for* them. He desires to bless, not punish. God's jealousy for His covenant people reveals His zeal to bless and elevate those who have declared Him their God, according to His first command. He seeks to honor His name among them. To seek Him out in any other way, shape or form that is not in keeping with His Word is to philander with the Divine. And, you see, this prevents you from benefiting of the Divine Plan.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Get to know your Lord.** Don't be satisfied with just knowing *about* Him, get to *know Him!* Study His Word!
2. **Don't settle for substitutes.** Is there something missing in your life? Is there an emptiness? Then you really haven't pulled out all the stops! Fill yourself with the Holy Spirit! *Accept NO substitutes!*
3. **Be dazzled by God!** Begin each day with a prayer to be in sync with the Spirit. Let God amaze you by what He accomplishes through your devotion to Him. Be thankful and content with everything!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you! Make Him the focus and center of your everyday activities!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Trivializing the Sublime

Introduction: Last Week

1. The first commandment deals with the object of our worship, YAHWEY, and Him only
2. It is the principal command to observe
 - a. Pride makes a god of self
 - b. Covetousness makes a god of money (greed)
 - c. Sensuality makes a god of the stomach
3. Violation of this dares God to His face

I. Second Commandment: Teaching on Worship

Exodus 20:4

A. The Prohibition: No Images of God!!!

1. Idolatry reduces God to the physical (*John 4:24*)
 - God is not to be defined in terrestrial terms
 - He is not definable; He is an indefinite spirit
2. Idolatry makes the truth of God into a lie (*Rom 1:25*)
 - An image is a teacher of lies (*Hab 2:18*)
 - It insinuates God having a body
3. Idolatry equates God with man (*Isa. 55:8-9*)
 - His ways are not our ways
 - Denominationalism and superstitions make God an idol:
 - a. Mormonism--teaches existence of other gods
 - b. Astrology--Star worship
 - c. Psychic Network--Mind worship

B. The Reasons For This Prohibition

Ex. 20:5-6

1. Idolatry is a form of disloyalty (He is a *jealous* God)
2. Idolatry destroys morality
 - It belittles the Word of God
 - It teaches others to do same (it's passed down)
3. It brings about punishment

Conclusion: Keep yourselves from idols (1 John 5:21)

Colossians 3:2-6:

1. The Focus: Set your minds on the Spirit
2. The Reminder: You have died in Christ
3. The Hope: You will be with Him
4. The Life: Keep yourself from idols (the flesh)
5. The Warning: God will come

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Is God an idea to you, or is He the Almighty being? What has made you think of God as an idea? What has made you want to make Him predictable and measurable?

See To It

Exodus 32:5-7

1. After sacrificing and worshipping their false image of God, what did the people do?
2. When you study God's Word, or return from a worship service, are you quick to forget the ordinances of God?
3. What is it that keeps you from becoming immoral? Are rules and regulations enough? *See Colossians 2:2-23*

Seeing It Closer

Romans 1:21-25

1. What two things precipitated the downfall of the people being spoken of here?
2. What actions showed the foolishness and darkness of these people's hearts?
3. Is verse 23 just talking about making physical statues and images of God, or can this be referring also to worshipping the One True God under some false form or methodology?
4. Can verse 25 be talking about serving self and other people because of selfish ambition? Could it be talking about serving out of convenience, rather than serving Jesus? *See Colossians 3:17*
5. What then, was the cause of the downfall of morality in these people and in the Israelites we read about in Exodus chapter 32?

Getting To It:

When religion slides from the sublime to the trivial, the first thing to go is moral restraint. Pray that we, as the bride of Christ, may remain faithful and steadfast in our devotion to the Lord.

MONDAY

As we learned last week, the first commandment has to do with discipleship. It demands that we give our wholehearted allegiance to the Lord. The second commandment warns us against worshipping the One True God under some false pretense or methodologies. Remember Naaman in **2 Kings 5:1-14**? Would Naaman have been blessed by God if he would have pursued his own form of obeying the Lord? When was it that God's blessing was fulfilled in Naaman's life? In the same way, you too must abandon your own ideologies about the Lord and worship Him according to His Word. Write **Jeremiah 13:10** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

Many seek to worship God in a way that would appease their conscience. They seek to be justified by tangible actions and rule following rather than by the promise of God. Read **Matthew 7:21-27**. These verses clearly teach the importance of relying of the Words of Jesus ONLY for a true worship of the Lord. Did the people in verses 22-23 feel justified by the actions they had done? Did the people in verse 22 feel justified by just declaring Jesus vocally? What are you trying to do, or appear to do, to justify yourself? Do you seek the approval of other people, like your Mom and Dad? Are you seeking the approval of brothers or sisters in the church? Are you just going by what seems right to you? See **Proverbs 14:12**. Write this passage on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

The Pharisees were people that had reduced God's religion to rule-keeping, a form of idolatry that is still very common in many professed "Christians". Read **Matthew 23:16-28**. Why were the Pharisees called hypocrites? Do you think that they believed they were worshipping God? What did they substitute God for? What did they substitute devotion for? Whose approval were they looking for? How did they reduce God's grace to the trivial? How is this rule-keeping idolatry? What were they focusing on in verses 16-22? Instead of using their means of worship to seek out the Lord, they treated the means as the end itself. They worshipped the objects instead of their Creator. They have lost connection with the Lord (**Colossians 2:18-19**). What does it mean when Jesus says they are straining gnats and swallowing camels? Do you think they forgot the reasons why they were doing all those things in the first place? Also notice what this rule-keeping produced—hypocrisy. Write **Galatians 5:4** on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

Yesterday we saw how the Pharisees, in their search for truth, got distracted by religion! Is it possible for religion to get in the way of knowing Jesus? Of course! Our minds are continuously seeking satisfaction and understanding. We're always seeking to package and define the truth of God. What we need to train ourselves to do is to let the Lord always define our parameters by His Word. Throughout the ages, many so-called Christian churches have even attempted to define their faith by establishing creeds, confessions and charters. People have sought God in statues that cry, wells that grant wishes and churches that physically heal the body. Jesus confided in the Samaritan woman that any such form of worship where the focus is attached to some material object is not the worship that the Lord seeks. Read **John 4:20-25**. What kind of worship were the Samaritans and the Jews used to? Was their worship attached to sacred objects and rituals? What about the New Covenant? How is the New Covenant different? What time was that which Jesus was speaking of in verse 23? Don't we sometimes place some superstition on crosses that we carry or symbols we want to identify with? What kind of mentality does that reveal? What should our focus be on? Write **Jonah 2:8** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Because of paying attention to anything other than Jesus, our minds can turn towards idolatry. The second command has given us a lot of insight into God's spiritual nature and holiness. Nothing that we can reproduce here on Earth can even compare or be in the same sentence as God's holiness and vastness. Yet, many continue worshipping according to their misunderstanding instead of according to godly wisdom from the Scriptures. If you didn't get a chance to do the Wednesday Discussion, use those questions and the Scripture reading to see what idolatry brings to the idolater. Isn't it awesome what we've been learning about God's nature as we examine His commands!!?? Write **John 4:24** on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

When you hear the name of someone you love being spoken, are not your thoughts filled with pleasant memories and emotions? Doesn't that person's face fill your mind and you can only think about how much their presence has blessed you? The same emotions and thoughts are evoked when the name of someone you associate with negative feelings is spoken, unfortunately in a negative way, though. This goes to show you how much there is in a name. How much do you value your name? I'm not necessarily talking about what the name means, or if it's a nice name or a weird one; I'm talking about the value others have learned to attach to your name. The special associations that are made when your name is spoken. Have you been careful to guard your name? To keep it from being a curse to others?

The memory of the righteous will be a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. **Prov 10:7**

The deliverance of Israel was initiated by the revelation of God's name to Moses.

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation. **Exodus 3:14-15**

God's name was to be magnified among the nations at that time and forever more. It was time for the world to know who the Lord, God of Israel, was. The inner meaning of Yahweh--"I am the One who is"--emphasizes God's dynamic and active self-existence. Our Lord God is not the God of the dead, like some make Him to be, but He is the God of the living (Luke 20:37-38). As His name implies, He is to be sought in the present, not to be thought about for past issues or future requests. He does not dwell in the past and does not promise involvement in our life for the future only; He demands present attention and conviction. Present changes in your heart and mind—not to be putt off for later (see Heb 3:7-9). As Jesus Himself declared, the ever-present nature of God dwelled in Him when He also said He was the Great I AM!

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" **John 8:58**

The Heart of God: The Third Commandment There's Something About that Name...

Key Text:

Exodus 20:7

"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."

Theme:

The name of God stands for the person He has revealed Himself to be. It was by God's name that Moses was sent as His messenger; it was by God's name that Israel was delivered out of Egypt with power and it was in the name of God that they were called to have a covenant with Him. Since God's name reveals things about His character, any use of it that is irreverent and inappropriate shows disrespect and lack of understanding. As Jesus Himself prayed, God's name is to be hallowed in your life; honored as holy. By word and by deed your life needs to show that the name of your God is "I AM"—YAHWEH!!!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Think about God's name.** Do you not know that His mark is upon you? You have been sealed with His Spirit! *Ephesians 4:30*
2. **God's name is pure.** If God's name doesn't sound right being attached to something you're doing, saying or thinking, then it shouldn't be done, said or thought of!
3. **God's name invokes intimacy.** Begin each day with a prayer to be in sync with the Spirit. Let God amaze you by what He accomplishes through your devotion to Him. Be thankful and content with everything!
4. **Develop a godly fear!** Be aware that God is really with you and that He has saved you! Make Him the focus and center of your everyday activities!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Something About that Name...

I. God's name reveals His essence...

Psalms 29:2

1. God has a name
2. He first used His name in connection with the Exodus.

II. Jesus shares God's name...

Matthew 1:23

1. God's ultimate essence is revealed in Jesus
2. His name is powerful. *John 17:11*
3. His name is the highest. *Philippians 2:9-11*

III. Swearing in God's name???

2 Samuel 2:27

1. Why was swearing common in the OT times?
2. God is the only sure thing in this universe.
3. Their integrity eroded as they didn't keep promises not sworn in God's name
4. Jesus teaches integrity by keeping your word.
Matthew 5:33-37

IV. Profanity, Pretense and Presumption???

Matthew 7:21-23

1. Self is praised
2. God's will is not sought
3. God's name is belittled
4. Hypocrisy reigns (see *Matthew 23:1ff*)

V. The name of the Lord is to be praised!

1. His name is to be feared
2. His name is to be honored.
3. Our life is to reflect the right use of God's name.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

When you think about the name of God, what comes to mind? What do your thoughts turn to when God's name is spoken?

See To It

Daniel 2:19-23

1. In this prayer of thanksgiving and praise, Daniel reveals many of God's qualities. What kind of things did he attribute to God's name?
2. What was he thanking God for in verse 23?
3. Now read verses 24-47. From verses 27 and 28, who did Daniel give credit to for being able to interpret the king's dream?

Seeing It Closer

2 Timothy 3:1-9

1. What kind of people is the Apostle Paul speaking of in these verses?
2. According to verse 2, pride and selfishness is emphasized.
3. What does verse 3 and 4 say about these people?
4. Can you name a couple of things that supposedly have been done in the name of God, but have turned out to be very selfish acts, to elevate men instead of God?
5. Is God the main motivation for these acts, or is it these qualities mentioned in the verses here?
6. Have you ever wanted to do something in God's name only to discover that it was for your own purposes that you wanted to do this? What helped you realize that you were being presumptuous about using God's name?

Getting To It:

"From fowl mouthed pagans to fund raising preachers, the possibilities of emptying God's name of its honor and power seem endless. In contrast to such a spirit, there is an attitude towards God that the Bible calls *the fear of the Lord*."

MONDAY

The holy and everlasting name of God was revealed ultimately by the person and work of Immanuel. Read **Isaiah 7:14**. What does the name Immanuel mean? (Look at the footnote for this verse in your Bible). Who was it, then, that was coming into the world? What was the sign of His coming? Look at **Isaiah 9:6-7**. What will this child be called, according to Isaiah's prophecy? What kingdom is Isaiah talking about in verse 7? Does he mean David's physical Kingdom? The Kingdom of Israel, or the Kingdom of God? Notice that the Kingdom this child was to possess would increase in peace forever! Could such an inheritance be attributed to a physical worldly Kingdom? Now read **Matthew 1:18-25**. Prophecy fulfilled! So far, we've seen many qualitative names given to Jesus, most importantly *Jesus* and *Immanuel*. Write Proverbs 18:10 on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

Read the introductory pages of your Bible. If you have an NIV or a NAS, there's usually an explanation for why the translators chose to translate God's name as *LORD* in the pages of Scripture instead of YHWH, known as the *tetragrammaton*. If your Bible doesn't have these introductory pages then ask someone who has an NIV or a NAS to let you read this part of their Bible. It is usually located in the preface. Do you believe that abstaining from pronouncing or writing God's personal name is what the third commandment is all about? Think about what this name stands for. Read **John 17:11**. What was this name that the Father gave Jesus? What power does it hold for those who believe in it? You see, Jesus shares God's name. The name of the God of Israel and the Word made flesh among us (Immanuel) is the same, all-encompassing, supreme name. Read **Philippians 2:9-11**. What name is this that God gave Jesus? The name that is above every name? The answer is in verse 11: Jesus is **LORD**!!! The phrase "in the name of the LORD" is replaced all over the New Testament by "in the name of Jesus". The name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the same as the name of Jesus. Compare **Matthew 28:19** and **Acts 2:38**. Write John 8:58 on an index card and memorize it. "I am" in the Greek is "ego eimi": I am, I have been, I will always be. Jesus declares himself to be The Lord Almighty!

WEDNESDAY

To use the name of the Lord in vain is to trivialize God's very existence and dishonor what His name stands for. Read **Leviticus 19:12**. Look up the word *profane* in a good dictionary. What kind of swearing is spoken against of in this passage? Now read **2 Samuel 2:27**. Is this man using God's name in vain? In those days people used God's name to validate their words. Since God's very existence was the only and ultimate truth, people commonly used His name in oaths. Jesus teaches us, in the same spirit, that any oath or promise we make we should count worthy to keep so that we may be people of integrity. False swearing is considering oaths in God's name as the only ones worthy to keep. This is a gross misuse of God's name because of hypocrisy. Jesus accused the Pharisees of this very thing in **Matthew 23:16-22**. Write Matthew 5:37 on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

The only time you hear people speaking the name of God outside of a worship service is probably when they invoke His name to condemn someone or something, out of anger or frustration. An angry man was using God's name freely as he vented his anger toward a clerk in a store. Almost every sentence had a request for God to condemn something or someone to eternal damnation. The man had his eleven year old son with him, who wasn't the least bit surprised about his dad's behavior. An older clerk walked over to the situation and asked, "Pardon me, sir, but do you always do your praying in public? And so loudly? My God is not in the damning business, and you are giving this young boy the wrong idea about God: you are implying that God desires to condemn rather than to seek and save the lost." Now don't think that just because you don't curse or use God's or Jesus' name in profanity you're guiltless of using His name in vain. **Matthew 7:21-23** reveals that those who invoke the holy name of God without pursuing a holy life are only being pretentious. The harshest words from Jesus are reserved for those people (see Matthew 23). Write Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

The people of God's covenant community respect Him. When He speaks, the people listen; when He commands, they obey; when He is disobeyed, he does not hesitate to punish because He loves His people. There is a stability in the relationship between Him and His people that can never be in any other religion. YAHWEH is the same yesterday, today and forever. The beginning of knowledge and wisdom is fear. See **Psalms 111:10; Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-5; 9:10; 14:27; 16:6**. The very nature of the name of God is to be feared. Go back to **Psalms 111:2-9**. Remember the distinction that is made in the Scriptures. It is not a fear of terror, due to punishment, but an honor and respect out of what the Lord has shown Himself to be to His covenant people. (**1 John 4:18**). Write Exodus 3:14 on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

Think about someone you love dearly. Do you find your thoughts running to them? Do you find yourself missing them a lot? Isn't it great when you can spend time with those you love? When you can get away from the routine and all of life's ordinary affairs? It's a time to rejoice; we look forward to that special time. It's also easy to miss this time. Sometimes we get so busy with our responsibilities and work that we neglect our loving relationships. We need to stop ourselves and make sure we dedicate time to the ones we love. If we don't, these relationships will soon fade away. This must not be the case with the Lord your God!

If we treasure our relationship with our Lord we need to show it in our devotion. Devoting time to the Lord is essential; after all, is our time really our own? Isn't it the Lord who grants us each new day of our lives? Without Him we would not even exist. For "through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made..." (*John 1:3*). Only in the Father are we truly alive (*Luke 15:24*). We need to dedicate our time to the Lord. Set aside time from your work and all the ordinary affairs of life and devote yourself without distraction to God.

Moses prays to God, "Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom..." (*Psalms 90:12*). Paul chimes in saying "Be very careful then how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (*Ephesians 5:15-16*).

Rubel Shelley simply states that when we waste time (dissipation), it cannot be replaced: "Lost money can be replaced by effort and thrift, squandered talent can be reclaimed and put to use; but time is irreversible." Wasted time is lost – it cannot be replaced or refunded. The spirit of the fourth commandment calls us to be faithful stewards of time. Remember the Lord your God!

It's so easy to get caught up in the "daily grind" of life. Adam's God-given responsibility was to work the Garden of Eden and to take care of it (*Genesis 2:15*). God calls us to work. He also calls us to set times to devote ourselves to Him. Be a diligent steward of your time! Don't let your relationship with the Lord fade away!

The Heart of God: The Fourth Commandment My Time Is His Time.

Key Text:

Exodus 20:8-9a

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."

Theme:

The Sabbath was created as a "lasting covenant", a "sign between God and the Israelites forever" (*Exodus 31:16, 17*). It was a blessing from God. Through time, legalistic Jews such as the Pharisees distorted the Word of God by adding to it. They turned the Sabbath into a burden (see *Matthew 23:1-4*). Jesus said they "tied up heavy bonds and put them on men's shoulders..." He also teaches them that the Sabbath was created for man, not man for the Sabbath (*Mark 2:27*). The commandment was to help the Israelites live the right balance of work, rest, and worship; to teach that our time is God's time. We need to apply this lesson to our hearts. The Pharisees lost the spirit of the command in endless controversies. Let us listen to the lessons God is teaching us and live a life balanced between work, rest, and worship.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray to God for wisdom.** We need the Lord to guide us to live lives which are balanced and pleasing to him. "Teach us to number our days aright" *Psalms 90:12*.
2. **Remember that work is good and holy.** As long as we do not allow it to prevent us from dedicating the time we need remember the Lord our God.
3. **Prioritize your time.** Have a fixed time of spiritual devotion to God. Plan out and dedicate time to worship God with an undivided focus.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“My time is His time...”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The third commandment deals with the manner of worship: God’s name is to be honored and praised
2. Do not misuse His name by:
 - a. Life of hypocrisy (*Mt. 7:21*)
 - b. Unresolved wrath (*Mt. 5:23-24*)
 - c. Using God’s name for a no-good purpose (*Ps. 29:2*)
 - d. Integrity (*Mt. 5:37; James 5:12*)

Fourth Commandment: Time of worship

Exodus 20:8-11

“Sabbath”--Heb. *shabbath* (intermission; pause)

A. Background

1. Given to the Jews at Mt. Sinai (cf. *Neh. 9:13-14*)
3. It carried a death penalty (*Ex 31:14; Nu 15:32-36*)

B. Christians under the law of Faith (*Rom 3:27,28*)

1. Acts 2:38--need a relationship with Christ
2. Day of worship became the first day of week
 - they assembled on first day (*Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:1*)
 - Sunday known as “Lord’s Day” (*Rev. 1:10*)
 - Secular history confirms this (*Didache 14.1*)
3. We are released from OT regulations through Christ (*Col 2:13-16*)

C. Spirit of the Sabbath--for all believers

- a. Fundamental principle: Devotion to God
 - man needs a fixed time of spiritual devotion
 - working all week will produce bad results:
 1. forgetting God
 2. deteriorating relationships
- b. Intended for helping man, not burdening him
 - Mark 2:27*--Sabbath made for man

D. The Lord’s Day

- a. It’s a time we worship the Lord as a group
- b. It’s a time of reflecting upon Jesus
- c. Sunday shouldn’t be treated as another day of business, but of strengthening ties
- d. Judge for yourselves what is good (*Lk 12:57*)

E. The Gospel is the eternal Sabbath

(*Heb 4:1-3a, 9-11*)

- a. In Christ, there is a day of rest that is eternal
- b. For never will the sun sink in that land! (*Rev 21: 23; 22:5*)

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

No time for a warm-up question this week - let’s get into the Scripture! Let’s **all** participate in tonight’s study! “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...” (*Col. 3:16*).

See To It

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15

1. The word “holy” means sanctified or set apart. What does it mean to keep a day holy?

2. Read verses 13-15. Talk about each of those who God calls to not work on the Sabbath. Why does He mention each of them? What is God’s concern? What does He want Israel to remember? What does this say about the heart of God?

3. Can you think of some other lessons the Lord may have been teaching Israel that haven’t been discussed yet? Really try to see what God’s concern for Israel was and what He was trying to teach them.

Seeing It Closer

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever”. The Sabbath was a covenant between God and Israel, but the lessons He taught them still apply today.

1. Do you feel a personal need to set apart time to focus on God? How do you arrange your schedule so that other things don’t interfere?

2. How do you spend a typical Sunday?

3. Compare your stewardship with regard to money to your stewardship of time. Are you more careful with one than the other. Why?

4. Do you organize your time? Do you plan or just go with the flow?

5. How is your example to “the alien within your gates” (those who do not know the Lord)? What does your example say about how much you value your time with the Lord?

Getting To It:

Pray that we always remember the Lord our God and are good stewards of our time.

“MY TIME IS HIS TIME”

MONDAY

Read **Exodus 20:8** and dwell on this passage. What does it mean to keep something *holy*? Now read **Genesis 2:1-3** and **Exodus 31:12-18**. What insight do you gain about the Sabbath covenant? Who was this covenant between? Why does God call the Israelites to observe the Sabbath? How serious was the Lord about their obedience? Why do you suppose he is so serious? Who is he concerned about, himself or the Israelites? Read **Ezekiel 20:1-44** and gain insight into the heart of God. How did it make God feel when Israel mistreated something He considered holy? Apply this to your own life and consider how you treat that which God considers holy.

TUESDAY

What are the Israelites called to do in **Exodus 20:9**? Now read **1 Thessalonians 4:11** and **2 Thessalonians 3:6-10** with regards to work. Also read **John 6:27: 9:4-5** and **Ephesians 4** with regards to working in the Kingdom. Seek to balance your life with the guidance of the Scripture. Pray for wisdom in all things and do not discourage those who work hard in the Lord, rather respect them (see **1 Thess. 5:12-18**)! Now read **Matthew 9:37** and understand there is much work to be done and yet there are only a few workers. Write **2 Timothy 2:15** on an index card and memorize it. Work for the Lord and remember Him everyday!!

WEDNESDAY

Examine **Exodus 20:10-11**. Consider everyone the Lord mentions in these verses. Why do you suppose God mentions each of them? God wanted his people to take time to focus on him without being distracted by the ordinary affairs of life. He wanted them to remember all of his love for them. Did he want them to share their blessings or keep them to themselves? Read **Deuteronomy 5:12-15**. Examine the heart of God in these verses. He is not simply challenging the Israelites blindly. He wants them to give their family, their servants, and even the animals a Sabbath rest. Why? What role do each of them play? What did God want the Israelites to be motivated by in verse 15? What did he want them remembering and learning? What lessons do you learn that you can apply to your life? What are you doing with the blessings God has given you?

THURSDAY

Read **Deuteronomy 4:23; Deuteronomy 6:12; Psalms 103:2; and James 1:25**. What is the tendency of man? What happens to us if we do not take the time constantly to look into the Word of God and to apply it to our lives? Read **James 1:19-ff**. What does God compare us to when we do not take the time to focus on him and apply his Word? Be a doer of the Word and not just a hearer. Dedicate time to remember the Lord your God and abide in his love!!!

FRIDAY

Let's examine the parable of the banquet in light of what we have been learning. Read **Luke 14:15-24**. There are many who will make excuses about why they cannot accept the invitation to the banquet of the Lord. What are some of these excuses? Are the excuse-makers being good stewards of time? Do they understand that their time is God's time? How about you? How have you been using the time that God grants you? Read **Ephesians 5:15-16**. Meditate on these verses and then write them on an index card and commit them to heart.

INSIGHT

Don't you long for the warmth and security of a stable family? Isn't it great to look forward to going to a nice, comfortable, warm, home after a tiresome day at work? Although many desire to have these things going for them the sad case is that many people are the result of broken, unstable, and abusive homes. The family unit, which is the basis of a stable and nurturing society, is being threatened by the godlessness and selfishness that comes by being disobedient to God. The commandments given at Mt. Sinai are to be the fertilizer that makes the community flourish with the love of God. The particular command that begins to address the type of relationships that we should have in our community is the fifth commandment. This commandment is a transitional one.

The transition from Yahweh's expectation of His people in relation to Himself to His expectation of His people in relation to the human family is this commandment establishing a norm for the relationship with father and mother. —John Durham

You see, your relationship with God hangs on your personal conviction of the first commandment. Your relationship with your community hangs on your personal conviction of the fifth commandment. All of them, of course, are nothing without the first commandment being established. Without honor and respect for your parents and the elders in your community there is no reason to preserve life, tell the truth, honor your marriage and be satisfied with your self. Without honor and respect for your parents there is no respect for any kind of authority. The first four commandments focus on your relationship with God—the last six on our relationship with each other. It is no wonder, then, how many of the problems that plague our society can be traced back to the stability of the family unit. We are even hearing many community leaders speak of the importance of focusing on the stability of our families. Much, if not all, of the lack of respect for authority shown to our police and our leaders comes from the lack of attention to honor in the family. How can we, as a people of God, make an impact on our community in regard to this commandment? I believe God can work through us as He did through the nation of Israel at that time. Of course, in order for us to get to that point the first four commandments need to be a solid foundation in our heart.

(1 Pet 2:17) Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

The Heart of God: The Fifth Commandment God Among the Generations...

Key Text:

Exodus 20:12

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Theme:

This is the first commandment that carries a promise for those who keep it with a true heart. This is a **transitional** command. The first four deal with God's relationship with His covenant people and the next six focus on the dealings between the people of the covenant community. The root of the dealings with the community are established by the conviction of this fifth commandment. Those who regard their family relations with honor will pass this honor and respect to future generations and appropriately defer their honor to God above all. In families where disrespect and folly reign, probably the first four commands were held with loose convictions and the rest of them will also be held loosely as well.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Call your parents.** Let them know your plans, your whereabouts, your struggles, rekindle communication! Tell them often that you love them!
2. **See to their needs.** Not only physically or financially, but emotionally.
3. **Include them in your family.** Make them feel at home, make them part of your family plans.
4. **Learn to honor them!** As you get to know who they really are and the struggles they have been through, you will find newfound respect for them. If you have been a victim of their abuse or neglect, teach them and love them as you would any other person who needs to know about the love of Jesus.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

God Among the Generations...

I. The first four commands...

Exodus 20:2-11

1. Focus on our relationship with God.
2. Establish a deep conviction and set the stage for the type of relationship we are to have with each other.

II. The fifth commandment--a transitional one

Exodus 20:12

1. Focuses on the adult relationship with one's elderly parents.
2. Is the first commandment with a promise.
Ephesians 6:1-4
3. Teaches us to love and take care of our natural family first. *1 Timothy 5:1-4*
4. Brings a godly conviction into our family relationships.

III. What is honor?

Mark 7:1-13

1. Hebrew *kabad*. To be rich, abounding in glory and greatness. To be weighty, carry much weight
2. Greek *timao*. To fix a value upon; to prize. To fear.
3. To honor someone is the opposite of shaming.
4. To honor is to provide material needs; to place high value upon; to acknowledge their worth by word or deed.

IV. As it goes with your parents, so it goes with God

Hebrews 12:5-11

1. Parents are to discipline.
2. God disciplines us for holiness
3. Verse 9--->Respect (honor) is a must!
4. How well you listened and obeyed your parents is reflected in your relationship with God.

V. Your relationship with the community

1. Commandments 6 through 10.
2. Goes as our relationship with our parents goes.
3. Reflects ultimately on our relationship with God.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Discuss some effective ways of disciplining children.

See To It

Deuteronomy 21:18-21

1. What could have caused this son to be stubborn and rebellious? Does any cause justify stubbornness or rebellion in a family?
2. What classified this son as being stubborn and rebellious? Why did the parents eventually had to bring him before the elders?
3. What made the situation change from a family matter to a community one? What does this say about those families who don't address stubbornness and rebellion in their household?

Seeing It Closer

1 Timothy 5:1-4

1. How is honor to be shown amongst the family and the brethren?
2. How is your religion to be put into practice amongst your family?
3. Do you see yourself owing something to your parents? Is there something to repay them?
4. What are some ways that you show honor to your mother and father? How does this reflect your relationship with God?

Getting To It:

Pray that above all we, as the church of Jesus Christ, may be ministers of reconciliation to all the members of our immediate family. If we cannot be ministers of peace with our immediate family, then we are simply playing the part (being hypocrites) when it comes to ministering to strangers.

Are there some members of your family you have had a tough time making peace with? What have been some things that have prevented you from practicing your religion? How do you see yourself being a peacemaker with them?

MONDAY

The fifth commandment was not given to the children of the Israelites. It was an admonition given to the adults of the Israelite community. Of course, there is counsel for the children given in the Bible, such as *Ephesians 6:1-3* and *Colossians 3:20*. The focus of the command given at Mt Sinai, however, was the treatment of the elderly parents by their adult children. This can be seen clearer in *Matthew 15:3-9*. What verb is at the heart of this commandment? What does the verb *honor* mean? (Look it up in a good dictionary). Why do you think this command carried such a heavy penalty if disregarded? What were some Pharisees doing to dishonor their parents? Have you ever dishonored your parents? Have you ever used religion as an excuse not to meet your family obligations? Has your relationship with your parents made it easy or difficult to honor them? Write *Proverbs 23:22* on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

In the New Testament, Paul says this commandment is the first commandment with a promise: *Ephesians 6:2*. How does honoring your parents make your life longer or better? How has honoring your parents contributed to your personal welfare? Have you held back from honoring your parents? If so, how has that attitude contributed to the kind of relationship you have now with them? Can you think of any justifiable exceptions to this duty in the Scriptures? Check out *Matthew 10:37-39*; *Mark 10:29-30*. What are you to do if your family stands in your way of serving the Lord? Are you to honor their stand, if it is against what the Scriptures teach? What other situations could you think of where a parent might have betrayed their trust to their children? Abuse? Abandonment? Neglect? Have these things caused you to harbor hatred and dissension? Have you brought them the reconciliation they need between them and God? Have you exhausted your efforts of attempting reconciliation? (See *Romans 12:18*). Write *Hebrews 12:14* on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

At the heart of the fifth commandment you find the preservation of society's basic unit: the family. No nation whose family units are crumbling can stand and prosper. How do you feel about the role of a mother and father? What responsibilities do they perpetuate in our society? If you are married, sit down with your spouse and make a list of your individual and dual responsibilities to your community/society. Have you overlooked the impact you can have, even more so as children of God? If you have children, are you bringing them up to respect you for your discipleship in Christ? Do you use your family to make statements in your community? (i.e., PTA Meetings, Neighbor's kid's birthdays, hospitality, etc.) Are you seeking to use your marriage and your children to *honor* your own mother and father? How are you fostering the ties that exists in your own household and beyond the household amongst your mother and father? Write *Proverbs 30:17* on an index card and memorize it.

THURSDAY

Sit down together with your spouse (if applicable) for today's quiet time. Recalling what Paul said in *Ephesians 6:1-4*, what are some blessings that come to you by giving honor to your parents? What would happen to a society's sense of respect toward authority if the fifth commandment was to be overlooked? Do you think this is happening in our society? Read Manoah's request to God in *Judges 13:6-8*. How important was it for Manoah to raise up his child right in the eyes of God? Do you think he was open to advice? How open to advice are you about raising up your child? How important is this in teaching your child about honor? How important is your relationship with your parents in teaching your child about honor? Write *Proverbs 22:6* on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Read *1 Timothy 5:1-8*. List the ways this passage teaches to give honor regarding the elderly and the young. How is your religion defined, according to verse 4? According to this verse, do you owe something to your parents? Is there something to be repaid? What about if your parents abused you or neglected you? Is this honor still something pleasing to God? How is honor defined in verse 8? What is being equaled to being worse than an unbeliever? Have you ever been in this position? How do you honor older members of your family? of your work environment? of the church? How can one honor a parent who has Alzheimer's? Cancer? The relationship that you have with your parents ultimately reflects the relationship you have with your Heavenly Father. Read *Hebrews 12:7-11*. How can your relationship with your parents affect your relationship with your Father in Heaven? Write *Proverbs 30:17* on an index card and memorize it. Write *Proverbs 23:24-25* on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

Today's society places very little value on human life. America is filled with acts of violent crimes and murder. In the mid-1970s, the annual homicide total reached 20,000. In 1980, it reached 23,040. In 1985, the numbers began rising again, reaching 23,760 in 1992. Periodic crime bills passed by state and federal legislatures can't prevent brutality. Erecting more correctional facilities will not reduce the number of violent crimes. This is proof that politics cannot solve what is basically a moral and spiritual problem.

Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 15:18-20 "...the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'..." Without Christ, men are without hope! Crime cannot be obliterated! Only through the message of Christ, the gospel, can men be saved (*Romans 1:16*); and only through the person of Christ can he be raised to walk in newness of life! (*Romans 6:4; Galatians 2:20*)

Contrary to the lack of respect for human life reflected by much of society, the Bible consistently upholds the sacredness of life. It is in this context that the sixth commandment is framed. The sacredness of life is built on the biblical truth that men and women were created in God's image. Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Everything the Bible says about the worth and dignity of humanity is rooted in the creation story. People are not accidental outcomes or purposeless natural events. People are valuable! Why? Because they were called into being to bear the glory of the God who created them. Genesis 9:6 says, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." God's teaching is clear: Anyone who showed such irreverence toward God by taking innocent life was to pay with his own. Murder is opposed to who God is! Life! For "He Himself gives to all life and breath..." (*Acts 17:28*)

Jesus taught the importance of human life in Matthew 16:26 when He said, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?" The soul is of utmost importance and cannot be exchanged for anything in this world! It is priceless! The riches of this world have no worth; but the soul has worth! You are valuable!

The Heart of God: The Sixth Commandment The Value Of Human Life

Key Text:

Exodus 20:13

"You shall not murder."

Theme:

God places human life in highest regard. This importance is expressed at the cross, *for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life!* (*John 3:16*) Murder is against the principle of the Gospel. Christ came to give life (*John 10:10*), not to destroy life! For this reason, murder has no part in the kingdom of Christ! However, we must be aware that murder is not restricted to the act of taking a life with guns and knives! Jesus taught that any form of anger, rage or malice toward another human being puts one in jeopardy of judgment (*Matthew 5:21-26*). These things not only lead to murder, but are wrong within themselves! The apostle John taught that anyone who hates his brother is a murderer (*1 John 3:15*). Therefore, showing disdain for others by racist attitudes, sexist behavior or any other form of contempt is evil in the eyes of God! And this will brand you a murderer! *You shall not murder.*

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Remember the cross!** Let the sacrifice of God's Son motivate you to respond in a godly manner in all circumstances! Forgive as Christ forgave you! Love as Christ loved you!
2. **Treat one another with kindness.** Christ taught a very important principle in Matthew 25:40, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Treat your brother as if he were Christ. And love your enemies! (*Matt. 5:44*)!
3. **Be thankful when corrected!** Be angry with sin, not with your brother who is correcting you!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“The Value Of Life”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The fifth through tenth commandments deal with loving your neighbor.
2. The Word of God is summed up in two commands: (*Matt 22:37-40*)
 - a. Love God
(the spirit of the 1st through 4th commandments)
 - b. Love your neighbor as yourself
(the spirit of the 5th - 10th commandments)
3. Honor your parents (Honor means *to elevate*)
 - a. Focus was on the children of elderly parents
 - b. Show an attitude of respect (*Prov. 23:22*)
 - c. Help them when they need help (*Mt 15:3-9*)

I. Sixth Commandment: Value of a soul

Exodus 20:13

A. God, the Father, values human life (*John 3:16*)

1. God's focus: LIFE!
 - a. The world needed spiritual life
 - b. He gave us His Only Son
2. God's desire: TO GIVE LIFE!
 - a. Purpose of the gospel is to give LIFE through His Son (*cf. Rom. 1:16*)

B. God, the Son, values human life (*Matt. 16:26*)

1. The soul priceless!
 - a. The riches of this world has no value compared to the soul
 - b. Nothing can be exchanged for the soul

C. God's People must value human life

1. Hatred carries a *murder* sentence (*Mt. 5:21-26*)
 - a. Revilers fall under same judgment as murderers
 - b. Settle matters: be reconciled and promote life!
2. Hating makes us *murderers* (*1 Jn. 3:15-16*)
 - a. Hatred has no purpose in the kingdom for it takes away life: it kills.
 - b. Christ died for us to give life--we should too!
3. Love must go beyond the church: *Mt. 5:44-48*
 - a. Love promotes life, therefore love perfectly:
-do right towards everyone and pray for them in love

Conclusion: *Matthew 25:40*--treat others rightly

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Have you ever felt such strong anger or hatred towards someone or something? Share with us an incident that made you very hostile and explain the thoughts that went through your head.

See To It

Matthew 5:21-26

1. Why did Christ bring up the sixth commandment? Weren't the Jews familiar with "*Thou shalt not murder*"? Share your insight.
2. How was Jesus' teaching on the sixth commandment different from that which was taught by the Jewish religious teachers of the day?
3. **Read verse 22.** YAHWEH gets angry (*Ps. 106:40*); Jesus was angry when He drove the sellers out of the Temple (*John 2:14-16*). Yet, in their anger, they did not sin. Where is the difference? When is anger sinful?
4. What does "*Raca*" and "*fool*" mean? Explain the difference? Why is the term "*you fool!*" more serious than "*Raca!*"?

Seeing It Closer

1. If anger were a crime, would you be convicted? What would you be classified as according to Christ?
2. What must be the Christian's goal in the kingdom? Why is this goal important? *cf. Romans 14:17*.
3. How can we glorify God's name in our anger? What should we immediately do when we are upset with our brother or sister?
4. If you have no righteous cause to be angry with your brother, what is the solution?

Getting To It:

Never allow your anger to get the best of you. Instead, pray for wisdom in dealing with your anger. Don't give Satan a foothold, instead seek peace and resolution with your offender! For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. *James 1:20*

The Value Of Life

MONDAY

In *Exodus 20:13* God gives the Israelites the commandment, "You shall not murder". The Hebrew verb for "murder" refers to a premeditated and deliberate act (see *Exodus 21:12-14*; *Numbers 35:29-34*). Next, read *Genesis 5:1-2* and *Genesis 9:5-6* to gain insight into why God gave this command. What makes every human being valuable in God's sight?

TUESDAY

Read *Matthew 5:21-26* and see what the Lord is teaching us with regard to murder. What is at the root of this sin? Must you actually murder someone to be subject to God's judgment? Jesus instructs us how to deal with our anger. If you have a problem with a brother or a sister, when should you deal with it? What does God want us to do before we come to Him? See also *Ephesians 4:25-26*. Commit *1Peter 4:8* to heart and apply it to your life. Praise God for His instruction and for revealing His heart's desire for us.

WEDNESDAY

Read *Genesis 4:1-12*. Why was Cain so angry at his brother Abel? What did it lead him to do? When Cain gave into his anger it led him to sin. What did God instruct him to do in verse 7? What is the nature of sin? What does it want to do to you? God also reveals something very positive in this verse. We have the ability to overcome (master) our sin. How could Cain have done this? What would have been a good spiritual response to Abel finding favor with God? Have you ever been angry with a brother or sister because they are doing good? Have you ever been envious or jealous of someone who is being blessed by the Lord? Read *1Corinthians 12:26* and ask yourself, do you suffer with those who are suffering? And do you rejoice with those being honored? Remember the message of *1Corinthians 13*, love is the most excellent way!

THURSDAY

Read *Romans 13:1-7* and *1Peter 2:13-14*. What does God call us to do in these verses? Who establishes the governing authorities? Who are we rebelling against when we go against them? In verse 4, what is the sword supposed to be used for? Is the sword used with God's approval or disapproval here? God himself instituted the death penalty for lawbreakers in the Old Testament (remember *Exodus 21:12-14*). Understand the distinction between the criminal act of murder and the justified punishment instituted by God. Despite what the world may say, we must trust in God and obey what He teaches us. Write *Romans 8:28* on an index card and commit it to heart. Remember the heart of God is all good! Seek the good in your circumstances always and in all the commands and teachings of God.

FRIDAY

Read *1 John 3:24* and *5:3*. The Greek word for the verb *obey* is *tereo* (tay-reh 'o), which means to guard (from loss or injury). When God calls us to obey his commands what is he asking us to guard or protect? What has he given us that he does not want us to lose? There are so many precious gifts God has given us and it is for our sake that the Lord commands us to obey him. He is teaching us how to protect ourselves from losing or injuring all the precious gifts he has given us. Read *Exodus 19:5* and *Isaiah 1:19*. The Lord warned the Israelites to obey him (to protect their relationship with him). We see from the scripture that most of them did not listen (see *1Corinthians 10:1-13*). How about you? Do you see the heart of God is filled with love for you and that his commands are not burdensome? Are you guarding what he has given you? Read *Ephesians 6:10-ff* for further insight into how you can guard the gift of God!

INSIGHT

Despite what we hear about on the news and read in the papers concerning marriage and divorce, the truth is that most married couples stay married for the rest of their lives. Even though we have seen the divorce rate climb steadily during the early eighties, nowadays the pendulum seems to be swinging in the other direction. *“Economic considerations, the fear of STDs, a general maturing of the baby-boom generation—all these factors have been offered to account for the drop. While they have probably contributed, a more fundamental factor seems to be having even more effect: people are realizing that making commitments and keeping promises is at the heart of being authentic human beings.”*

Even though the seventh commandment is aimed at keeping the human covenant of marriage pure, God’s desire for His people is for them to keep their covenant relationship with Him pure! There are many passages in the Bible that parallel Jesus’ relationship with His church and a husband’s relationship with his wife: *Ephesians 5:22-33; Romans 7:1-6* and *Matthew 25:1-13* are some of them. If you recall the first study of the *Heart of God* series, where we learned about how personal God considers our relationship with Him to be, you will remember that the whole book of *Hosea* parallels God’s relationship with Israel to Hosea’s relationship with his adulterous wife.

This command deals with our attitude towards the covenant we have made with our God. If we have not realized the extent of our covenant with Him, are we ready to make covenants with partners on Earth? It is my conviction that the kind of marriage covenant God designed can only succeed if we have held to His teaching. God not only want you to stay married, He wants you to stay *happily* married! He designed this covenant relationship to be one of the richest experiences you can have during your life on Earth. You just need to be aware of what you’re getting into when you decide you want to marry someone. It is a *choice* you make, not something you *must* do. Therefore, once you make that choice you must stick to it.

“Another thing you do: You flood the Lord’s altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. {14} You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.” (Mal 2:13-14)

The Heart of God: The Seventh Commandment Keeping your Marriage Intact...

Key Text: **Exodus 20:14**

“You shall not commit adultery.”

Theme:

The seventh commandment protects the sanctity of the home and expresses the value God places upon faithfulness in relationships, especially in the most intimate relationship of life (cf. Mal. 2:14-16). To commit adultery is to compromise one’s integrity, to cast a shadow on the trustworthiness established with your mate and to break a union that has been established by faith in God’s sight.

Application:

Here’s a four-part prescription for the “*best*” of all possible marriage relationships. While no human formula for marriage is anything other than an encouragement toward the divine ideal, Edward Wheat, in his book *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, offers insights that could help:

1. ***Blessing*** your mate includes kind deeds, telling them how much you appreciate specific qualities about them, and praying to God for them.
2. ***Edifying*** your mate happens when you show support in something that he’s trying to achieve, praising how well she does certain things around the house, and responding positively to your mate’s attempts to show love and affection.
3. ***Sharing*** refers to doing things together. Sharing conversations, feelings, romantic moments, spiritual experiences, and decisions.
4. ***Touching*** denotes all forms of non-sexual contact between a husband and wife—holding hands, a kiss in the morning, gentle pats and hugs. These are all non-verbal statements of your mate’s importance and desirability to you.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“Keeping Marriage Intact”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The sixth commandment deals with the value of a soul.
2. The Gospel is about life: *John 3:16*
3. Christians must be people promoting life!
 - a. *Anger* carries same sentence as murder (*Mt 5:21-26*)
 - leads to abusive speech
 - must be dealt with right away!
 - b. Hating a brother makes one a murderer (*1 John 3:15-16*)
 - c. We must rid ourselves of sinful anger! (*Col 3:8*)

I. Seventh Commandment: Moral Commitment

Exodus 20:14

A. God's relationship with Jerusalem (*Ezek. 16*)

1. Pre-Israelite Days
 - a. People despised and uncared for (*vs. 4-5*)
 - b. God shows compassion (*vs 6-7*)
 - c. God enters a covenant with her (*vs. 8*)
2. After the blessing of being God's wife:
 - a. They became prostitutes through idolatry (*vs. 15-22*)
 - b. Sentenced to be punished as adulterers (*vs. 38*)
3. Marriage to God is to be a faithful one

B. Jesus' teaching on adultery (*Matt. 5:27-30*)

1. The spirit of this law goes beyond the act of adultery!
 - a. Adultery begins with the eyes
 - ensnaring looks cause adultery
 - the tempter who dresses to be seen is also guilty
2. The dangers of adultery: Destructive to soul
 - a. Deal drastically with sin
 1. Avoid the occasions of sin
 2. Resist the beginnings of it
 3. Decline the company of those who snare us
 4. Be involved in lawful things
 5. Seek God's grace and depend on it!

Conclusion: *Gal. 5:16*

Only through the Spirit can we crush the fleshly desires

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

What would you expect in a marriage? How would you feel if your spouse were to love another?

See To It

Ezekiel 16:1-63

1. What was Jerusalem's early days like?
2. What did Yahweh do for Jerusalem? How did He demonstrate his love?
3. **Read verse 8.** What is meant by the word *covenant*? What did Yahweh expect from Jerusalem?
4. What happened after Yahweh “married” her? What went on?
5. What was the punishment of adultery?
6. **Read verse 59 through 63.** What is God's ultimate desire for His people to whom He made a covenant?

Seeing It Closer

1. How does verses 4 and 5 apply to us today? How were we like Jerusalem's early beginnings?
2. How does verses 9 and 10 apply to us today? With what did God bathe us and with what are we clothed?
3. List some ways for us to avoid adultery:
 - a. in the spiritual realm?
 - b. in the physical realm (marriage)?
4. How is the events in Ezekiel 16 similar to Christianity today?

Getting To It:

Thanks be to God for His grace! Grace that gives us hope of eternal life! Pray that we all keep in step with the Holy Spirit! Pray that we may develop a strong hatred towards sin and flee from circumstances that lead to adultery!

The Seventh Commandment

Monday

Exodus 20:14 says "You shall not commit adultery". Read **Leviticus 20** and see how serious the Lord was about Israel keeping his commands. Why do you think he was so strong with Israel? Think about the effects of sin. Think about how everyone is affected by the sin of adultery (the parties involved, the family, the community, as well as the Lord). Now read **Psalms 51** and gain insight as David is convicted of adultery. Why do you think God spared David's life? What does this Psalm reveal to you about the heart of God?

Tuesday

Read **Matthew 5:27-30**. God holds us accountable as he did Israel. What part of the body is linked with the sin of adultery in these verses? Is adultery merely a physical act of unfaithfulness that occurs when one of the marriage partners voluntarily engages in sexual intercourse outside of the marriage, or is the definition of adultery broader than that? What type of attitude is Jesus teaching us to have toward our sin? Was he teaching us to literally chop off our hands and gouge out our eyes? Obviously not or none of the disciples would have had any limbs or eyes left! Jesus always targets the heart when he teaches. Read **Matthew 23** (particularly verses **23-26**) and seek to understand what the Lord is teaching. What does he mean when he tells the Pharisees to "First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean."? Read also **Matthew 15:16-20** about the source of our sin. What is it that makes a man unclean? Do you see why we are always in need of God's forgiveness and mercy? **Psalms 103** teaches that God does not treat us as our sins deserve! Praise the Lord for his love and let it be the motivation for each of us to please him in what we do!

Wednesday

In **Job 31:1** we read how Job made a pact with his eyes to not look lustfully at a woman. He understood that this is where adultery begins (**2Peter 2:14**). Read **Matthew 6:19-23** and **Luke 11:33-36**. What do you learn about your eyes from these verses? What role do they play in your spiritual life? Obviously the world is not concerned with your spiritual welfare as each day you are bombarded with seductive images and pictures. Think about how dangerous this is in light of the role the eyes play in our spiritual lives! Next read **2Corinthians 4:18** and **Hebrews 12:2**. Meditate on these verses and commit them to heart! Understand that God loves you and is teaching you how to overcome the world and the influence of the evil one!! Pray that you be blessed with eyes full of light all of your days!!

Thursday

Read **Ezekiel 20:1-44**. What was Israel doing to infuriate the Lord? What did he call them to give up in verse 7? Do you see the heart of God in his dealings with Israel? Over and over they forsake him and seek after the desires of their eyes instead of doing what is good in the eyes of God. This is Israel's downfall so let us not follow in that example! God detests those with haughty, pride filled eyes (see **Prov. 5:7-11** and **Prov. 21:4**). He gives grace to the humble (**James 4:6**). Write **John 8:12** on an index card and commit it to heart. Fill your life with the light of the world - JESUS CHRIST!!!

Friday

Our motivation for obeying the gospel and for doing God's will can be summed up in one word - JESUS!! "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died." (**2Cor. 5:14**). This is why we are called to be faithful to God and to one another - because Jesus is faithful!! Study **Philippians 2:1-18**. Apply this to your life deeper and deeper each day and be blessed in the Lord forever!! Praise the Lord!!!

INSIGHT

There is an old folk tale that paints us a picture about honesty that is worth telling during these times. Both children and adults need to learn from its teaching:

Once upon a time a lazy man decided to sneak into his neighbor's fields to steal grain for himself. He thought, "If I only steal a little bit of grain from each field nobody will miss it and it will all add up to a great store of grain that will see me through the winter." So he waited until it was dark and crept out of his house. He took his daughter with him to stand guard while he was in the fields taking the grain. He said to her, "Daughter, if someone is spying upon me while I am taking this grain you must call out." They came upon the first house and the lazy man began to reap what he had not sown. Before long the child called out, "Father, someone sees you!" Frightened, the man looked around but he saw no one. He took the stolen grain and moved on to the next field. Not long after he began reaping his daughter called out again, "Father, someone sees you!" Again the man stopped dead in his tracks to look around. Seeing no one, he gathered the little he had reaped and moved on to a third field. A little while passed and the daughter called out once more, "Father, someone sees you!" This time, more annoyed than frightened, he looked around quickly. He saw no one so he continued gathering grain that had been produced by another man's labor. Coming to the last field, he began his dishonest toil when his child said, "Father, someone is looking at you!" The thief stopped and looked around. Seeing no one, he questioned the child, "Why do you keep saying someone sees me? I've looked everywhere and I don't see anyone!" "Father," said the little girl, "there is Someone who sees you from above."

The eighth commandment addresses all kinds of stealing. From theft of property to theft of services and rights! Taking money or tangible property that is not rightfully one's own is the most obvious form of stealing. Acts such as burglary, embezzlement, fraud, bogus insurance claims, plagiarism and even contracting debts beyond one's reasonable ability to pay or simply leaving a debt unpaid are all forms of stealing!

Taking intangible things from others is also a form of stealing. For example, making personal calls at work without asking permission, taking advantage of someone's kindness, denying someone's social rights, and lacking generosity all violate the eighth commandment!

The Heart of God: The Eighth Commandment *When you take what belongs to another...*

Key Text:

Exodus 20:15

"You shall not steal."

Theme:

"Because some hearts are corrupt, greedy and selfish, there will always be people who try to acquire property dishonestly." God's desire for us to acknowledge everything we have as *His*, is at the heart of this commandment. You need to be firmly convinced that whatever you own is God's property held in trust. Therefore, if you steal, you are stealing what rightfully belongs to God. You are taking someone else's trust which God has given.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. ***Don't use your position for personal profit.*** This may include soliciting bribes, taking kickbacks, etc.
2. ***Don't cheat on your tax return.*** Hiding your income from the Internal Revenue Services is intentional deceit and robs the people of government services.
3. ***Don't keep as yours what you have not paid for.*** This includes items you have *borrowed* (but not intended to return), violations of copyright laws (on videos, recordings, software, etc.)
4. ***Be careful of what you say to people about others.*** Don't gossip, slander, disrespect, or discriminate. Encourage the opposite wherever you are.
5. ***Make it a habit to put your \$\$\$ where your mouth is.*** If you claim to be a disciple of Jesus, don't store up treasures on Earth, but in Heaven. Spend your money and your time on the Kingdom. Use your dollars and your property to bring others into the Kingdom and to promote good stewardship (*Luke 16:9-13*).

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“Taking What Belongs To Others”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The seventh commandment dealt with the importance of moral commitment to God!
2. The Gospel provided hope for a sinful people
3. God, through Christ, took us and made us His bride, to be faithful to Him
4. *Adultery* is breaking faith with your spouse and pursuing after other “lovers”
 - a. Adultery begins in the heart! (*Matt. 5:27-30*)
 - b. We must deal with adultery radically in our lives
 - c. We must rely totally on God’s grace (*Eph. 2:8*)
 - d. We must live by the Spirit (*Gal. 5:16*)

I. Eighth Commandment: Moral Action

Exodus 20:15

A. Thou Shall Not Steal

1. The Work Ethic: *Eph 4:28*
 - a. Basis: Spiritual Renewal (vs. 20-24)
 - b. Heed the warning: *Steal no longer*
 - c. Act upon it: *work, do something useful...*
2. Idleness makes thieves

- a. God desires His people to be involved in lawful industry
--it keeps you out of temptation
- b. Earnings used for holy purposes
--All that we have belongs to God
-- God’s gifts are to be used for the kingdom:

B. Jesus’ teaching on stewardship (*Matt. 25:14-30*) stewardship: *one who manages another property, finances and other affairs*

- all three pertain to Christianity
- a. It’s God’s property: your possessions
 - b. It’s God’s finances: your money
 - c. It’s God’s affairs: soulwinning, fellowships and discipleship

1. Point: While Christ is away, honor Him with the things entrusted to you and promote His interests among all peoples
2. When He returns, He will hold us accountable

Conclusion: *Prov. 30:7-9*

--Consider what you need from God:

1. Grace sufficient (pardon)--the spiritual
2. Food that is enough (provision)--the physical

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

How would your lifestyle change if you were required to give one-fourth or one-third of your annual income to God?

See To It

Malachi 3:6-12

1. What kind of God is Yahweh? Is He a God who speedily executes judgment on His people? Why?
2. **Read verse 7.** How is Yahweh’s grace demonstrated in this verse?
3. What was Israel’s first response to God’s rebuke? What does this response imply? Did they recognize their sin?
4. What did Yahweh accuse the people of doing? What was their response? Did they see themselves guilty?
5. Why did God accuse them of theft? In what ways were they stealing from God?
6. What were the tithes and offerings in the Old Testament used for?

Seeing It Closer

1. Give some specific examples of how we can rob the Lord today as Christians?
2. Have you been convicted in robbing the Lord recently? If so, how have you robbed Him?
3. Do you see yourself like Israel, challenging God’s rebuke? Or are you open to correction in the area of sharing your time, finances, home, and other possessions with others? Be honest!!!!

Getting To It:

Our God is a merciful God who continually showers His grace upon us! Let us always examine our hearts and lives to see if we are robbing God in any way. Don’t be like Israel who didn’t recognize their sin, but rather use all that you have to the glory of God! Is your home a fellowship hall? Is your time God’s time? Is the Lord in full control of your finances and material possessions? Heed to His warning: “*Stop robbing Me!*”

Taking What Belongs To Others

MONDAY

As we approach the end of our study of the Ten Commandments, review what we have been learning by reading **Exodus 20:1-21**. How has your appreciation and understanding of these verses changed in the last several weeks? Do you see God's concern for the salvation of his people in these commands? Read verses **18-21** again. Why did the Lord come to the Israelites in the manner he did? What feeling did he instill in his children? Why? Read **Proverbs 16:6** and dwell on it – understand how essential the fear of the Lord is! In **Isaiah 11** the prophet foretold the coming of Jesus and he revealed wonderful insight into his heart! How did Jesus himself feel about the fear of the Lord? We can and must follow the life-giving example of our Lord and Savior!! Let Jesus turn our wrong notions upside down! Delight in the _____ of the Lord as Jesus did!!

TUESDAY

Do you desire to grow in your fear of the Lord and to delight in it? Well if you do, today's quiet time will help! **Exodus 20:15** says "*you shall not steal*". If you haven't robbed a bank recently you may not be too convicted by this passage – but, before you get too comfortable, we are going to read the book of **Malachi** today. Before you read: PRAY! Pray to the Lord for an open heart – pray for guidance – pray to grow more pleasing to the Lord as you understand your relationship with him better – pray and God will answer and He will do wonderful things in your life!! Once you've done this, read. Read and expect to learn and draw nearer to God as He speaks to you and reveals His heart to you today!! Read the book of **Malachi** in its entirety and listen closely to the voice of the Lord.

WEDNESDAY

It is awesome to realize that the God who spoke us into existence is speaking directly to us today in His Word! Re-read the first two chapters of **Malachi** today and again pray to the Lord before you begin. As you read **chapter 1** ask yourself how God felt when the priests showed contempt for His name? How did they do this? How does he feel when we view our calling as a burden and we willfully withhold our best from Him? What passages help you see this? In **chapter 2:4-7** what do you learn from the example of Levi? How did Levi respond to God's calling? How have you responded to your calling into the Lord's priesthood (**1Peter 1:9**)? How should we stand before God and what needs to come out of our mouths? What do our lips need to preserve? Do people seek instruction from your lips or do they seek you out as a partner to complain, gossip and talk negatively with? How can we accomplish God's will for us? Read and apply **Ephesians 4:22-5:21**.

THURSDAY

By now you see that when you pray to the Lord he reveals great things to you in his Word! Today let's pray and focus on **Malachi 3 & 4**. First of all, marvel at the awesome prophecy about Jesus in the beginning of this chapter. You can see that we cannot stand before the Lord alone without his grace and mercy! After God told the Israelites what was coming he opened their eyes to the reality of how they were treating Him. How were they robbing Him? What kind of words were coming out of their mouths? How did God feel about this? How important are our words to the Lord? What do you learn from **chapter 3 verses 16-18** about the importance of our attitudes and our words? Read **Hebrews 13:15-16** for further insight.

FRIDAY

The beauty of getting into the Word the way we have been doing is that we really begin to learn what pleases the Lord (**Eph. 5:10**)! Remember "out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (**Matthew 12:34**), so how can we be sure the fruit of our lips and the sacrifices we offer up to the Lord are good? How can we begin to give to God the praise He so richly deserves and stop robbing Him? List specific things you can do that will prevent you from "stealing" from the Lord? Fill yourself up with His goodness – let your mind dwell on only that which pleases the Lord!! Read, apply, and live **Philippians 4:8-9** and you will please the Lord and his family as well!!

INSIGHT

How much are your opinions worth? How about your statements? Your speech? Your words? Have you ever lied? Have you ever manipulated the truth so that it looks and sounds like the truth but is really a self-centered attempt to justify your actions? I'd like to think that my words are as good as gold. Gold doesn't change. If I buy it, it will remain gold until Jesus comes again. Even if I die gold will still be gold until Jesus comes again. Gold will never turn into some worthless material and real gold is gold all the way through; not just coated with gold. How about your words? Are your statements/actions sometimes just "gold-coated"? Are your statements/actions sometimes unreliable? People don't know whether to believe you or dismiss you as a liar?

Every time you lie, whether it is by manipulating truth, deceiving, outright misrepresenting something or someone, your integrity suffers. You steal trust from people. You begin to owe trust. It is very interesting that it only takes one lie to destroy someone's integrity and other people's trust in that person. One lie. One "small, innocent, white, lie".

The ninth commandment deals more with honesty, sincerity and integrity than with issues of knowledge, accuracy and facts.

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor does not require you to be omniscient, but it does require you to be honest. It does not demand that you have the full content of factual truth in your possession, but it does require you to be trustworthy when you speak about some matter wherein the facts are in your possession."

You are not responsible for lacking in information on a particular subject or being perplexed and confused about some difficult matter; but you are responsible for telling the truth and not misrepresenting the facts so as to deceive, mislead, or send someone down a blind alley.

The Heart of God: The Ninth Commandment The Pinocchio Syndrome...

Key Text:

Exodus 20:16

"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

Theme:

Many echo the words of Pilate when they reflect an attitude of cynicism by the response, *"What is truth?"* Many people today rely on being deceitful and manipulative to get what they want. So much misrepresentation and dishonesty exist that "truth" has become an idealistic concept—unexisting and nonsense to those who make their living by deception. As people of God, required to emulate divinity, falsehood should never be an option that we are willing to pursue. The words that we speak are only valuable if they are truthful. Otherwise, they are not even worth the paper this is printed on.

Application:

Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. **Trustworthiness:** requires you to give honest opinions and judge impartially. Tell the truth in love, even if it hurts.
2. **Integrity:** To have integrity is not to be fragmented (partially truthful and/or partially dishonest). Be consistent. Speak the truth whatever the circumstance, situation or position you are in.
3. **Encouragement & Praise:** There's always something positive that can be found in a person. Be an edifier instead of a destroyer (slanderer). Always give the benefit of the doubt, never assume. When you slander someone you assume—and that is lying!
4. **Accountability:** Hold yourself accountable in everything you do. If you find yourself making excuses and justifying your actions, chances are that you are being dishonest to those you are letting down and deceitful to yourself. Wake up and let the Spirit transform you into a person able to give an account!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“You Shall Not Give False Testimony”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The eighth commandment dealt with the importance of moral action!
2. “You shall not steal” applies physically and spiritually!
3. We rob God when we don’t sacrifice our best.
4. We rob God with our words!
 - a. We rob him with faithless words *Malachi 3:13-ff*

I. Ninth Commandment: Moral Speech

Exodus 20:16

“You Shall Not Give False Testimony Against Your Neighbor”

A. Do not give false testimony

1. Who is my Neighbor?
 - a. Who does Jesus consider to be a neighbor?
 - b. *Luke 10:25-37*
 - c. Anyone you come across is your neighbor!
 - d. How does false testimony effect people?
2. The Perils of False Testimony.
 - a. *Numbers 13:26-14:1-4*
 - b. A nation is lead astray by false testimony
 - The faithless deprived the promised land.
 - Joshua and Caleb’s faithful response and their inheritance of the promised land!

B. Speak Faithful Words to One Another!

1. A vision for the faithful.
 - a. *Malachi 2:4-9*
 - b. Our lips need to preserve knowledge (speak what you know).
 - c. Never assume!
 - d. Nothing false should be on our lips.
 - e. Speak faithful words!

C. Speak Wholesome Words To One Another!

1. *Ephesians 4:22-ff*
 - a. Wholesome = nutritious for the soul.
 - b. Don’t talk anything which is not good for the soul-- spiritual “Wheaties™”!!

II. Conclusion: *Hebrews 13:15*

1. Combine speech with action!
2. This is pleasing to God.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Can you illustrate how it is possible to say something that is factually true but morally false?

See To It

Psalm 15

1. To whom does the opening question of this Psalm refer?
2. What is the underlying theme of this short yet powerful Psalm?
3. How is true happiness achieved in light of this Psalm? Explain.
4. **Read verse 3.** Explain how not being these things can attribute to the breaking of the ninth commandment?
5. **Read verse 4.** Explain how not being these things can attribute to the breaking of the ninth commandment? What does it mean when the Psalmist says, “*who keeps his oath even when it hurts*”?
6. **Read verse 5.** Explain how not being these things can attribute to the breaking of the ninth commandment?

Seeing It Closer

1. Is there a distinction in your mind between lying about trivial matters and lying about important things?
2. Is it possible to lie by being silent? Can you illustrate how this might happen? Have you ever been guilty of it?
3. Imagine for a moment that people’s noses actually grow when they tell lies. Would your own appearance be altered?
4. How can you guard your heart against the temptation to lie?

Getting To It:

Lying is not a fine art to be practiced. It is an offense against God and man. There should be a quality of honesty and integrity in us--whether in business, professional life, filing a tax return, or simply in casual conversation--that sets us apart. Let us be a people who do not excuse themselves in dealing with lies!

The Pinocchio Syndrome

MONDAY

Exodus 20:16 reads “*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*”. This week we will read about how an expert in the law tested Jesus and sought to justify himself by asking the question, “Who is my neighbor?”. Before we examine this part of the commandment, we should first understand how the Lord feels when we speak anything false. For a deeper understanding, let’s read *Acts 5:1-11*. Read carefully - What happened to Ananias and Sapphira? Why? In verses 3 and 4, Peter convicts Ananias of lying - Who does he say he lied to? Read verse 7. Sapphira had an opportunity to tell the truth or continue in the lie. What did Peter ask her? What was the lie they were telling? Ananias and Sapphira wanted the brethren to think they sold their house and gave all of the money to the Lord. Why do you think they wanted to do this? Perhaps they wanted everyone to pat them on the back. They didn’t have to do this, as Peter pointed out in verse 4. Think of ways you seek to make yourself look better to a brother or a sister. Have you ever said something that wasn’t altogether true? Who are you really lying to? “*Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will lift you up.*” (*James 4:10*)

TUESDAY

We know that the Lord does not want us to speak what is false. Ananias and Sapphira truly found out the hard way. Now let’s look at another part of the commandment. God commands his people not to speak falsely about their neighbor. Read *Luke 10:25-37*. You will see Jesus define who and what a neighbor is – something the teachers of the law were unable to do. If you are unfamiliar with the relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans (Gentiles), research it in a good study Bible or commentary. The “expert in the law” was seeking to justify himself, not to learn. He probably treated those he considered neighbors (like his fellow Jews) pretty good, but judging by what Jesus said to him, how do you think he viewed non-Jews (such as the Samaritans)? Read the parable and stand in awe of God who knows the heart of every man! What did the priests and the Levites do when they saw the man who was suffering? Weren’t they supposed to love their neighbor as themselves (*Lev. 19:13-18*)? Didn’t they consider this man a neighbor? How about the Samaritan? Apply this to your own life. Do you consider all people as your neighbor or only certain people? Do you avoid some people because of something you consider undesirable about them? If so then today is the day to repent! Love your neighbor as yourself! Speak the Word of God to someone you may have passed up otherwise. Remember that someone did this for you.

WEDNESDAY

God’s heart is filled with love for us and he understands more than we do the consequences of our sin. How many people throughout history have been wrongly hurt, brutalized, imprisoned and even killed because of a false testimony made against them? We begin to learn how powerful this sin is as children the very first time we get away with blaming someone else for something we did – “I didn’t do it-he did it!” False testimony is an extremely dangerous sin. Look at *Matthew 26:69-75*. In these passages we read about Peter giving false testimony about Jesus. What caused him to do this? Who did it effect besides himself? Read *Luke 22:54-61* for further insight. Not only did Peter give false testimony about Jesus, he also missed a great (evangelistic) opportunity to love his neighbor as himself. Next read *Acts 16:16-24*. When Paul and Silas got in the way of somebody’s money-making operation, how did the people respond (see verse 19)? What did they use as a weapon against Paul and Silas? – false testimony. The results were devastating! However, the Lord in his usual awesomeness turns it to spectacular! Read the rest of the chapter. Our society promotes and rewards false testimony. The courtrooms are filled with people seeking to make money by filing false claims against one another. The Lord changes us just as he changed Peter from a false testifier to a preacher of truth. See his true testimony in *Acts 2:22-36*.

THURSDAY

Read *Exodus 23:1-9*. The NIV labels these as laws of justice and mercy. As you read them, think of ways you are guilty of breaking these laws. What kinds of things sway you to give false testimony? Have you ever hurt someone by giving in to your heart this way? Now read *Numbers 13 and 14*. What did God promise in 13:1, 2? In verse 32, what caused the Israelites to doubt? What did this lead the Israelites to say and believe in 14:1-4? Do you see how damaging false testimony is? Was God bringing the Israelites into Canaan only so they could die by the sword? The bad report, which was faithless and false, caused the whole nation to doubt. As a result, they were deprived entrance into the promised land. Think of some ways you have spoken faithlessly. What did you say and how did it affect the Body? Read on in this chapter and learn from the faithful responses of Joshua and Caleb (see verses 5-9). Call a brother or sister today and speak faithful words to them!

FRIDAY

Wasn’t yesterday’s reading awesome? How do we fulfill the commands God has given us today? Read *Galatians 5:1-15*. What happened to the Galatians in verses 1-9? How did a false teaching affect them spiritually? In verses 10-15, what was the way to overcome the damage done by this false testimony? Read *Romans 13:8-10* and discover how to fulfill the law. Write verse 10 on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.

Rom 7:8

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; {14} but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. {15} Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

James 1:13-15

Selfish, self-gratifying, lustful, enticing desires. These desires are the center of what the tenth commandment warns about. This commandment strikes at the very core of the desires that entice and lead us to sin and to break all the commands of God.

The tenth commandment is the only commandment that does not deal particularly with an action or lack thereof. It deals more with attitudes of the heart. It is a command directed at the core of our desire for self-satisfaction. It addresses the sinful nature and condemns it. No one can escape the judgment of the tenth commandment because it basically tells everyone that they are selfish, self-seeking beings.

Every sinful act or thought can be traced back to covetousness. The nature of the flesh is to be covetous. The only time we are not being covetous is when we are loving. God's nature is to love. God IS LOVE. People, on the other hand, are covetous. The flesh IS covetous. This is the reason why Paul teaches:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Gal 5:16-18

The Heart of God: The Tenth Commandment The Envy Trap

Key Text:

Exodus 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Theme:

The Hebrew word for *covet* (*hamad*) refers to an enthusiastic desire. The word itself is morally neutral. That is, you can covet great things as well as bad things. You can have an overwhelming desire to serve God or a brother in need. However, when your desires turn toward serving self; when you are enticed by the flesh to gratify your sinful nature and you yearn to please your heart, then your *covetousness* leads you away from the Spirit and into sin. And the results of coveting in this manner are always morally wrong because they lead us away from God. The end result? DEATH.

Application:

Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. ***Don't think about what you could HAVE...***
Think about what you do have and use it to glorify God. If you don't have it you probably don't need it. You're doing fine without it.
2. ***Don't think about what you could DO...***
Think about what you are doing! What are you doing at this very time with your life? Are you using your life, or are you being used by it?
3. ***Focus your energies on someone in need...***
redirect your steps toward brothers and sisters that need your company and your fellowship. Focus your energies on putting your flesh to work for the Kingdom instead of for yourself.
4. ***See yourself as God's agent who manages blessings for the good of all...*** Your business is to give, not to receive; to build up, not to destroy; to make peace, not to divide. Know your place in God's Kingdom!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

“The Envy Trap”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The ninth commandment dealt with the importance of moral speech!
2. False testimony can lead astray a whole nation (*Nu 13:26-14:4*)
3. God’s desire for His people to speak faithful words (*Mal. 2:4-9*)
4. Our speech should be that for building up (*Eph 4:22ff*)
5. The world glorifies lies and compromise: Do not fall in its trap!

I. Tenth Commandment: Moral Thoughts

Exodus 20:17

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

A. Root of the whole problem!

1. This command strikes at the root
 - a. Commands 5-9 deals with externals: forbids actions that injure your neighbor!
 - b. The tenth deals with the internal: pledging all of one’s energies to self-gratification!
-- covetousness is the root of the malignant tumor known as “sin”
--In it is the sting of death!
2. Jesus explains the root of the problem (*Matt. 15:17-20a*)
 - a. What proceeds from heart is polluted (*Jer. 17:9*)
 - b. The violation of the Law stems here!
 1. Murder, adultery, theft, falsehood, etc.

B. Examples of covetousness

1. Material Greed: King Ahab (*1 Kings 21:1-16*)
--prior to murder and theft was covetousness
2. Lust: King David (*2 Sam. 11:1ff*)
--prior to the adultery, murder and theft was covetousness
3. Leech: A sluggard (*Prov. 21:25-26*)

II. Conclusion: Paul’s Personal Confession: *Rom. 7,8*

1. Covetousness made apparent by the Law
2. Plug into the power: Jesus Christ!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Name the form of success that is most attractive to you from this list: money, athletic ability, intelligence, physical attractiveness, fame, power, or some other. Why does it attract you?

See To It

Romans 7:1-8:6

Here’s a test: *Until you get to question 1 of next section, no matter what happens, promise not to scratch your nose or any other part of your head. There is a purpose for this!*

1. **Read Romans 7:1-8:6.** What law was Paul referring to when he said: “*Is the law sin?*” How do you know? Explain from the Scriptures.
2. What did the law reveal to Paul? What does the law reveal to you personally?
3. Explain verses 9,10. What did Paul mean when said: “*I was alive apart from the law*”?
4. What does a “No Trespassing” or a “Wet Pain” sign promote us to do? What is Paul’s point in Romans 7?

OK. Scratch your itch. Paul’s point is proven!

Seeing It Closer

1. Is Paul saying that it is all right to continue to live the way we want to, since Law puts us to death?
2. What is the only solution to the problem of covetousness in our lives? Who can make a difference and how? Can our own strength change our hearts?
3. How has God’s Holy Spirit worked to transform and renew your mind?

Getting It Together

Only those who follow Christ can be saved from this wretched thing called *envy*. But to follow Him is much more than being baptized, going to church, and having people think well of you. It is emptying yourself, giving everything up for Jesus!

The Envy Trap

MONDAY

To understand the commandments is to understand human nature. God reveals our weaknesses through them “for he understands how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (*Psalms 103:14*). Read *Exodus 20:17*. We are all guilty of one form of covetousness or another and need to understand it so that through Jesus Christ we can overcome! First look up the word covet or covetousness in a dictionary (the Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary has an especially clear definition in it). Write the definition down. Now list the things God speaks of in the commandment that we are covetous of. Remember that the word neighbor includes everyone! Which of these things do you struggle with the most and why? Bring your sin to the Lord in prayer and ask for forgiveness and deliverance. He will hear the prayer of faith and he will answer!!

TUESDAY

Today we are going to look at the result of a covetous heart. Remember when God issued the commandments to his children he also promised that those who obeyed would inherit the promised land (a land flowing with milk and honey – Canaan)!! Read *Joshua 5-7*. Here we see God in his awesome power fulfilling his promise to the Israelites. He is delivering a great and powerful city into their hands in order to give them the promised land. God clearly shows them that he provides everything they need. Take note of *6:17-19*. He specifically tells them that all the silver, gold, bronze and iron in Jericho was to be devoted to the Lord, they were not to take these as personal possessions. What was Achin’s sin? What was the cause of this sin? Do you see how dangerous it is to follow the desires of the heart? What was the consequences of Achin’s sin for himself? His family? And all Israel? If you read chapter 8 you will see how foolish Achin was to take what God had not yet given him. The next city God gave to Israel was called Ai and with this city he allowed them to take the very articles that Achin coveted. He just was not patient enough to let the Lord provide for him. Understand that God is to be revered and that we will also die if we submit to covetousness as opposed to the Lord!! Truly “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (*Prov.9:10*). Write *Matthew 6:21* on an index card and commit it to heart! Make sure that the Lord and his kingdom are what you treasure above all else!!

WEDNESDAY

Read *1Corinthians 10:1-13* and you will see that everything written in the Old Testament was written as an example for you and me! Now turn to *2Kings 5*. What motivated Gehazi to lie to Namaan? What was it he desired? What was the result of his sin? Apply this to your own life. Are you honest with your brothers and sisters and your discipler about the things you are pursuing and want or are you like Gehazi, pursuing these things and then trying to hide it? Is there anything you are doing (coveting) that you do not want to be open about? Understand that you are called to live in the light (*1John 1:5-7*). Confess your sin to the Lord and to another brother or sister who is able to pray for you, advise you and help you (see *James 5:13-16*)! Remember that in the Lord “*we are more than conquerors through him who loved us*” (*Romans 8:37*).

THURSDAY

Hopefully you have already been convicted about the sin of covetousness in your life, if not, prepare for today’s quiet time! Let’s read *James 4:1-10*. Do you recognize the desires that battle within you? What are they? How are you at controlling them? What is the answer to your struggles? Write verse 7 on an index card and carry it with you until you memorize it! Make signs with scriptures to hang in your room or on your refrigerator which will help you overcome your struggles.

FRIDAY

Understanding who and what we really are and where we stand before God requires spiritual maturity. Read *Romans 7&8* and learn from the apostle Paul. What did sin produce in Paul? How did Paul view himself in v.18? Why did he view himself this way? How do you see yourself in relation to God? According to chapter 8 what are we obligated to live by? How can we accomplish this? Take time to reflect on what it means to live according to the Spirit. What are some things you will do today to please the Spirit as opposed to pleasing the flesh? Call a brother or sister and share these things with him or her!

INSIGHT

When Jesus was asked which was the greatest command in the Law He replied:

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Before Jesus left us, He said:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus made it clear that His commands are centered on the action of **LOVING**. When we love God, we will love our neighbor. When we love our neighbor, we are keeping the sacred laws of God which promote peace, unity, edification and spiritual growth. Even though you may encounter serious trials throughout this life, when you focus on loving, you will overcome the difficulties and grow through these very trials.

If you read the *Sermon on the Mount* (Mt. 5, 6 & 7), you will notice that the core of Jesus teachings is LOVE. In chapter five he speaks about the mindset and practice of those who uphold His spiritual law. He ends this chapter by saying: *"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."* The only time we actually uphold the law of God is when we are loving from the core of our very being. Chapter six is about the attitude the citizens of the Kingdom have. In chapter seven He speaks about how to persevere in these, so that growth ends up being the result, and not stagnation.

The *Beatitudes*, in the beginning of chapter five, come as a result of recognizing how we have been blessed as sons and daughters of God's Kingdom. To be blessed is to be in bliss; to be extremely satisfied; fulfilled; happy. (From the Greek: *makarios*) Out of these realizations come obedience to the spiritual laws of Christ and growth from putting these laws into practice. This is what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself.

The Heart of Jesus: The Greatest Commandment The Most Excellent Way!

Key Text: *Matthew 22:37-40*

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." {38} This is the first and greatest commandment. {39} And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' {40} All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Theme:

These two commandments which Jesus used to summarize the whole Law are actually taken from Deuteronomy 6:4-6 and Leviticus 19:18. The first of the greatest commandments was known to the Jews as the *Shema*, Judaism's basic confession of faith. According to rabbinical law, it was to be recited morning and night. In Galatians 5:14 the Apostle Paul quotes the second greatest command as being the fulfillment of the whole law. In other words, if you are loving your neighbor, you are a disciple in word and truth.

Application:

Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. *Love the LORD with all your heart!* Make it your goal to serve the Lord with a willing spirit! God delights in a heart that is willing to serve as oppose to a heart that is bitter and critical! *Eph 6:7*
2. *Love the LORD with all your soul!* Have a deep appreciation for God and His divine love for you! Consider the man of the cross! This is the depth of God's love for you. Love Him deeply too! *John 3:16*
3. *Love the LORD with all your mind!* Get to know the Lord your God! Read His Word and be fascinated by the great things He has done (and continues to do) in the lives of His servants! For our God deserves our full attention and focus! *Colossians 3:2*
4. *Love the LORD with all your strength!* Never give up serving the Lord! Do everything to the glory of Christ, your Lord! *Col. 3:17*

May the Lord richly bless you!

OUTLINE

“The Most Excellent Way”

Introduction: Last Week

1. The tenth commandment dealt with moral thought!
2. Root of the problem stems from the coveting heart!
(*Matt. 15:17-20a*)
3. Kinds of coveting:
 - a. Material (*King Ahab: 1 Kings 21:1-16*)
 - b. Person (*King David: 2 Sam. 11*)
 - c. Business
 - d. Lazy spirit (*Prov. 21:25-26*)
4. Only through Christ can we make it to heaven!
(*Rom. 7:24-8:2*)

I. The Law Written In The Heart (*Rom 2:11ff*)

Romans 2:13

“For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”

- A. God does not show favoritism (*vs 11*)
 1. Salvation is not based on externals
 2. But according to the person's spiritual state
- B. Three degrees of enlightenment revealed to men (*vs. 12-16*)
 1. The light of nature: The Gentiles (non-Jews)
 - their conscience is their witness
(Natural awareness)
 - they are judged by natural law
 2. The light of the law: The Jews
 - The Law is their witness
(Spiritual awareness)
 - Judged by the Mosaic law
 3. The light of the gospel: The Christian
 - The Law of Love: *Mt. 22:37-40*
 - The Spirit of Christ is revealed in their lives
 - a. Love your God (First love)
 - b. Love your neighbor (Second love)
 - We have the privilege of having the Bible
 - We are called to be doers (*James 1:22*)
 - We will be judged by the Word (*John 12:48*)

II. Conclusion: The inner Christian: *Rom. 2:29*

- A true Christian is within:
 1. A Spirit-led person (desires to walk the walk)
 2. A Spirit-minded person (desires to please God)
 3. Christ's Words are Spirit and Life (*John 6:63*)

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Here is the scenario: You need a major operation. Would you entrust your life into the hands of any physician if given a choice? Why or why not? What helps you determine his or her trustworthiness?

See To It

Romans 2:17-29

1. What were the Jews professing to be? List the items they bragged about?
2. Why did they brag about their being a Jew? What did that signify?
3. Even though they professed God, what were they doing?
4. Why were they in grave danger? What did their salvation consist of?
5. How were they affecting the Gentiles?

Seeing It Closer

1. How can the Christian fall under the same condemnation as the Jew? Use question #1 as a guide.
2. Is a Christian a Christian, simply because he or she has been baptized, has the knowledge of the Word and has good attendance? What makes a true Christian?
3. What does God look at? What must be cleansed? How is it cleansed?
4. What are the characteristics of one who truly knows the Lord? Will you be able to tell?

Getting It Together

If we were to substitute the word “Jew” for “Christian”, Romans 2:28-29 would read something like this: “a man is not a Christian if he is only one outwardly, nor is baptism merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Christian if he is one inwardly...” Are you allowing the Spirit of God to lead you? Is God pleased with you? Do people see the light of Christ in your life? When they see you, do they see Jesus? Is your life a life that is filled with grace, love, peace and humility? You be the judge!

THE MOST EXCELLENT WAY

MONDAY

Praise the Lord for what He has been teaching us through His Word!! This week we will examine the two greatest commandments as described by Jesus. Examine **Matthew 22:34-40** and **Mark 12:28-34**. Jesus quotes **Deut. 6:5** and **Lev. 19:18** and is the first to combine these two texts to summarize the law into the two greatest commandments! He also mentions something we are to use to fully love the Lord that the text in **Deut. 6** does not mention. What is it? What does this tell you about how to love the Lord? Read and apply **Galatians 5:13-15** today. Do something for your neighbor to show love - something that you would like done to you today. Praise God for the opportunities that He gives to us!!!

TUESDAY

Today we are going to read **Deut. 6-7**. There are so many awesome and amazing lessons to learn in these passages! As you read chapter 6 ask yourself: "how is a child of God to show the proper fear of the Lord?" What did the Lord tell them to teach their children in verses 20-25? Do you see how this testimony applies to you and your need to share the Gospel? The lessons in chapter 7 may not be as easy to see, but as you read, contemplate how God has called us to be different from those in the world. How is this connected to what we read in **James 4:1-10**? We are to be set apart from the world through our obedience to God. Why are we to do this according to **Deut. 7: 6-11**? What is our motivation today? Make a poster with **2Corinthians 5:14-15** and hang it somewhere you can see it! Share with someone else how the Lord delivered you! Share His love and deliverance with as many as possible.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Deut. 8-10** today. As you read the text, notice what the Lord stresses to His children. In verses 1 through 5, why was it important for God's children to be tested the way they were? Does this remind you of what we read in **Hebrews 12**? Do you see how beneficial it is to be disciplined (loved) by the Lord? How is your attitude when you are disciplined? Take note of how God tells the Israelites to remember their blessings. What will happen to them if they forget the Lord? Have you noticed as you read these chapters how many times the Lord tells them to remember Him? In *chapter 9* why was God going to give the Israelites this great promised land? What kind of attitude was the Lord warning them about in *verse 4*? (Read **Titus 3** and see that this applies to us as well). In **Deut. 10:12ff**, can you see the two greatest commandments? Who are we to love above all else? How are we to treat others around us? Why? Meditate on verses 12 and 13 throughout the day and impress them on your heart.

THURSDAY

Read **Deut. 11**. What is God calling His children to do? Notice how the elements of loving, fearing and obeying God are repeated again and again? God says to His people in verse 26, "*see I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse...*" Describe what the blessing is and what the curse of God is? Remember from last week what happened to Israel as a nation when they forgot the love and power of God (**Numbers 13-14**)? Israel did not obey (love) the Lord therefore they broke faith, they did not obey the two greatest commandments and it devastated them as a nation. Pray to the Lord to constantly open your eyes to see His blessings in your life. Be prepared to see wonderful things that you may not have seen before and be prepared as God reminds you of His love for you!!

FRIDAY

What happens to a church that does not love the Lord with all their inner being? What happens if we forget our first love? Read **Revelation 2:1-7** and see. The church at Ephesus had some great qualities. What were they? What happened to them? What was the Spirit convicting them of? What was going to be their outcome if they did not repent? What would be their blessing if they listened and what would be their curse if they did not? Now read **Ephesians 3:14-20**. Knowing what the Ephesians were being convicted of in **Revelation 2**, you can appreciate why Paul prayed for them the way he did. Look at **Rev. 2:17-19** in particular. What did they need to grow in their understanding of? Pray as Paul did: that we, as a church, will grow continuously in our understanding and appreciation of God's awesome love for each and every one of us!!

INSIGHT

Health clubs and gyms are everywhere. These health clubs focus on one thing: Get your body in shape! In other words, for a certain price, they will help you lose weight and tone your body down to a healthy status! We understand that if we do not take care of our God-given bodies, we will grow tired, weak and fall prey to all kinds of diseases and sicknesses. Therefore, society understands (and we understand) how important it is to take care of our bodies – we only get one! So what do we do? We eat right (feed the body) and we exercise (strengthen its parts) by jogging, walking or any other aerobic exercise to make it strong and healthy.

In the same manner, since we are members of Christ's church, His body (*Ephesians 1:22-23*), we ought to spiritually take care of ourselves. *1 Cor 12:1-27* teaches that we individually make up the one body of Christ: whether we be a leg, hand or foot. No matter what part of the body you are, God places a strong emphasis on the care we ought to have for one another; *that its parts should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor 12:25)*. As Christians, it is our task to *spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24)* and to show genuine love for each other! Like food and exercise to the body, is fellowship, honor and love for the members of the Body of Jesus Christ. These can only make for a stronger, healthier spiritual body that can only produce spiritual goodness, encouragement and growth!

God summarizes all of our duties towards one another (the body) in one word: **LOVE**. *Romans 13:8* says, "*let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.*" We can be debt free, but one thing we must render always is love! *Romans 12:10-16* speaks of various kinds of love we must display to one another: an affectionate love (vs 10a), an honorable love (vs 10b), a sharing love (vs 13), a sympathizing love (vs 15), a uniting love (vs 16a), a humble love (vs 16b) and a peace-seeking love (vs 18). So let's get in gear and let's keep the Body of Christ spiritually fit! ***Value one another!***

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Valuing One Another

Key Text:

Romans 12:10

*"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.
Honor one another above yourselves."*

Theme:

The Bible teaches that our love for God is displayed by the way we love and honor one another. Therefore, our Christianity is directly affected by the way we treat one another. *1 John 2:8-11* says that anyone who hates his brother is still in darkness. Remember the Lord's command: "...*Love one another. As I have loved you... By this all men will know that you are my disciples...*" *John 13:34-35*

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Get to know one another.** Don't be satisfied with just knowing *about* your brother or sister; get to know them! Fellowship with them. Build a loving relationship with the saints by spending quality time with them!
2. **Watch what you say and how you say it.** You may not say anything that is discouraging or hurtful, but your body language could be saying something else. Be a positive spirit!
3. **Learn to listen!** When a brother or sister comes to you for advice or to talk, make sure you give them your full attention. Be ready to meet their spiritual needs!!
4. **Encourage.** If you see a brother or sister doing something that is praise worthy, let them know how encouraged you are by their example!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Valuing One Another

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers" James 2:8-9

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Preliminaries Of Love: Action vs. Profession

1. Starts with honor (placing a high value)
 - a. A soul is very valuable (*Mt. 16:26*)
 - b. Honor: lowers self, raises others (*Rom 12:10*)
2. Find out facts about the person (know their needs)
 - a. *Eph. 4:29*--you can't meet their needs if you don't know their needs.
3. Learn the skills (how to fulfill their needs)
 - a. What must I do? How must I do?
 1. *Prov 24:3* By wisdom a house is built
-- so goes the building of loving relationships
 2. *Prov. 11:2* Wisdom is only found in humility
4. Illustration: The Plant
 - a. Know the facts: What does it need?
--Sunlight, water, soil, air
 - b. What does it take to keep it alive?
--how much of these things?

II. Elements Needed In A Loving Relationship

Romans 12:10--Built on honor!

1. Commitment--show your commitment to one another
 - a. Love needs to be proved: The Lord proved it
--Verbal and Non-verbal reminders
--If you won't do this, how can you do *1 Jn 3:16*?
2. Meaningful Conversation
 - verbal: Verbal interaction (*Col. 4:6*)
 - non-verbal: Cheerful look (*Pr. 15:30*)
3. Activities: Meaningful Fellowship (*Acts 2:42*)
 - Find out what they enjoy (remember: honor)
 - Get involved with what they like
4. Physical Needs: Meaningful touch
 - hugs (*aspazomai*=embrace) (*Romans 16:16*)
 - provisions (*James 2:16*)

Conclusion: Are you willing? *1 John 3:18*

1. Love not with words, but action!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

What do you think is the most important element in building a great relationship with another person: whether they be a relative, friend, coworker, fellow Christian or stranger? What would draw you into a relationship?

See To It

Romans 12:9-21

1. What kind of love must be present in the hearts of Christ's people? Explain.
2. In order to have this kind of love, what is the first thing one must do? Why?
3. Read verses 10-16. What constitutes love according to these verses and give a specific modern-day example of each attribute?
4. With whom should we build a loving relationship? Why?

Seeing It Closer

1. Why is love so emphasized in the Bible? Give some reasons for its importance in the kingdom?
2. **Read Ephesians 4:29.** How can we fulfill people's needs? Give some specific steps?
3. **Look at the person to your right.** Are you aware of his or her needs? How can you fulfill Ephesians 4:29 in their life?
4. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the least and 5 the greatest), how would you measure the effort exerted on your part in getting to know your fellow brothers and sisters in the church?

Getting To It:

Romans 13:8 says, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." Love is a debt that must be always in the paying, for we always owe love to those around us! Never stop building relationships with love. For it is by loving do we fulfill the royal law as quoted in James 2:8: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

VALUING ONE ANOTHER

MONDAY

As we have recently learned, God has commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves. In order for us to fulfill this command we need to learn how to love ourselves. How can we love our neighbor if we cannot love ourselves? And how can we love ourselves and our neighbors in a way that pleases the Lord? In **John 12:20-26** Jesus teaches us that we must hate our lives in the world to follow him. But we need to love the life that he has given us in the kingdom! In the world peoples self love or self esteem is usually based on their physical attractiveness, abilities and or their achievements in life. In the Lord we must not fall into these trappings. We need to love ourselves for very different reasons. Read **1Peter 2:9-ff**. How does God describe you in verses 9-10? How did He show you how valuable you are to Him (read verses 24-ff)? Read **Romans 8:15-17**. As adopted children of God we cry out ‘Abba’ (Daddy), Father!! The Lord has adopted each of us to be his own and he is our Daddy, our Father!! As his children we are blessed to share in his sufferings and in his glory!! Esteem (value) yourself because God loves you. Think of a particular passage which helps you understand this. Call a brother or sister and encourage them with it today. And praise God, our loving Father, our Daddy – we are valuable because He loves us!!!

TUESDAY

Today let’s focus on how we can love others better. How can we have the loving relationships the Lord desires for us? Read **Colossians 3:12-14** carefully. How are we addressed by God? If you were to look at this as a recipe for perfect unity – what would the essential ingredients be? What is the main ingredient? Now read the chapter from beginning to end. The keys to great relationships are here. As you read, notice your need to remember who you were – who you are now in the Lord and how we are to be different! If we have the ingredients as described in verses 12-14 then we can successfully fulfill verse 18-ff.

WEDNESDAY

In previous weeks we learned about the power of the spoken word. Let’s look at the power of our words in light of our relationships. Review what we learned in **Ephesians 4:29-ff**. Only wholesome words should come out of our mouths. Do you see the ingredients for unity (great relationships) in these verses? Very similar to what we read in Colossians, isn’t it? Notice that we need to know what each other’s needs are in order to build one another up!! This is absolutely key to having great relationships. The opportunity for true loving relationships has been given to us!! Combine your words with action - read **John 13:1-17** and seek to imitate the Lord’s love today. Look at verse 34 as well and notice the results of our love for one another. It is the most powerful testimony to the world that we are truly Jesus’ disciples!!

THURSDAY

The Lord can use us to build one another up in awesome and powerful ways when we yield to him and follow the recipe for great relationships which he has given us. In the same way, when we don’t follow his instructions we can destroy our relationships and do tremendous damage to one another. Read **Proverbs 18:19-21**. What are some ways that you offend your brother, sister, son, daughter, husband or wife? What are the results? What does verse 21 say about the power of the tongue? Read **Colossians 3:18-21** again. Wives ask yourself, “am I submissive to my husband as is fitting in the Lord or do I put my own needs before my husbands and offend him with my words and attitudes?” Husbands ask yourselves, “am I loving my wife (like Jesus loves the church) or am I offensive in my words and actions and harsh with her?” Children ask yourself, “am I obedient to my parents and pleasing the Lord or am I offensive by being disrespectful and disobedient?” Fathers ask yourself, “am I embittering my children and discouraging them by being unloving?” Reread verses 12-14 as a reminder of the ingredients we need to have for loving relationships and repent to those you need to repent to. With repentance comes times of refreshing from the Lord (**Acts 3:19-20**)!!

FRIDAY

You may have noticed a common ingredient for love in all the passages we have looked at is humility. In **Philippians 2** the Lord teaches us that we must honor (value, esteem) one another above ourselves. His example to us is exactly that - he honors us above himself and that is how he shows he loves us! Read **Ephesians 4:1-16**. Humility is absolutely necessary for unity and love. Without humility we will not attain maturity in Christ nor will we have the love we all need so much. Pursue love (**1Tim.6:11-16**), strive for it in all your relationships because God is love (**1John 4:16**)!!

INSIGHT

One of the key ingredients in having a successful relationship is learning how to quickly reconcile your differences. The Bible teaches that reconciliation is the process by which God and man are brought together again. At one time God and man were alienated from each other, due to man's sinfulness (Isaiah 59:2). God demonstrated His love for us by letting his Son be used as a tool of reconciliation. Through the sacrifice of Christ, man's sin is atoned, and God's wrath is appeased. Thus, a relationship of hostility and alienation is changed into one of peace and fellowship. God set a very valuable example when he decided to let his one and only Son die for us (John 3:16). He showed us the importance of a relationship. God took the initiative to restore our relationship with Him even though He did nothing wrong. *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation..." Col 1:21-22.*

In 2 Cor 5:17-20, it shows that God gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, in the same way God humbled himself for us we should also do the same towards our brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and to everyone. We must learn to be builders of relationships not destroyers! How do you think God feels when we can't settle our differences? Please understand, God does recognize that quarrels will sometimes happen, even among the elect of God, who are holy and beloved. It is our duty as Christians to forgive one another in such cases. In order for us to do this we are encouraged to do two things: The first is to clothe ourselves with love; *"And over all these virtues put on love"* (Col 3:14). The second is to submit ourselves to the authority of the peace of God: *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart"* (Col 3:15) As members of one body, we were called to be at peace with one another. We must be thankful! Our work of thanksgiving in Christ is such a sweet and pleasant work that it will help make us sweet and pleasant towards all men and God.

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships A Ministry Of Reconciliation

Key Text:

Matthew 5:9

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. "

Theme:

Peacemakers are those who devote their lives to making peace by following the example of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Being a peacemaker involves an effort and a goal to always be at peace with all men as long as it is up to us (*Romans 12:18-21*). It also involves helping others to be at peace with God by proclaiming the gospel of peace (*Rom. 5:1; Eph. 6:15*). As peacemakers we are called to be the light of the world and to set the example of how we should live our lives. Therefore, let us always be quick to reconcile our difference for the kingdom of God awaits us!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Pray.** If you are struggling with an attitude with a brother or a sister, ask God to help you work it out. God is there for us and he wants to help.
2. **Listen!** Learn to listen to the person. Take time to hear and understand why the person is hurting and be determined to be part of the solution!
3. **Humble yourself!** Learn to admit when you are wrong. The quicker we humble ourselves and admit wrong, the faster we will be able to make peace.
4. **Speak to edify!** God teaches us that is not what goes in to the mouth that makes us unclean, but it what comes out. Therefore, when speaking always strive to build up and encourage.

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Overcoming The Major Destroyer

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers" James 2:8-9

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Last Week: Building Loving Relationships

1. **Honor:** Relationship starts here (*Rom. 12:10*)
2. **Nurture:** Four Elements Needed
 - a. Commitment
 - b. Meaningful Conversation
 - c. Meaningful Fellowship (*Acts 2:42*)
 - d. Physical Needs: Meaningful Touch

II. Restoring A Weakened Relationship

A. How To Detect The Erosion

1. People are made of three major ingredients
 - a. *Spirit* (the inner person; who we are)
 - b. *Mind* (the emotions, the will)
 - c. *Body* (hormones, skin, etc.)
2. We all have a 3-fold relationship with everyone
3. You can wound someone's spirit
 - a. Hurtful jokes, harsh words, honoring something above them, etc.
 - d. Reaction: spirit closes, will stiffens, no touch
-- they disagree with everything you say
-- they are distant and/or silent

B. How Do I Restore The Relationship?

1. Learn to open the person's spirit
 - a. Get soft (humility; gentleness)
 - b. Ask what's the matter and listen to what they are saying!
 - c. If you are to blame, seek forgiveness
 - d. Do not argue
 - e. Reach out and touch (embrace, hug, etc.)

Conclusion: Pursue Peace (*Rom. 14:19*)

1. The kingdom is about peace (*Rom. 14:17*)
2. Anger can cause someone to sin and also fall away!
3. We are in the ministry of reconciliation!
(*2 Cor. 5:18*)

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Have you ever been deeply hurt by another person? What caused the hurt and how did you respond to the hurt?

See To It

Matthew 18:1-7

1. Before we can build a relationship with the Lord and His people, what must we be? Why?
2. List the characteristics of humility. How does it show itself?
3. What kind of relationship must we have with saints of Christ?
4. Who is to be the most pitied? Why?

Seeing It Closer

1. **Read verses 10 through 14.** What kind of relationship does the Father have with His children?
2. When we destroy a relationship with our sin, what are we, in fact, doing?
3. What are some ways we can restore a wounded relationship? How can we promote peace between us and those whom we discouraged or hurt?
4. What insights have you learned regarding the sheep of God from what was just read?
5. How can we guard ourselves from causing someone else to stumble? What must we be aware of?

Getting To It:

We are members of God's family; His prize possession for whom He sent forth His Son to die. With this in mind, we must always remember not to put stumbling blocks in the way of people, especially God's people. Learn to recognize what can destroy relationships and be willing to reconcile yourself with those whom you've hurt with your sin. Be the kind of person Christ calls us to be: humble children, valuing His possession, always pursuing peace!

A MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

MONDAY

“Because of the increase in wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.” (**Matt. 24:12**) This is such a powerful verse. The love of most will grow cold and they will be overcome but those whose love does not grow cold will be saved!! Are you determined to keep your love burning and growing? We know that God is love and so today we will read **Romans 12** and learn more about what we are to become if we desire to remain in Him!! As we read v. 9-21 we need to become what we read. Write each of the qualities of love you see in these verses on paper - this will be our vision list! Before each quality write down “Love is...” and then write the quality in present tense. For example, from v. 9 you can write: “Love is sincere. Love hates what is evil. Love clings to what is good.” After you write this examine these verses and ask yourself questions such as: What is the first quality of love? Am I loving if I am not zealous in my service to the Lord? Am I loving if I am not joyful in hope, patient in affliction and faithful in prayer? Go through the list you wrote and put your name in place of the word love. What areas are you the weakest in? Pray for God to show His power through your weaknesses and to cause you to grow in love. Your growth will be reflected and manifested in your relationships!! Don’t allow your love to grow cold - be among those who grow in love and are saved!!

TUESDAY

Read **1 Corinthians 13: 4-8**. Compare the list you made yesterday to this passage. As you read these verses put Jesus’ name in place of the word love. He fulfills each quality perfectly because He is love!! Now do the same with your own name. Repeat this exercise frequently as a spiritual workout!! Allow yourself to be transformed by the power of God and become more like him as you practice and become love.

WEDNESDAY

The Lord clearly teaches us what love is and that it is the fulfillment of all that God has commanded us (see **Romans 13**). He also teaches us how we can become stumbling blocks to one another when we don’t love. Today we will read **Romans 14**. Read carefully and ask yourself if you have been or are a stumbling block to those you have been called to love. If we act in a way which is destructive to a brother or sister are we acting in love (see v. 15)? Is it possible to destroy a brother or sister (for whom Christ died) through our own discouraging, unloving behavior according to this verse? What is the Kingdom of God all about in v. 17-18? In v. 19-21 what is required for great loving relationships (unity)? Read the vision list you wrote on Monday and pray for yourself that you may grow to fulfill love!!

THURSDAY

If you have offended someone and closed their spirit towards you (see **Proverbs 18:19**) how will you open it again? How can you open someone’s spirit once you have closed it? The Lord did not do anything wrong to any of us but we all had closed our spirits to Him at one time. He opened our spirits to Him again and rescued us with love (see **Titus 3:4-5**). Remember the qualities of love (i.e. patience, kindness and gentleness), these are the keys! Go once again to **Ephesians 4-5**. Chapter 4 and verse 31 lists the qualities which close the spirit, hurt, offend and destroy. What does v. 32 teach? What is the motivation for us? From chap. 5 v. 1-2 what is our calling? We are to live lives of love as Jesus did!! **Read 1 John 2:6 and 2 John 6**. Dwell on these and pray to God to shape you and mold you to become more and more like Jesus so you can walk as He did!!

FRIDAY

Read **Philippians 2:1-18**. The calling of the Lord’s church is to love and to be unified in spirit and purpose (v. 2). Jesus, the author of our faith is our example and He shows that to love is to sacrifice. But our tendency when we sacrifice or experience pain is to complain and argue. We have already learned how powerful our words are (whether it be to build others up or tear them down). How can we be different? How will our relationships be different from worldly ones? Verses 12-18 show us how we can become so different that we will shine like stars in the universe!! We will be more and more like Jesus if we become what we are reading here. What are the keys that you see in these passages. Practice these and teach them to others!!

INSIGHT

Many people believe that no book has had a more direct and powerful influence on American history than Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin". With its vivid descriptions of suffering and oppression, this book inflamed the people of the North against slavery, and thus became a force in bringing about the American Civil War. Harriet Beecher Stowe used what is called an *emotional word picture*. It was this form of communication that moved people to cry out against slavery in the 1800's.

An *emotional word picture* is a communication method that uses either a story or an object to help people to understand and feel what the other person is feeling. *Emotional word pictures* stimulate both the left brain (analytical) and the right brain (emotional) of men and women. For example, an American flag is an *emotional word picture*. It represents democracy and freedom and stirs up emotions of patriotism. The cross is another *emotional word picture* in that it reminds us of the One who suffered and died for our sins, motivating us to love!

Emotional word pictures are very effective when it comes to communicating thoughts and emotions! In 2 Samuel 12:1-13, God used an emotional word picture to get king David to realize how heinous his sin with Bathsheba was!

Christ used *emotional word pictures*. He often used physical object or stories to illustrate a point. For "*Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.*" (Mat 13:34). A parable is a short, simple story designed to communicate a spiritual truth, religious principle, or a moral lesson; a figure of speech in which truth is illustrated by a comparison or example drawn from everyday experiences.

Jesus' parables centered around the kingdom of God. Through emotional word pictures, Jesus taught the nature of the kingdom (Mark 4:26-29), the grace of the kingdom (Luke 18:9-17), and the conditions of the kingdom such as commitment (Luke 14:28-30), forgiveness (Matt. 18:23-35), and compassion (Luke 10:25-37). These *word pictures* sought to stimulate a decision and change a person's life...as they did us!

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Effective Communication

Key Text:

Proverbs 12:18

"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

Theme:

Wise communication will bring about good results. Through the use of *emotional word pictures*, you can get others to understand and feel what you are feeling. This is done using meaningful illustrations and stories. *Emotional word pictures* tend to get our attention, bring the thought communicated to light, motivate us to respond and lock the point into memory! It is an effective communication tool!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Decide what your purpose is.** What do you want to convey to this person? Do you want to give praise? Clarify something? Correct the person?
2. **Find out the persons interest.** In order to illustrate your point effectively, you should use an illustration that is meaningful to that person.
3. **Choose your object.** Use a story, an object, a past event or nature to communicate your point!
4. **Practice.** Practice what you're going to say and how you're going to say it! Pray for effectiveness!
5. **Meet with them at a convenient time.** Try to avoid the use of a mobile device. Communicate in person!
6. **Be persistent.** If one emotional word picture doesn't work, try another. Be persistent in activating the emotions!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Effective Communication

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers" James 2:8-9

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Last Week: Restoring A Weakened Relationship

1. **Detecting erosion:** Ingredients in a relationship:
 - a. *Spirit* (the inner person; who we are)
 - b. *Mind* (the emotions, the will)
 - c. *Body* (hormones, skin, etc.)
2. **Restoring relationships:**
 - a. Be gentle in your approach
 - b. Seek forgiveness, don't be judgmental.
 - c. Reason with them and reach out (physically too)
3. **Pursue peace:** Pursue Peace! (*Rom. 14:19*)
 - a. The kingdom is about peace (*Rom. 14:17*)
 - b. We have the ministry of reconciliation! (*2 Cor. 5:18*)

II. Building intimacy by sharing emotions...

A. How To Effectively Communicate...

1. Communication is the transference of information
2. It is also the transference of emotion
3. Must know what to say and *how* to say it. (*John 12:49*)
 - a. Validate the person's emotions.
 - b. Validate their actions. Give them the benefit of the doubt.
4. Jesus used **parables** to communicate effectively.
5. We can learn from Him and use Word Pictures.

B. Emotional Word Pictures

1. Definition
2. Function/usage
3. How to use one/create one.

Conclusion: How we communicate shows how much we love one another. Effective communication leads to *loving relationships*.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Do you have trouble communicating your emotions to your mate (or other people)? Why?

See To It

Proverbs 12:18

- 1- Give an example in your life how you have pierced someone with reckless words.
- 2- Give an example of how you have been pierced with reckless words.
- 3- How could you or the person speaking to you have approached the situation with a healing tongue? Try to come up with an emotional word picture that would have worked for you.

Seeing It Closer

John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:14

- 1- What is *the* major gateway to intimacy in relationships?
- 2- What causes major breakdowns in communication?
- 3- What can you do as a loving person to *restore* the lines of communication?
- 4- Does it take effort to communicate with an Emotional Word Picture? Why is it so imperative to persevere in this kind of communication? What happens if we give up after trying to communicate without success?
- 5- After reading *1 John 3:14*, what do you think John is referring to when he says we have *passed from death to life*?

Getting To It:

Relationships are special as they are different with each individual you know. Great care must be taken to ensure their growth. If you truly love someone you will seek to build a relationship with them based on communication. Like water is to a plant, communication is to a relationship. You know you have passed from death to life when you discover the joy of spiritual intimacy with your soul mate. If you have let God's Spirit teach you about humility and love, then make His joy complete in you by building loving relationships with each other. On your own read: *Phil. 2:1-3; 1 Sam 18:1-2 Sam 1:26 (David and Jonathan)*

MONDAY

This week we will be studying the use of *emotional word pictures* in the Bible. An *emotional word picture* is a communication method that uses either a story or an object to help people understand and feel what's being communicated. An example of an emotional word picture would be ***the cross***! Think of the cross! What does the cross personally mean to you? **Read Isaiah 53:5-6**. What was the deepest, darkest sin you've entertained prior to knowing the Lord? What did that sin do to the Servant of the Lord? Have you ever been pierced, punctured or cut by a sharp object? Describe, in detail, how it felt. Does this give you a better understanding of the Lord's pain? Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? Describe, in detail, how you felt. **Read Isaiah 53:5-6** again. Did the Man of ***the cross*** suffer for a crime He did not do? Who is to blame? Are you moved by this emotional word picture of the Suffering Messiah? Get down on your knees and thank God for His saving grace! Write *Isaiah 53:5-6* down on an index card and memorize it. Let the emotional word picture of ***the cross*** positively affect not only your life, but also your relationship with your family, friends, coworkers, strangers and yes, even your enemies!

TUESDAY

Read Luke 18:9-14. How do you feel about this Pharisee? Why? Describe your feelings towards the tax collector. Why do you feel this way about him? What is this *emotional word picture* teaching us? How does God feel when we dishonor (put less value on) others? What type of attitude must we possess? How does this attitude promote loving relationships with those around us? Does this *emotional word picture* help you understand (and feel) what God feels when we dishonor others? How did it help you? Have you been proud in heart? Have you been "looking down" on others? If so, humble yourself like the tax collector and pray to the Lord for mercy! The Lord will forgive you! Write *James 4:6* down on a card and memorize it. Call a brother or a sister today and tell them how much you love them! If you live with your family, tell them how much you love them!

WEDNESDAY

Read Matthew 18:21-35. Read verses 23-27: What is the equivalent of ten thousand talents in modern dollars? Is that a lot of money? Are you impressed by this king's actions in verses 26-27? Why? Who does this king represent? Read verses 29-31: Describe your feelings towards this servant beating up the fellow servant. Are you upset about this man? Why? Read verses 32-35. What happened to this merciless servant? What is this *emotional word picture* teaching you? How does God feel when you act out of anger and disrespect towards others? Who does the ten thousand talent debtor represent? Who does the one hundred denari debtor represent? How can this help you to be more forgiving? Write *Mark 11:25* down on an index card and memorize it! Have you hurt someone recently? Seek their forgiveness today! Have you been hurt recently? Seek reconciliation and be ready to forgive! In either case, use *emotional word pictures* to help communicate your thoughts and emotions! They are very effective! Pray for effectiveness!

THURSDAY

Hebrews 1:14 says we are encamped by ministering angels! This is very encouraging to know! This is one of many indications of the love God has for us! **Read Matthew 18:10-14**. What kind of devotion does this man have for his sheep? Does he have equal concern for each and every one or was his love partial? What would he do for one lost sheep? Who does this man represent? Who are the sheep? How does God feel about each one of us? How does this relate to you? What insight does this *emotional word picture* teach you? Do you show a genuine concern for God's people? Are you building a loving relationship with them or are you destroying the apple of God's eye? How do you respond to His sheep's needs? Write *John 13:34* down on an index card and memorize it! Be a relationship builder not a destroyer!!

FRIDAY

Read 2 Sam. 11:1-12:13. God was very effective in getting David to see his moral blindness. Of course, He used *emotional word pictures* to do it! Describe David's emotions towards the man who killed the poor man's ewe lamb. Why did he feel this way? Who was the rich man? How did David feel now? Effective, huh? Whether you are praising someone, clarifying an issue, expressing a desire for intimacy or correcting someone, use meaningful *emotional picture words* to express your thoughts! They are helpful in communicating your thoughts and feelings!

INSIGHT

If someone were to ask you, "What does it take to have a close-knit family or relationship?" What would you say? Research has shown that the common response to this question, by close knit families, was, "*We do a lot of things together.*" These same people were asked, "If you could pick one activity that you thought was the most important, what would it be?" Many of them said, "Camping". You may ask yourself what is so special about camping? Camping by itself does not make a relationship closer, it is what takes place when you go camping. That something is conflict. Camping is one activity that seldom goes smooth. Something is bound to go wrong: bad weather, spoiled food, insect bites, bad attitudes, getting lost, etc. But surprisingly enough, it is through these conflicts that friends and love ones are able to find a common bond and draw closer to one another. Think of the times you felt the closest to those whom you love? Wasn't it through a crisis? Or maybe you became good friends with a stranger simply because he or she took the time to lend a helping hand!

Shared crises solidify relationships within families, coworkers, friends and even strangers. Although suffering does not feel good at the time it is being experienced, it does have the power to establish close knit bonds!

The apostles shared both good and bad experiences together. They preached the word, fellowshiped with each other and suffered together for the sake of Christ. For, "*The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.*" (Acts 5:41). The apostle knew the secret of a closer relationship with God and each other: shared crisis. In this case, not only did they share a common crisis, they shared the sufferings of the Lord Jesus. They bore their suffering with an invincible cheerfulness. It was a shared crisis that motivated approximately three thousand souls to be converted to Christ in Acts 2. When Peter preached the message of the Gospel, those who were affected by the suffering of Christ were "*cut to the heart*" (Acts 2:37). They shared a common crisis: they (and us as well) were all guilty of the death of Christ and of sin. It was after the preaching of the gospel that the bonding began: As it is written, "*Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*" From that day forth, all the believers did everything together (Act 2:42-44). They preached God's word, fellowshiped with each other and comforted each other as they faced various kinds of trials for the sake of Christ!

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Closer Relationships

Key Text:

Romans 5:3-4

"Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope."

Theme:

Having a relationship with Jesus Christ brings us peace and reassurance of salvation. For the Scripture says, "*...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.*" (Rom. 5:1-2). However, we too rejoice in our sufferings for the sake of Christ. For by it, we grow in patience! Patience is a quality that can endure evil without being filled with resentment or revenge, two attributes that can destroy relationships. Patience will put up with a person's shortcomings, and wait long to see its kind effects! Such a quality builds strong and close relationships! Patience, a byproduct of suffering, brings us closer to God and to one another!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Fellowship!** You cannot build a relationship by being distant. Did not the God of heaven come down to earth to build a relationship with you? Is not the Spirit of God in you? Just as He is in you, you must also be in the fellowship of His children! It is through fellowship that we can get know one another and experience different things as a family!
2. **Be of assistance!** If you see anyone who is down or experiencing difficulties in their life, comfort them! Pray with them! Give them a call of encouragement! Build them up! Hug them! Reaffirm God's love for them! Show them that you care!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Closer Relationships

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers" James 2:8-9

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Last Week: Effective Communication

A. Emotional Word Pictures

1. They communicate thoughts and feelings (stimulate left and right brain)
2. Nathan used it with king David (2 Sam. 12:1-13)
3. Jesus used them to explain the kingdom --parables (Mat. 13:34)
4. Ordinary people used them --Harriet B. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin"

II. The Key To A Closer Relationship

A. Reminder: The Basis

1. Romans 12:9,10
 - a. Sincere love=hating what is evil
 - b. Honor (A person's soul is very valuable)
 - c. Know their needs (What does he/she need?)
 - d. Supply their needs (What must I do?)
--commitment, conversation
fellowship, physical provisions

B. Suffering: The Key To Closeness

1. Romans 5:1-4
 - a. Suffering is influential
--It builds patience
--It proves and improves (Gk. prove)
--Jesus, through suffering, brought us near to God, the Father (Isa. 53:5-6; 1 Pt. 2:21; Gal. 3:25)
2. Suffering can bring out the best in relationships
 - a. Personal experiences
 - b. Disastrous events (tornado, fire, etc.)

Conclusion: 2 Peter 1:5-11

1. Increase in the qualities of love
2. Welcome the things that help increase

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Describe a time in your life when you were shown the most support from your friends, family, etc. What did this situation do for you?

See To It

1 Thessalonians 1-3

- 1- From verses 2-6: List the particulars for which Paul, the Apostle, was so thankful to God on behalf of these brethren.
- 2- How did their faith in God show itself? Why was Paul encouraged by their faith?
- 3- How was life as a Christian like for these Thessalonians? Did life seem easy? What kind of impact did they make on others?
- 4- From chapters 2 and 3: How did their love for Paul show itself? How did their love for Timothy show itself?
- 5- What caused these people to have such a great and close relationship with Paul and Timothy? Explain.

Seeing It Closer

- 1- Explain each of the following: How is gold made pure? How is faith made pure? Are relationships strengthened through crises?
- 2- Have you experienced personal hardships as a Christian? Please share it with us. What key factors kept your faith from waning?
- 3- **Read Philippians 3:10.** Why did Paul want to know the sufferings of Christ? What benefits does that bring?

Getting To It:

Suffering for Jesus' sake strengthens our relationship with God! By the same token, our relationships are made stronger when we experience common trial and tribulations as a family! For by these experiences, our true devotion for one another is shown by what we do as opposed to what we say!

CLOSER RELATIONSHIPS

MONDAY

It has been said that shared crisis is a slow drying glue in a relationship. In the midst of the crisis the glue is being applied and afterward it begins to dry and bond together those who shared in the experience. This is a spiritual truth. Shared crisis or suffering bonds us to the Lord and to each other. **Read *Phillipians 3***. What was Paul's greatest desire? What do you learn about fellowship from verse 10? Can you really know Jesus without suffering? What was Paul's attitude toward sharing in Christ's sufferings? In verse 17, Paul challenges the church to imitate his attitude. Are you eager to be bonded closer to Jesus? Are you willing to share in His sufferings in order to do this? Write *Phillipians 3:10-11* on an index card and meditate on them. Pray to God to bless you with the right attitude and insight toward suffering and the privilege of being with Jesus!!

TUESDAY

Read *Acts 4*. What happened to Peter and John? Why? Take note of the response to suffering as you read verses 23-36. Where did they go immediately after their release from prison? What did this shared crisis do to those who were there? Notice how it drove them nearer to God as evidenced by their powerful prayer! What happened after that (see *verses 32-36*)? How does verse 32 describe the relationship of the believers who were suffering together? Do you see how beneficial suffering in Christ is? Think of examples of shared crisis in your life. What have the results of your suffering been? Read *Acts 5* and notice how the church continued to benefit and grow through suffering. Continue to pray that the Lord bless you with a pleasing attitude toward the suffering you endure. Know that God turns everything upside down and that situations that the world considers as only tragic the Lord turns into blessing for each of us!!

WEDNESDAY

In previous weeks we read about the relationship of Jonathan and David. Today we will look at it in light of the effect shared crisis had on it. **Read *1 Samuel 20***. Put yourself in Jonathan's shoes as you read verses 24-33. What crisis was he faced with? How would you feel if you were in Jonathan's position? What did he stand to gain if he obeyed his father Saul (see v.31)? What did he choose to do and why? What was the effect on David and Jonathan's relationship as they went through this? What verses clarify this for you? They had in common everything that matters in life: they had in common a wholehearted faith and devotion to the Lord!! You may be more familiar with the faith David showed in the Lord even as a boy. Read *1 Samuel 14* and see the faith that Jonathan had. Do you see what they shared? At the center of their relationship and every holy relationship is an awesome faith in the Lord God Almighty!!! What are your relationships based on? Pray to have great and holy relationships like David and Jonathan shared!!

THURSDAY

Read *1 Thessalonians in its entirety*. Pray that God will teach you and make you more loving as you read and apply what you learn in His Word!! As you read, consider the following: What was Paul's time with the Thessalonians like? Was it trouble free or filled with trouble? What kind of relationship did they have with the brethren? Was it a lukewarm relationship or an intense loving relationship? What verses give you this impression? How did they feel when they were apart (see *2:17-3:11*)? How did Paul develop the discipleship and love that he shared with the Thessalonians through their difficult times (see *2:6-12*)? Take a moment to look at Chapter 4 verse 9. Bear in mind how these disciples went through a lot of suffering together! What was it that God taught them through this? They had learned so much about suffering that Paul felt no need to write anymore about it; rather he encouraged them to do more of it! Now you can understand why the Thessalonians served as a model for all the believers!! Praise the Lord for the suffering you endure! Allow Him to make you more loving as a result of it! What a BLESSING!!

FRIDAY

With the right focus we can realize that our sufferings are a blessing. Shared crisis (the slow drying glue) bonds us to the Lord and to one another if we persevere (give the glue time to dry and bond us). If we do not have the right focus, then our sufferings produce all negative emotions within us which can destroy our relationships and break the bonds we share. Our brother Paul endured much suffering (see *2Cor.11:21ff*). Yet he learned the secret to "being content (happy) in any and every situation..." What was it that the Lord had taught him? How did he overcome the negative emotions that most commonly accompany suffering or crisis situations? Read *Phillipians 4* carefully. The keys to happiness are here!! If you are counting on people, places or things to make you happy you are heading for failure! In verse 9, Paul tells us how we can have the God of peace with us! What must we do? Happiness and peace are a byproduct (result) of what we do!! If we serve the Lord and one another we will find happiness!! Get down on your knees and thank the Lord for salvation! Also, ask Him not to remove the trials from your life, but rather, ask Him to see you through the trials; that you may gain a closer walk with Him and those around you! God bless you!

INSIGHT

Companies are finding it harder and harder to stay on top. Successful businesses are those that have learned the secret of serving: *meet the needs of your potential customers!* A successful business targets the needs of the community, then develop a top-quality product that will meet that need, and finally, service that product to make it available. Businesses link their success to an ability to target, meet and support their customers needs.

Just like a company that profits through its service, Christianity profits through servanthood! Jesus came to meet our needs (salvation); we, in turn, are called to meet the needs of those around us!

Jesus demonstrated how to be a profitable citizen in the kingdom of God by washing the feet of His disciples (*John 13:5*). Christ taught us that greatness does not come by being served, but rather, by serving (*Luke 22:26-27*). The key to happiness is found through serving and following Christ's example. For:

Servitude Elevates Life - "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all." (*Mark 10:43-44*)

Servitude Shows Neighborliness - "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (*Luke 10:36-37*)

Servitude is Christ Like - "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet." (*John 13:14*)

Servitude Demonstrates Love - "Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'" *John 21:16*

Servitude Lightens Life's Burdens - "...as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (*Gal 6:10*)

Therefore, be a servant. Meet the needs of those around you! By serving, you will know the joy of God!

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Overcoming Negative Emotions

Key Text:

Luke 22:27

"For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

Theme:

Happiness is achieved in the fulfillment of one's true purpose. We, in Christ, are called to be servants of the Lord Almighty and to serve Him wholeheartedly. A true servant of God is one who serves others. We are taught this in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:30-37*). Jesus calls us to be people who serve. Christ is called the "light of the world" (*John 8:12*) because He came to meet the needs of sinners like you and me! We, in turn, are called lights of the world (*Matt. 5:14*) because, just as Christ served us, we too ought to serve both the community of saints and sinners. For we are a ministry! A community of servants! And where there is service, there is joy in the Spirit!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Target.** Make yourself aware of the needs of others around you. Focus on a particular brother or sister that can use your help!
2. **Meet the need!** Be determined to meet the needs of those who are hurting! Make it your personal goal to to serve them! Your love for your brother, sister or any one else will be displayed by your action. If you truly love them you will become their servant.
3. **Be Supportive!** Be willing to put others before yourself, care for them, weep with them, laugh with them, pray with them! Remember, we are called to honor one another above ourselves! (*Rom. 12:10*)

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Overcoming Negative Emotions

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers" James 2:8-9

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Last Week: Key To Closer Relationship

A. Suffering (Romans 5:3-4)

1. Suffering is influential
 - a. It produces patience
 - b. It proves (integrity)
 - c. Christ's suffering brought us to God
2. Suffering brings out the best in people
 - a. It brings compassion and empathy (2 Cor. 1:3-7)
 - b. It brings closeness (builds compassion)

II. Overcoming Negative Emotions

A. Minister To The Needs Of Others!

1. Luke 22:26-27
 - a. Greatest person is a person who serves
 - b. Christians are called to ease others
 - c. This is the key to spiritual happiness

B. The Pursuit of Happiness: A worldwide goal

1. Reasons for unhappiness
 - a. We choose not to be happy
 - Circumstances don't make us this way
 - We must assume responsibility (Ja. 4:1)
 - b. We are all alike: Seeking happiness
 - c. Here is where we fall:
 - i. Like a light bulb we plug ourselves:
 1. Into people (husband, wife, children...)
 2. Into places (homes, cities, towns...)
 3. Into things (jobs, talents...)
2. Make serving your focus!
 - a. Happiness is a by-product of service
 - b. Service brings success
 - Seek to help, not happiness
 - Service will produce happiness

III. Conclusion: 1 Peter 2:16-17

1. Be servants of God
 - a. Honor (value) everyone!
 - b. Love unconditionally (agap )

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Share with us a time when you aided someone who was in desperate need of your help. How did that person feel after you helped them? How did that make you feel?

See To It

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

- 1- What does the word *compel* (NIV) or *constrain* mean? Why is the love of Christ compelling?
- 2- What does the love of Christ compel us to do?
- 3- Explain verse 15. What is Paul inferring here? What kind of life must we lead?
- 4- Read verse 16. What are some of the *worldly point of views* of Christ and Christianity in the 1990s? You may want to include some of your thoughts prior to your conversion. After meeting Christ, what is your view of Christ and Christianity now?
- 5- Read verse 18. What were we given? What does the word *ministry* mean?

Seeing It Closer

- 1- What must be every Christian's goal? Why?
- 2- What are people looking for? How can we promote the gospel in the lives of people?
- 3- **Read Matthew 5:14-16.** What seems to be the emphasis here? What should we be seeking?
- 4- How can we promote men to glorify God? What must we do in the midst of meeting their needs?

Getting To It:

Serving is the key to greatness. If we seek happiness in things that cannot satisfy (that is, any person, place or thing), we are bound to fail. Like the song says, "*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; I dare not trust the sweetest frame (person?), but wholly lean on Jesus' name!*" Is this true for you? Christ is our happiness! Christianity is Service!

THE KEYS TO HAPPINESS

MONDAY

It is stated in the Declaration of Independence that everyone of us has the right to the pursuit of happiness, but is happiness something we should pursue or chase after? The flesh says yes but what does the Spirit say? *1 Corinthians 10:23-24* reads “Everything is permissible - but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible - but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but rather the good of others.” Read the following passages and assemble a list of the things the Spirit of God teaches us to pursue which are beneficial to us. *Proverbs 21:21; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:22*. Do you see the word happiness in any of these passages? Could we gain happiness as a result of pursuing these things which the Spirit says to pursue? Read *Ecclesiastes 2:24-26*. Who does God give happiness to - those who please themselves or those who please Him? Serve Him and you will understand that happiness is not something you need to pursue, rather it is a result of your service!!

TUESDAY

Today’s quiet time will review what we began looking at last Friday. Read *Philippians 4:1-13*. Paul learned to be content (happy) whatever the circumstances. What were his circumstances when he wrote this letter (see *chapter 1*)? How do you think you would have felt in Paul’s circumstances? Would you have felt happy? What was the secret he learned? Notice in verse 9 the key to having peace (happiness) - What was this happiness a result of? Practice the things the Lord has taught you and you will experience the same peace as Paul!! “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are YES in Christ.” (*2 Cor. 1:21*)

WEDNESDAY

What did we chase after in the world to make us happy? People, places, and things. We thought, if only I had a better relationship - or any relationship! - I’d be happy. If only I lived somewhere better - I’d be happy. If only I had some nicer things - I’d be happy. If only, if only, if only! What does the Lord teach us about these things? First let’s look at what He says with regards to our tendency to put all our hope in each other- our tendency to look to people to make us happy. Read *Jeremiah 17:5-13*. What is our condition if we trust in man? If we depend on the flesh for our strength (and happiness)? Where does our trust and confidence belong? Do you look to people to make you happy? What condition are you in if you do - cursed or blessed? If you are unhappy you need to ask yourself why. Are you looking to someone, your wife or husband, your brother or sister to make you happy? If you are you can turn it around. Trust in God!! Serve your husband or wife, your brother or sister and you will feel the difference!! Don’t chase after happiness like the world does. It will come to you if you serve!!

THURSDAY

What is our lot if we look to things (material possessions) to make us content or happy? The world boasts about this notion with bumper stickers that read, “The one with the most toys in the end wins!” In Christ we add the word “nothing” to this phrase. Read *Luke 12:13-34*. What was the rich fool putting his hope in? According to *verse 19*, what was the source of his happiness? What is God’s response to this? What does the world run after (see *verses 29-36*)? What should we pursue? Do you see how happiness comes as a result of seeking and serving the Lord? Write *verse 15* on an index card and meditate on it. Praise God for the opportunity to have a happiness that is from above!! Serve and experience it!

FRIDAY

The word “blessed” means supremely blest, fortunate, well off, *happy*. How is this different from the world’s definition of happiness? Read *Matthew 5:1-12* and *Luke 6:20-36* and note what it takes to be blessed or truly spiritually happy. What are the requirements for blessedness as taught by the Lord? Go through each one and ask yourself if you fit the description for blessed. Which of the requirements are the most difficult for you? Pray that God will show His strength through your weaknesses. Understand that our calling is to follow Jesus!! He came to serve and so we are called to serve. When we truly follow, we will also truly experience a happiness that the world can never give or know. Blessed are you who live by the truth and who come into the light (*John 3:21*)!!

INSIGHT

Why do some people always take charge in a group while others don't? Why are some people naturally confrontational and bold while others aren't? Why are some people easier to talk to than others? Why are some people task-oriented while others tend to be people-oriented? It could be a matter of "personality" ...a natural inclination you are born with.

Jesus describes the members of the kingdom of heaven as different kinds of fish caught in a net. *"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish."* (Matthew 13:47) Inside of God's fishing net, there are different kinds of people (fish), each with his or her own unique personality. God has designed the kingdom of heaven to be a melting pot of personality types – each with its own strengths, designed to build up the church, which is Christ's body (Eph. 1:22-23). God has given each individual a talent! Our brother Paul says in Romans 12:6-8, *"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."* Whatever we have that is good, God has given it to us (Romans 12:3) and that which is useful to the church of God should not be buried, but instead, be put to practical use! Not all the members of the body of Christ have the same function (Romans 12:4), but each has his or her respective place and task! Some are called to one sort of work, while others are called to another sort of work. Each member has his or her own function that will be beneficial to the whole body and every other member of the body. Each member's personality trait helps us to become more well-rounded individuals. Each talent has the potential to instruct us and to bring us to maturity! A leader teaches us to lead while a servant teaches us to serve! We are called, as members of God's family, to do all the good we can one to another. Each of us are essential to the growth of the body! You are essential! Glorify God with your talents!

The Royal Law: Loving Relationships Appreciating Each Other's Differences

Key Text:

Matthew 13:47

"Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. "

Theme:

The kingdom of heaven is open to all who accept the message and get baptized (Acts 2:36-41). God does not show favoritism, but instead He invites all personality types into His church; each with their particular strengths and weaknesses. We, in Christ, are called to bead with one another. *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."* (Ephesians 4:2) By being humble and gentle we will make the opportunity for fellowship. And by this fellowship, we will be able to benefit from one another's positive attributes and strengthen one another's weaknesses!

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Honor.** We need to honor each other's talents and abilities. Recognize the strengths of that person and imitate those strengths!
2. **See yourself as a teacher** or a coach. If you are helping someone with their weakness, be helpful. Keep in mind that you are trying to help someone improve!
3. **Show you care!** Express your sincere concern about sharing ways the other person can boost his or her talents!
4. **Show how** the person will benefit from taking the actions you suggest!
5. **Be sure** you yourself can take correction, otherwise you may not be perceived as a credible source!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Valuing One Another's Differences

"If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right."
James 2:8

Practical Ways To A Loving Relationship

I. Last Week: Key To Happiness

1. Minister to the needs of others (*Lk. 22:26-27*)
2. Reasons for unhappiness
 - a. We choose not to be happy
 - b. We plus into things that fail

II. Appreciating Personality Differences

A. Recognize The Value!

1. *Romans 12:10*
 - a. honor (Gk. time=of high cost or worth)
 - b. Value is a result of knowledge

B. Four Types Of Personalities

1. The "L" Type (Lion)
 - a. Category: Fast paced task-oriented
 - b. Strengths: Courageous; Take charge; Get results; Confident
 - c. Weaknesses: Impatient; Pushy; Overly Persistent
2. The "O" Type (Otter)
 - a. Category: Fast paced people-oriented
 - b. Strengths: Enthusiastic; Well-liked; Optimistic; Emotional
 - c. Weaknesses: Disorganized; Not detailed oriented; Unrealistic
3. The "G" Type (Golden Retriever)
 - a. Category: Slow paced people-oriented
 - b. Strengths: Patient; Easy-going; Calming influence; Team player
 - c. Weaknesses: Indecisive; Too passive; Non-confrontational
4. The "B" Type (Beaver)
 - a. Category: Slow Paced Task-oriented
 - b. Strengths: Accurate; Practical; Conscientious; Organized
 - c. Weaknesses: Tend to be late; make one feel uncomfortable

III. Conclusion:

Draw from each other's strengths!
Honor each personality type!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Use a body part (kidneys, lungs, eyes, etc.) as an emotional word picture to describe your best personality trait. Explain why you chose that particular body part of organ.

See To It

Romans 12:3-8

- 1- What is the physical body made up of? Does each part have the same characteristic? Explain.
- 2- Are all the parts essential? Give an example of a body part that is different from the other parts, yet essential to the whole body.
- 3- What is the body of Christ? What is it made up of? Is each member essential? Explain.
- 4- List the personality traits mentioned in these passages. Use the following type: Lion=Take Charge Type; Otter=Inspirational Type; Golden Retriever=Sensitive Type; Beaver=Instructional Type
- 5- Why is variety in the body of Christ essential?

Seeing It Closer

- 1- Do we need the body of Christ? In what way do we benefit from the variety of personalities? Be specific.
- 2- According to the Scriptures, are you an essential part of the body? What is your greatest personality strength? How can this benefit the body of Christ?

Getting To It:

Each member of the physical body has its particular form, place and use. The smallest part is part of the whole body. In the Lord's Body, the Church, every member is significant: from the lowliest to the noblest. All His members are dear to Him and all were purchased with His blood. As we recognize the need of Christ in our lives, we, in turn, recognize the need of each other. Each individual member has the potential to offer the other members of His body goodness, strength, and encouragement through the gifts given by the Holy Spirit of God. You are vital!

APPRECIATING OUR DIFFERENCES

MONDAY

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” (Rev. 4:11) Our Father is our creator and there is no other like Him!! Look at His awesome power to create beautiful and wonderful varieties in all the kingdoms of life – the plant kingdom – the animal kingdom – and most importantly the Kingdom of His Son – the Church of Christ!! Read Matthew 13:47-52. What is the kingdom of God compared to? How does this apply to us? Read Matthew 4:18 and remind yourself of what God has called you to be. Next time you go fishing remember to throw out your net to catch all kinds of fish!! Share the gospel with any and every person you have opportunity to!!

TUESDAY

With yesterday’s lesson in mind, read Acts 10 and 11. What was the Lord revealing to Peter? Does it surprise you that Peter and the other disciples had to be taught this even though the Lord’s church had been in existence for some time? What did Paul realize through his experience with the Lord (see v. 34)? How about you? Do you show favoritism? Are you more likely to share the gospel with certain people than others? Do you pass up opportunities that the Lord provides for you because you are uncomfortable with some people? Imitate the Lord and let Him break down the barriers that hold us back at times!! Make a conscious effort this week to share the good news with someone you may otherwise have passed up. Remember that the kingdom is made up of all nations.

WEDNESDAY

If you read Galatians 2:11-16 Paul convicts Peter of showing favoritism after some men from James came to him. Remember what we read yesterday and what the Lord taught Peter. Read Acts 15 and you will see this was an ongoing process. What was Peter and James’ role in resolving the issue with the treatment of the Gentiles? What was the Lord teaching them? Now read James 2: 1-13. Isn’t it awesome how God worked in their lives shaping and molding them? What did James learn about favoritism? Remember that mercy triumphs over judgment!! If you have been showing favoritism and judging someone in an ungodly way, now is the time to turn it around! Show the mercy that God has shown you to someone else today!!

THURSDAY

Read Romans 12 with the previous lessons in mind. How should we think of ourselves? Why? What is the danger if we ignore this teaching? What are some of the gifts that God has given to us? What specific gifts has the Lord given to you? How are you using your gifts? Are any of these gifts more important than another? As you realize that the Lord has blessed each of us with particular gifts does it help you to understand why we should honor one another? How? Think of a brother or sister who you have not had enough contact with recently. What gift or gifts has the Lord blessed them with? Call them or visit and let them know how encouraged you are about the way the Lord has blessed them and is using them to do His will!!

FRIDAY

Read 1 Cor. 1:26-ff. Notice how Paul reminds the Corinthians of who they were when they were called? That’s you and me as well brothers and sisters!! This is sober judgment of who we are and yet we can boast. How can we boast? In whom should we boast? Read chapter 12:12-26 next and see how each of us fit into God’s plan. No one is more valuable or more important than anyone else!! Truly allow God to cause you to see this clearly because we know this is not true in the world. That is why Paul says what he says in his second letter to the Corinthians. Read 2Cor.5:16-ff. How have you been viewing one another? From a worldly or a godly point of view? What do you need to remember in order to have the right focus? Remember to also view yourself as the new creation that you are in Christ Jesus!! Praise Him and thank Him every day for newness of life!!

INSIGHT

Think of the most powerful enemy anyone could have: invisible, deceitful, unexpected, and capable of making you believe he's on your side. You would need some major weapons to fight this kind of enemy! Who is your enemy? Who wants to prevent you from building relationships that will edify, encourage, strengthen, spur you on, and build up your faith in Jesus? There are many people in the world that have given themselves already to this common enemy, that is, Satan, because they simply refuse to believe he exists. He already has them in his hand at this point! Even those of us who believe in the devil, who know he exists, can easily be deceived by his powerful temptations and unexpected assaults. The encouragement we receive from the Scriptures, however, holds us accountable to be aware of Satan's schemes:

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven--if there was anything to forgive--I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. 2 Cor 2:10-11

From what we are learning in the Scriptures, we know that sincere love has to be at the center of our relationships, especially between us and the Lord. Any attempt by you to undermine or threaten these relationships is a victory for the devil (**James 4:1-4**). He is a destroyer of relationships and represents the exact opposite of everything God teaches in the Bible.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:11-12

We just need to keep in mind that whatever struggle we have in this world is a struggle against the devil's schemes, not a struggle against your boss, your co-workers, your spouse, or even your brothers and sisters. Recognize who is in the midst of breaking relationships and who gives us the victory over any of Satan's schemes. It is also important to recognize that we cannot blame the devil for everything that goes wrong. The devil tempts us and entices us through our own evil desires:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. James 1:13-14

Therefore, you need to put your mind on heavenly things (**Heb. 3:1; Col 3:1-3**) and allow the Holy Spirit to *renew* your mind (**Rom. 12:1-3**).

Spiritual Warfare Satan's Master Strategy for Destruction

Key Text: **Ephesians 4:17-19**

"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."

Theme:

Spiritual warfare is a battle of the mind and of the heart. This is Satan's master plan of deception. This is the cycle he's going to try to catch you in. The results of it in this life are a mind filled with shame and guilt. If something is not done about the shame and guilt the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron. (*1 Tim 4:1,2*)

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Don't harden your heart:** (*Prov 28:14*) Blessed is the man who always fears the LORD, but he who hardens his heart falls into trouble.
2. **Don't be ignorant!** Don't think that because you know the Scriptures you are immune to Satan's schemes. Don't be futile in your thinking (thinking about vain things—unproductive). Be sure you are not lacking in God's Wisdom, which is pure and comes from the Scriptures. (*James 3:17*)
3. **Seek the fellowship!** Don't avoid your brothers and sisters! Seek their encouragement and their spurring on! Separation from fellowship is the first sign of being trapped by the Devil's scheme. (*Heb 10:23-27*)

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare

I. Last Week: Appreciating Differences

Romans 12:3-10

1. Each member has his/her function
2. Value the differences
 - a. Appreciate the good qualities
 - b. Strengthen whatever is lacking in our personality
3. Maturity comes when each others' good qualities are balanced in our lives

II. Satan's Master Plan of Destruction

A. The essence of Spiritual Warfare

1. *Ephesians 6:11-12*

- a. It is a battle of the heart and mind.
- b. It is falsehood vs. Truth.

B. The Artist of Deception

1. Satan is good at deception. He tries to catch you in his cycle of deception. (*Ephesians 4:17-19*):
 - a. Hardening of the heart
 - b. Ignorance
 - c. Darkening of understanding
 - d. Loss of sensitivity
 - e. Indulging in sensuality
2. The Devil cannot force you to fall into his trap. He tries to convince you. *2 Thess 2:10-12*
 - a. Don't buy his lies!
 - b. If you delight in his lies God will give them to you!
3. He appeals to your weakness. *James 1:13-15*
 - a. You are not immune
 - b. Don't give him a foothold!
 - c. Renew your mind (*Rom 12:1-3*)

III. Conclusion:

1. Don't be unaware of his schemes! Equip yourself with God's Word.
2. Seek out fellowship and encouragement from the brothers and sisters during troublesome times.
3. Pray fervently to persevere in the knowledge and wisdom of our Lord Jesus.

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Mention an area of weakness in your life. Share how you struggle to be accountable to God in that area.

See To It

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

- 1- How will Satan try to influence people? Is it going to be by presenting himself as a mean, ugly, red devil?
- 2- What kind of people are deceived by Satan's schemes? Why are these people in the condition they're in? (Look specifically at verse 10)
- 3- Does God give these people what they want? Explain.
- 4- What do you think got these people caught up in their delusion in the first place? Who were they really seeking?

Seeing It Closer

- 1- How has Satan tried to deceive you? Be specific.
- 2- What kind of sign, or wonder, or counterfeit miracle has he tried to pull on you?
- 3- How can you prevent from being caught up in a delusion that exists only in your mind?
- 4- What does this passage teach us about trusting in physical things as opposed to spiritual things?

Getting To It:

Satan knows that he will only be able to get us if he appeals to our senses. Jesus guards our hearts and minds (*Phil 4:7*) in His peace. Therefore, if you persevere in filling yourself up with the spiritual, with the things that come from above, from God; then you will be promoting maturity in the Spirit as opposed to fulfillment of the flesh. The thing that gets us is the reality of the desires of the flesh. They are real and they cry out! However, we must remember that discipleship involves crucifying these passions and desires (*Gal 5:24*) so that we let the Spirit cleanse us and renew our hearts and minds. Put on the armor of God! (*Eph 6:11-20*)

SATAN'S MASTER STRATEGY FOR DESTRUCTION

MONDAY

In order for us to be aware of the schemes of the devil we must realize that we live amidst spiritual beings. Many of them are unfriendly spirits (deceiving spirits and demons: *1 Tim 4:1-3*) and many more are ministering angels sent by God to protect us (*Heb 1:14*). Read *2 Kings 6:8-17*. How was the King of Israel finding out all the moves of the King of Aram? What did the King of Aram do when he found out what was going on? How did Elisha's servant react when he saw all that great army surrounding them? How did Elisha respond? Why was he able to respond this way? What did he see that others couldn't? Hezekiah, who also did many favorable things in the eyes of God, understood that he was always protected and surrounded by many more entities than his eyes could see. He encouraged the people who were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem with this in *2 Chronicles 32:7,8*. Are your eyes open to what's really going on around you? Are you praying that you may recognize who is in control and who you want to give the control to in your life? Write *Psalms 34:7-9* on an index card and memorize it. Call someone in the church and ask them whether they are "seeing" the Lord's hand at work in their life.

TUESDAY

How is your spiritual vision? How much do you dwell on the unseen battles that are occurring in your life? Are you just a spectator in your own battles? Do you cower before the temptations that come and just simply give in because you know of no other alternative? Do you shrink back from trying to make any progress in your relationship with God because you just don't know what to fight with or with who or what you are you fighting? Read *James 1:2-8*. What are you to rejoice in? What's so good about trials that we should rejoice in them? Is it possible that we could not be getting these great things from a trial? What then should we ask for (vs 6)? Do you think that perhaps you are not looking at some of your trials with spiritual wisdom (*James 3:17,18*)? Maybe you want to solve them on your own? Maybe you think that you can do it without any extra help?! Read *Ephesians 4:7-16*. What gifts does God give the church? Why did He give us these gifts? Because of these gifts, what things should not happen (vs. 14)? So then, *how* do we each do our part in the Body to help see the unseen? What do we help each other focus on?

WEDNESDAY

Satan's primary tool is deception. Read *2 Thess. 2:9-12*. How would you categorize the kinds of things Satan uses to deceive? What do these things appeal to? What do they satisfy? The essence of *spiritual warfare* is lies vs truth. Satan can't make you do anything so he will try to delude you into thinking something is good or truthful. He wages war to confuse your mind and capture your heart. Where does our delight need to be in? How do you teach yourself to delight in the Lord? (*Psalms 1*) Read *Gal 5:16-21*. It's all about what you spend your time on. What are you doing? What do you focus on most of the time? Your desires or the Law of the Lord? Where do you want to be? Write *Psalms 37:4-6* on an index card and memorize it. What happens when you make the Lord your hearts delight? Isn't that something???!!! Turn the tables on Satan!

THURSDAY

Once you know who you're fighting then you can prepare yourself for the attacks. Read *Ephesians 6:11-17*. How are you going to be able to stand (survive) the schemes of the devil? What kind of weapons and defense will you need? Can you fight the devil physically? Is that the way you've been fighting--battling against your spouse, your brethren, your boss, your co-workers and roommates?? Is it they who wage war on you? WHO IS IT?!! Notice in verses 11 and 13--who's responsibility is it to *put on* God's armor? Go through these verses and list each piece of the armor. Make a drawing of this armor (whether you're an artist or not) and point out each of the pieces of God's armor. On one of the margins of your paper list each piece of armor and *how* that piece will be effective in helping you stand firm. Rate how you are wearing each piece of armor. For example, in verse 15, how effective are you fitting your feet with the *readiness* of the gospel? What do feet have to do with readiness? What's the spiritual analogy here? From 1 to 10, how *ready* are you to "see to it" to these things? Rate the other pieces of armor and understand the analogies used by Paul to the spiritual armor. Hang up your work on a wall to remind you of *how* you are going to be prepared to stand against the devil.

FRIDAY

Read *Revelation 12:7-12*. Who was aging war in Heaven? Who is the dragon and his angels? Where were they thrown down to? What power has been given to those on Earth to fight this dragon? What's another name given to the devil in verse 10? How will you be able to overcome the devil? Why is a warning issued to you in verse 12? The Book of Revelation depicts the most amazing universal battle between Satan and his henchmen and the Lord God Almighty. The end of the story? Read *1 John 5:1-5*. Who is it that overcomes? How are you able to overcome the world (the devil)? Read *1 Cor 15:50-58*. Focus on verses 57 and 58. Who is our victory? Therefore, what is the encouragement? Doesn't this sound similar to the encouragement given in *Ephesians 6:11ff*? How will you be able to stand firm?

INSIGHT

Spiritual beings surround us. They are all over: some protecting and helping us, others attempting to deceive us and lead us astray. Sometimes angels allow themselves to be seen, but most of the time, if not all the time, those who see angels don't even know what they've seen!

There are good spiritual forces and bad ones, but all share the following:

1- They are not like people. Jesus, as the son of God is superior to any other being, but when He became a human, he accepted a position inferior to the angels (*Heb.2:7*). Angels and us are completely different beings (*Col 1:16; Psalm 148*).

2- They are not like God. Angels cannot do what God does. They are servant beings made by the most high God, and none of them was made His equal. They have limitations, though they aren't nearly as limited as we are. They are not omnipotent. God can do anything (*Jeremiah 32:27*). Jesus, along with the Father and Spirit, created everything (*Col 1:16; Gen 1:1-2*). Neither angels nor man have that power. They are not omnipresent. God is everywhere (*Psalm 139*). He isn't limited to a specific location or a specific point in time. Angels, on the other hand, like the angel Gabriel, left the presence of God to visit Zechariah (*Luke 1:19*). He couldn't be on Heaven and on Earth simultaneously. Angels can even be delayed in their journey to Earth to answer our prayers! (See *Daniel 10*) No angel has the power to transcend space and time like God can.

3- They cannot procreate. God gave humans the ability to procreate (*Gen 1:28*). Angels apparently don't have the ability to have "baby" angels. They were created when God, Jesus and the Spirit made them (*John 1:3; Col 1:16*). From what Jesus shared with a Sadducee about the next life in *Mark 12:25* and *Matt 22:30*, we get the idea that in Heaven there is no such thing as procreation. There is no marriage—no sexual union—no different sexes!

4- What angels look like. Angels apparently can appear to humans in any form they wish. Invisible, visible, disguised or in all their glory. One thing is consistent, though. When angels have appeared undisguised to people in the Bible, the experience has been somewhat terrifying for the human! (See *Daniel 10:7-11; Rev 1:10ff*) And these are the good spiritual forces!

The Hebrew writer (*Heb 13:2*) therefore encourages us with these words:

*Do not forget to **entertain** strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained **angels** without knowing it.*

Spiritual Warfare: Seeing the Unseen Forces at Work Against Us...

Key Text:

Ephesians 6:11-12

"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

Theme:

The battle we fight in this world is a battle against the power of Satan, who is the prince of this world (*1 John 5:19; John 14:30*). He has established authorities and dominions throughout the Earth to battle against us. He doesn't own the planet, but he controls a lot of the action in it. Particularly the actions designed to lead people away from God, to hurt people, and to hurt God. Our weapons against this sort of war have to be of the spiritual kind, for the fleshly ones hold no promise against evil.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. Don't rely on yourself! Satan is using any means necessary in his domain (this world) to try and deceive you. Always seek advice and involve yourself with the church.

2. Don't be ignorant! Don't think that because you know the Scriptures you are immune to Satan's schemes. Don't be futile in your thinking (thinking about vain things—unproductive). Be sure you are not lacking in God's Wisdom, which is pure and comes from the Scriptures. (*James 3:17*)

3. Remember God is on your side! Despite all the troubles you go through remember that nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus (*Rom 8:37-39*)! We are more than conquerors!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare: *Seeing the Unseen*

I. Last Week: Satan's master Plan

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Ephesians 6:11

1. It is a battle of the heart and of the mind.
2. It is deception vs. truth
3. Learn to delight in Heavenly things!

II. Forces at Work Against Us

A. The Devil is real and He's out to get you!

1. *Ezekiel 28:12-17*

- a. He was the most beautiful angel created.
- b. He was the captain of the angels.

B. His pride led him to his fall.

1. He apparently was very powerful; many other angels followed him. *Mat 25:41*
 - a. Hell was originally prepared for the Devil and his angels!
 - b. When Satan sinned he was cast down to Earth with his angels. *Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4*
2. Now he rules the world. *1 John 5:19*
 - a. He doesn't own it! *Psalms 24:1*
 - b. But he controls a lot of it. *Eph 6:11-12*
3. He also rules the air. *Eph 2:2*
 - a. The air is the atmosphere, the first heaven.
 - b. The third Heaven is God's realm. *2 Co 12:2f*

C. His angels do his bidding! *Eph 6:12*

1. There are angels assigned to different geographical areas. *Dan 10:12-13; 20-21*
2. They are the "eyes" and "ears" of Satan.
3. They carry out the work of the devil himself.

D. The power of the devil. This week's Quiet Times will focus on the particular powers the devil can use to deceive you and entice you. Don't miss them!

III. JESUS WILL RULE!!!

- A. Jesus is sovereign! *Mat 28:18*
- B. Everything will be subject to Him at a certain time. *1 Co 15:24-27*
- C. At present, we do not see everything subject to Jesus even though He has all authority. *Heb 2:8-9*
- D. And at present, even though you are exposed to the powers of this dark world, you are conquerors through Jesus! *Romans 8:37-39*

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Bring the drawing and analogies of the armor of God you drew up from last Thursday's Quiet Times. We will be using it for Wednesday's class.

See To It

Ephesians 6:11-18

- 1- What is the purpose of armor? Physically and Spiritually.
- 2- How did you describe what the *belt of truth* is? How is it an effective piece of armor? How did you rate on wearing your *belt of truth*?
- 3- How did you describe the *breastplate of righteousness*? How is it an effective piece of armor? How did you rate on wearing your *breastplate of righteousness*?
- 4- How does the *shield of faith* protect you? How do we wear this shield? How do you rate on this?
- 5- What is the *helmet of salvation* for? What is a helmet used for? How is salvation analogous to wearing a helmet?
- 6- What is the only *defensive* piece of armor described in this passage? What is it used for? Is it a dangerous piece (*Heb 4:12*)? Are you training to be able to use it well? Is there any other piece you can use for your defense?
- 7- How does a soldier communicate with his commanding general on the battle field? How do we communicate with our commanding general? How do you rate on this important part of your armor of God?

Getting To It:

Brothers and sisters, WE ARE IN A WAR! Would you venture into an active battlefield without your armor and defense weapon? Would you venture into enemy territory without the skills to fight the enemy with your weapon? Would you dare not to take a communication device with you to keep in touch with your commanding officer? He will help you by alerting you to the schemes of the enemy and guiding you safely home!

FORCES AT WORK AGAINST US...

MONDAY

"The devil controls the world, has power in the world, and is using that power effectively. He and his angels use weapons of deception and delusion to manipulate. And they don't exist only in theory or theological treatise; they exist in fact. Even if you have accepted the fact that Satan really exists, you are unequipped for spiritual combat if you think him practically powerless. Just how much power does he have? Are any limitations placed on him?" —Joe Beam, *Seeing the Unseen*. We will examine these questions this week. Perhaps a good place to start is by examining what happened to Job, since this is a popular reference point. Read **Job 1:6-12**. How is Satan described in verse 6? Is he omnipresent according to verse 7? Why do you think God asks Satan where he has been? Does Satan have to report to God? Does Satan know God's mind? Does he know everything (omniscient)? Does God know Satan's mind? Consider verses 9-11. Who else is Satan accusing? What limitations does he have (vs. 12)? Can he do anything he wants even though he disobeys the Lord? What do you think God's purpose is in letting Satan test Job? Write **Romans 8:28** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

In your notebook, look at the following verses and write down the *verbs* associated with Satan's doings. **1 Chron 21:1 * Luke 13:16 * John 13:2 * John 13:27 * Acts 5:3 * 2 Co 4:4 * Eph 2:2 * 2 Tim 2:26**. What do these verses show about Satan's powers and abilities? What can Satan do to you? Has he been able to do any of these things to you? Will he be able to do any of these things to you? Now look at **Job 1:13-19**. How did the devil operate in Job's life to test him? Add these actions done by Satan to your list of verbs associated with Satan's doings. So, is Satan only limited to doing things that will deceive your heart and mind? How did he discourage Job? Read the following verses: **Heb 11:37 * Mat 14:10 * Acts 12:2 * Mat 24:9 * Job 2:7**. What were some of the tools Satan and his angels have used to persecute and try to destroy God's people? Can Satan and his cohorts do these things without any outward miracle taking place? Write **1 Co 10:13** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

Do you know any person well enough to manipulate him or her? Do you know how to arrange circumstances or situations that will ensure a probable course of behavior? If a human can do it, how effective do you think an angel can be? Do you think they could *make* you do something, or simply *entice* you and *convince* you to do it? What's the difference? Can we blame our mistakes on them or are we responsible for our own decisions and actions? Consider the following passage: **1 Tim 4:1-2**. What kind of people does Satan and his angels look for to do their work? What kind of things do these people do to spread the work of the devil? Do you think it is possible for these people to come to their senses after being taken captive by the devil? What must be done to accomplish this? (Read **2 Tim 2:25-26**) What is the antidote to the devil's poison? If Satan can manipulate nature and people to accomplish his will, do you think he can manipulate governments, cultures, and politics to do the same? Perfect case study.... THE CRUCIFIXION!!! Isn't that why Jesus said what he said in **Luke 23:34**?

THURSDAY

As you can see, Satan is capable and able to do many things you probably weren't aware of. But isn't that sly of him? The least we know about him and his schemes, the better he can delude you. I'm sure that even after we finish these studies, he's going to be mad and he's going to get bad with the Long Island Church of Christ and any other church that continues to seek the face of the Lord. Just remember that he also has plenty of limitations and even more so if you seek to put on the armor of God. We mustn't be ignorant of the devil's position because those who have chosen to be ignorant of the devil's power will also perish. Read on to find out why: **2 Peter 2:10-12**. What do these people despise? How are these people characterized? What do they slander? Do angels have more sense than these people? What will be the outcome of these people? Do you think Satan is included among the beings we must not disrespect or slander? Read on: **Jude 8-10**. Is this passage talking about the same kind of people Peter was talking about? What must your attitude be then concerning angels and even the devil? What must your reaction to the devil's schemes be? Write **Mat 16:23** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Satan not only uses people, he helps them do what he wants. Satan can empower the people he uses to accomplish his will. Read **John 13:27**. Do you think Satan entered Judas by force? Did Jesus know what had happened? What was the devil trying to do as he empowered Judas? Why use one of Jesus' disciples? Read **1 Chron 21:1-4**. How did Satan influence David to bring punishment on Israel? What was Satan able to use from David's position or personality to accomplish his task? Did David finally realize what he had done (vs. 8)? What does Satan use to empower us? → **1 John 2:16**. What happens if you feed on your selfish desires as opposed to filling yourself with God's Spirit? See **Romans 8:6-17**. Remember, it's a battle fought in your mind and in your spirit!

INSIGHT

Although the Holy Spirit God gives those who have been baptized for the forgiveness of sins is technically not a force within us, it is encouraging to know, in light of last weeks study, that He is the greatest force at work in any human being.

Your relationship with God, as far as He is concerned, is secure:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Rom 8:38-39

And this love God has for us is in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit God gives us when we decide to be born-again:

"And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Rom 5:5

There is no evil spirit strong enough to drive God's Spirit away from you. Christians are protected by His Spirit from demon possession and empowerment of Satan. However, that doesn't guarantee that no matter what we do we will be offered this kind of protection.

It is possible for a Christian to grieve the Holy Spirit and even cause Him to leave you!

Consider these two passages: ***Ephesians 4:30-32*** speaks of the Holy Spirit as a Person that may be grieved by the behavior of Christians. This state is always especially unfortunate since the Holy Spirit is the One who seals believers "for the day of redemption."

1 Sam 16:13-23; 18:10-11 tells of how Saul, King of Israel, was tormented by an evil spirit after the Spirit of God left him. This evil spirit even caused him to try and kill David.

Spiritual Warfare: Seeing the Unseen Forces at Work Within Us...

Key Text:

James 1:13-15

"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

Theme:

This passage illustrates the temptation process used by Satan. God doesn't tempt anyone, you are tempted when you are dragged away and enticed (lured) by *your own evil desires*. Satan deceives you through these *cravings* and fools you into thinking you will be satisfied (Prov 13:4). This temptation process fits directly into the template of Ephesians 4:18-19. Temptation is part of the devil's strategy. It starts outside before it gets inside us. The temptation in the Garden of Eden illustrates this process very clearly.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Check the focus of your desire.** What actions will this desire lead me to? What will I do if I let this consume me? Are the actions right or wrong? It is a wise and honest man who see where his desires are taking him, but it is a spiritual man who will change the path!
2. **Check the strength of your craving.** Would I get past any obstacles from God to satisfy my craving? Are wise and godly people counseling me against this action? Am I avoiding spiritual events or people? Pray for wisdom *and* seek the counsel of people who are spiritually mature (Prov 12:15)
3. **Examine the possible consequences of your desire!** Who will be affected if I fulfill this craving? How will they be affected? What spiritual or biblical justification do I have for bringing this consequence into their lives? What will be the consequences in my own life?

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare: *Seeing the Unseen*

I. Forces at Work Against Us

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Ephesians 6:11

1. The devil is real and powerful!
2. He rules the world.
3. He tries to entice you though your own desires!
4. Jesus has ALL authority!

II. Forces at Work Within Us

A. Your desires are used against you.

1. *James 1:13-15*
2. Some desires pretend to be good!
3. Satan baits the trap and hooks you on!

B. The deception of emotions. (*Rom 8:5,6*)

1. The Pleasure Principle
2. When you think you stand...
3. The Pleasure Principle Process

C. Satan uses pain against you.

1. Satan used pain against Job.
2. Pain can make you angry against God...
3. Pain weakens the faith
4. The flaming arrows of the evil one...

D. Satan even uses religion against you!

1. Hypocrisy, gossip and innuendoes...
2. Self-righteousness...
3. Idolatry...worshipping anything except God.

E. Satan uses families against themselves.

1. Family conflicts...
2. Professional "helpers"???
3. When religion "gets in the way" ...

III. JESUS WILL RULE!!!

- A. He will not allow Satan to tempt you beyond what you can bear *1 Co 10:13*.
- B. He has saved you from your body of sin!
Rom 7:24-25

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Have you ever really wanted to do something you knew was wrong? Would you like to share it with the group?

See To It

Romans 6:12-14

- 1- How do you let sin reign in your body?
- 2- What kind of instrument do you become by acting upon the desires of your body?
- 3- What does grace vs. law have to do with sin being master over us?
- 4- Carefully apply the suggestions given on page 1 to your desires! Go over some of these personal questions.

Seeing It Closer:

Galatians 5:16-18; 24-26

- 1- Where is the spiritual battle fought? Name the opposing sides involved.
- 2- Why is Law mentioned again in verse 18? How is Law involved in all this business?
- 3- How does Jesus teach us to deal with the passions of the flesh? Doesn't the word *crucify* bring about a good word picture of how we need to deal with the problem?
- 4- What are some outward sign of following our desires rather than the Spirit? (vs 19-21 and vs 26)

Getting To It:

"Among them we too all formerly lived in the **lusts** of our flesh, **indulging the desires** of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His **great love** with which He loved us, *even when we were dead in our transgressions*, made us **alive** together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the *heavenly places*, in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the **surpassing riches** of His **grace** in *kindness toward us in Christ Jesus*."

Eph 2:3-7

FORCES AT WORK WITHIN US...

MONDAY

Remember how we studied Satan's Master Plan two weeks ago? Now we are going to look at a Scriptures that detail the temptation process. Read **James 1:13-15**. Does this passage assume that everyone is tempted? Where does the temptation come from? What or who drags you away and entices you? Look up *entice* in a good dictionary. Does this word imply that temptation is a process that begins outside ourselves? Who sets the trap, the lure, to involve our fleshly desires and arouse passions? When is sin conceived (done)? So, to which point does Satan want to take you? Check out **1 Co 10:13**. Are you alone in your temptations? How does God prove His faithfulness toward you? Is He in control or what?! How do you see this passage applied in Job's story? (Read **Job 1-2:13**). Does God *always* provide a way out of your temptation? Write **1 Peter 1:14-15** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

Satan craftily uses our emotions to darken our understanding. Emotions are so real and palpable that they are hard to ignore when present. If you get back to Satan's master plan in **Ephesians 4:18-19**, you can see how Satan's goal is to get your passions (emotions) flowing. What does he try to darken? What are they ignorant of? What, then, do they go by? How does this relate to **Prov 12:16**? How does the fool show his annoyance? What kind of temptations come to a person through logical, intellectual thinking or reasoning? What kind of temptations come to you through your feelings, especially when those feelings (emotions) have the strength to overpower your reasoning? Are you more frequently driven by intellect or by emotions? Read **Hebrews 11:25**. Who is this passage talking about? What does this passage say about that person? Was this person satisfying the sinful nature? What does this passage say about sin? Can pleasurable things be good and bad? What makes the difference? Can something be bad even if it feels so good? Can you trust your emotions? Write **Jeremiah 17:9** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

Let's get back to Job to take another look at how Satan uses another of our weaknesses against us. Check out **Job 1-2:13** again. What was Satan trying to incite in Job when he challenged God in 1:11? What was Job's response in 1:22? Did Satan quit just because Job didn't fall into the trap (2:7)? Again, how did Job respond (2:10)? If you were Job, what would you have thought when all those bad things happened? Would you have questioned why God let them occur? Would you have been angry with Him? Let's look at an incident in Jesus' time that reveals how God responds to our pain and anger. Read **John 11:11-35**. Did Jesus' disciples understand what He was about to do (12-15)? Even though these men struggled with their feelings about Jesus, do you think Jesus continued to believe in them? Were Mary and Martha upset at Jesus' delay (21, 32)? Do you think both sisters were deeply hurt about their brother's death and Jesus' delay? Do you think their hearts were filled with pain? How do you react towards your loved ones when they have caused pain in your heart? What did all this commotion cause in Jesus (33)? Think about what he was seeing around Him: hurt, disbelief, doubt, anger, pain. Was He weeping in vs 35 because of Lazarus' death or because He was Himself feeling the pain and taking on the burden of this pain in His heart? How do you think God reacts when you are angry at Him, or doubtful or unyielding? Write **Romans 8:26-27** on a big piece of paper this time, and stick it on your wall, maybe next to your bed. When you pray at night and read this passage you will be assured that your Lord knows what's on your mind and in your heart!

THURSDAY

One of the most powerful tools Satan and his armies have conjured up to render God's people ineffective is aberrated religious convictions. Between hypocrisy, fratricide and self righteousness (look up these words in a good dictionary) Satan and his henchangels confuse and render useless many of Christ's soldiers. We all are familiar with the Pharisees and how Jesus treated them (**Mark 7:6**). He Didn't hesitate to chastise them in public so that other would beware of this self-deluding sin. During Job's intense suffering and anguish three of his friends came over to comfort him in **Job 2:11-13**. If you continue reading through the *end of the book*, you will realize what these "friends" were really doing. Instead of comfort they brought accusation because of their narrow-mindedness. I'll let you figure out how Satan used these good-hearted men, who had good intentions and were not hypocrites, to commit spiritual fratricide. What about the church "cops"? The "pious" self-righteous who do not need a doctor? Read **Luke 18:11-14** to see who is really justified and by Whom he is justified! The faith of the self-righteous is the weakest of them all because he refuses to be healed by confession → **James 5:16**.

FRIDAY

The family was the first institution established by the Lord God (**Gen 2:23-24**). From our studies in the *Heart of God Series*, we clearly see that the fifth commandment is a transitional command. The first four deal with God's relationship with His covenant people and the next six focus on the dealings between the people of the covenant community. The root of the dealings with the community are established by the conviction of this fifth commandment. Those who regard their family relations with honor will pass this honor and respect to future generations and appropriately defer their honor to God above all. In families where disrespect and folly reign, probably the first four commands were held with loose convictions and the rest of them will also be held loosely as well. Read **1 Tim 5:4,8**. How is what we believe put into practice? What is pleasing to God? What can you become if you don't provide for your family? Look up provide in a dictionary and make a list of how Satan can use you or has used you to not *provide* for your family. If Satan succeeds in breaking the spiritual strength that can exist in a believing family to wreak havoc and confusion in the saved, imagine how much more he can do to those families that are not with God!

INSIGHT

Spiritual Warfare: Seeing the Unseen Forces at Work For Us...

Why does God let Satan hurt us? This question is similar to the ageless questions: Why do bad things happen to good people? Or Why does God allow humans to suffer?

"The only way anyone—even God—could explain the problem of human suffering to your complete satisfaction would be if *you* possessed divine knowledge, wisdom, and power. When Job questioned God about the harm in his life, God replied by pointing out Job's lack of divine knowledge. He made it clear that if He explained why He let Satan attack him, Job wouldn't be able to understand it." —Joe Beam, *Seeing the Unseen*

"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone—while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

Job 38:2-7

Job realized that he could only trust in God and believe that He had Job's best interest in mind:

The Lord Challenges Job

In the face of God's fearful challenge, Job could only humble himself.

God's Challenge	Job's Response
First, Job's ignorance (38:1-40:2) • He was absent at creation • He cannot explain the forces of nature	Job admits his ignorance and becomes silent (40:3-5)
Second, Job's frailty (40:6-41:34) • He cannot overrule God's ways • He cannot control the forces of nature	Job confesses his presumption and repents (42:2-6)

How do you respond to the challenges that God brings about in your life? Do you let Satan stop you from thanking God? Do you doubt the love of God? Do you get angry at God?

Why don't we begin to develop spiritual foresight and learn to see God's love for us in everything that happens around us?
See God with your headlights AND your taillights!

Key Text:

1 Peter 1:3-9

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

Theme:

The Lord God allows Satan and his evil forces to attack us because growth comes as a result of trials. He never lets them defeat us, but He permits them to cause us grief. Peter uses the refinement of gold as a word picture to illustrate to us this process of growth through trial. The kind of growth that emerges through trial and suffering is a spiritual growth; a growth that comes by having your faith proved genuine because of your trust and reliance upon God throughout difficult times.

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

- 1. Don't let trials embitter you.** Satan's desire is to paralyze your growth in Christ. Use trials and difficult times as stepping stones toward spiritual growth and maturity, not as stumbling stones!
- 2. Don't be hardened.** Listen to the voice of the Spirit through your older brothers and sisters. Don't give in to the flesh! It doesn't like trials! ***Remain pliable in your heart!***
- 3. Become better!** Let the Holy Spirit mold you and renew you in thought, attitude and strength. You have the victory!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare: *Seeing the Unseen*

I. Forces at Work Within Us

"...but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed." *James 1:14*

1. Your desires are used against you.
2. Your emotions are used to *deceive* you.
3. He uses pain and suffering to *weaken* you.
4. He tries to *confuse* your convictions.
5. He uses your family against you.

II. Forces at Work For Us

A. The Goal: Purification of your Faith.

1. *1 Peter 1:3-9*
2. Impurities need to be burned away!
3. The Goldsmith wants His gold to reflect Him!
4. The gold needs to be malleable.
5. The gold needs to become strong.
6. He does not allow the fire to get too hot.
1 Co 10:13
7. He doesn't allow the heat to be on too long or the cooling process to happen too fast. He will *gradually* restore you.
1 Peter 5:10

B. The Cross defeated the Devil.

1. Satan was unaware of God's plan. *1Co 2:7-8*
2. Jesus suffered separation in *our* place!
3. His blood was shed for our sins.
4. If we die with Him, we too shall be raised to life!
5. He has made a public spectacle of Satan's force.
Col 2:14-15

C. The Power at work within us. *The Holy Spirit*

1. *Ephesians 3:20*
2. He lives in us. *Rom 8:9*
3. He leads us. *Rom 8:13-14; 1 John 4:1*
4. He represents us. *1 Co 2:9-16; Rom 8:26-27*
5. He strengthens us. *Ephe 3:16-17*

D. Angels minister to us. *Hebrews 1:14*

E. We are here for each other.

1. He comforts us in our trials so we can comfort others.
2 Co 1:3-4
2. We pray for each other and confess to each other.
James 5:13-16

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Read *1 John 4:1* and think about the answer to the following question: *How do you learn to listen to the Spirit of God?*

See To It

Joshua 1:7-9

- 1- Who is this speaking? To who is he speaking?
- 2- How were they going to find success? (*Three things...*)
- 3- How many times does he command them to be strong and courageous? Why?
- 4- How would they know whether God was with them or not?
- 5- How would they be able to test whether something was from God or not?

Seeing It Closer:

Hebrews 5:12-14

- 1- What was Paul's rebuke to the *Hebrews*?
- 2- What does he call the *elementary truths of God's Word*?
- 3- Does a young Christian live on milk or on solid food?
- 4- Is a young Christian acquainted with the teaching about righteousness? Is a young Christian well trained to listen to the Spirit of God?
- 5- What is *solid food*? How is a mature Christian trained to listen to the Spirit of God?

Getting To It:

"Oh, how I *love* your law! I *meditate* on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for *they are ever with me*. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I *meditate* on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I *obey* your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might *obey* your word. I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me. How *sweet* are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Psalm 119:97-103

FORCES AT WORK FOR US...

MONDAY

By the end of the week, you will be rejoicing in your spirit, knowing all that God has and is giving you to protect you from harm. He teaches you, through His Holy Spirit, how to turn Satan's flaming arrows into stepping stones towards spiritual maturity. Read **1 Peter 1:3-9**. How is God's power able to shield you? Notice; you are to **rejoice despite** what? How is your faith proved genuine? Would you be filled with inexpressible joy if your faith were not tested? Read **1 Co 10:13**. Do you sometimes feel as if your temptations are unique? That nobody understands the kinds of emotions you're going through? What does this passage say about that? How does God show His faithfulness? Check out **1 Pe 5:10**. Is it necessary for you to suffer? Why? Isn't it great that God doesn't even allow us to suffer for too long?! What happens after you've suffered? Write **2 Co 1:5** on an index card and memorize it.

TUESDAY

Check out **Col 2:9-15**. This passage is packed with hope and victory for us. Verses 9 and 10 speak about the fullness of Christ. What is this fullness, mentioned in verse 10, that has been given to us? How is this reassuring to you? Make a list of the work done by God on your behalf in vs. 11-15. Is there anything at all left for you to do to receive all these blessings? (Two things [see **Mark 16:16**]) Can any of this that *has* happened be credited to us? Are we saved by His incredible grace or what?! Many believe that baptism is a work of man, and therefore not necessary for salvation. What does the verse really say? Why was the written code against you? How did Jesus disarm the power of the devil? How do you think the devil uses the Law against us? (**1 Co 15:56**). Do you think the devil had any idea of how God was going to use the cross? If he did, what would the devil had done? Write **1 Co 15:57** on an index card and memorize it.

WEDNESDAY

How do you test to see whether or not the Holy Spirit is in you? How do you know if God's power is at work within you? See **Ephesians 3:20**. Carefully read **2 Co 13:5**. Why should you examine yourself? Do you think this passage is intended to cause you doubt? What should be your conclusion after examining yourself? How would you know if you fail? How do you know if it is indeed Jesus who is in you? Read **Rom 8:5-17** to find out! How do you let the Spirit control you? If you are not controlled by the Spirit of God, who or what controls you? If you can hear the Spirit within you, What does the Spirit cry out along with you? If your sonship is made possible through Jesus, what is your inheritance? Check out **Ephe 3:16-20**. How does God provide spiritual strength for you? How is Jesus able to dwell in your heart? What must you be rooted in to have the *power* to grasp Jesus' love for you? How can you be filled with the measure of all the *fullness* of God? Isn't this amazing?! If you indeed realize all these blessings because your eyes have been opened and your heart is soft, isn't it because you are yielding to God's Spirit? What should you do if you don't realize these things and you notice your heart hardening?

THURSDAY

Angels are also forces at work for us. Perhaps the most detailed passage about angels is the comparison between Jesus and angels in **Hebrews 1-2:9**. Draw up a contrast between Jesus and angels. Where do we, as humans, fit in? What do angels have to do with us? Would you feel safer with an angel watching over you, or the Holy Spirit being within you? What's the difference between angels and the Holy Spirit? Would Satan have a tougher time fighting an angel or the Holy Spirit? I'm bringing up these questions just to let you know that, if you are a Christian, you have the best protection afforded to anyone on Earth. Although angels do serve us and minister to us, God chooses to manifest most of His work today through the Holy Spirit He has given us. Write **Rom 5:5** on an index card and memorize it.

FRIDAY

Perhaps the most visible, reassuring and palpable force at work for us is the body of Christ. God's love, His word and His Spirit work *through* us, in the body, to encourage, uplift and spur each other on toward love and good deeds. It is a shame when we don't humble ourselves to each other, in recognition of the fact that God works through all of us. It is no wonder that the Bible reminds us of this fact in **1 John 4:12-16**. How do we know if God is living in us? How does God show His love for us through each other? Write **1 Co. 3:16** on an index card and memorize it.

INSIGHT

Jesus Christ made a public spectacle of Satan's forces the day He died for our sins! For Christ won the battle for our souls by removing our sins and our slavery to Satan! This is the encouragement we have as baptized believers! Colossians 2:11-15 says: *"In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."* As we end the year, let us rejoice in salvation! For Christ's death has given us eternal life, forgiveness of sins, freedom from the condemnation of the written code, and victory over the evil forces of Satan! Christ redeemed us from Satan's evil grip! The dark spiritual powers and authorities were conquered and disarmed by the dying Redeemer, who is to be praised and blessed forever and ever! Amen!!! Never has the devil's kingdom suffered such a mortal blow the day Jesus was crucified! Truly did Satan bruised His heel; but Christ has crushed his head! (*Gen. 3:15*) God used Satan against himself! For Satan thought he won the victory; but instead, he lost!!! If Satan and his evil battalion had known that Jesus' death was to bring victory to the lost, he would've protected Jesus, keeping Him from dying for our sins! For, as it is written in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, *"...we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."* If God had come to destroy the earth and the heavens around us and cast Satan into hell before Jesus had freed us from the bondage of sin, we would've all gone to hell with Satan and his demons! God Himself would've been forced to send us there since His law would've demanded it! (*Eze. 18:4*) But thanks be to God for giving us victory: our faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior! By fighting the battle Satan himself didn't understand, God released from the forces that work against us! Jesus didn't come to take the world from Satan; He came to take us from Satan's world! Hallelujah!

Spiritual Warfare: Seeing the Unseen Faith Is Our Victory!

Key Text:

1 John 5:3-5

"This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!"

Theme:

Faith believes that God keeps His word, rewarding those who are His! Faith is trusting God in all situations! *"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see"* (Heb. 11:1) and that victorious *faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ* (Romans 10:17). Christians believe in something they cannot see because they believe the message of the One who tells them it is there! The word of the Lord is good, trustworthy, and credible. If God says something is true, we can be absolutely certain of it—even when we can't see it! If you can see it, then you don't need faith; but as it is, *we live by faith, not by sight* (2 Corinthians 5:7). Do you have faith in Christ? Do you place all trust in Him? Do you believe that He has victory over Satan? Do you have victory over Satan through Christ your Lord?

Application:

Here are some practical suggestions:

1. **Love the law of God!** God's law is holy and just! A good understanding of God's nature and will can be found through His Word.
2. **Obey it with rejoicing!** Half-heartedness cannot lead to spiritual sensitivity! Be opened to hearing and submitting to God's will with gladness of heart!
3. **Hide it in your heart!** Memorizing the Word of God makes it available for study or meditation, anytime! It helps us resist temptation (Mt. 4:4,6,10)!
4. **Understand what it means!** Misunderstood Scripture becomes ammunition for the evil ones. Learn not to misapply Scripture, but learn and understand God's Word and apply the Word appropriately!

May the Lord richly bless you!

SERMON OUTLINE

Spiritual Warfare: *Seeing the Unseen*

I. Last Week: Faith: *Idea or Master?*

1 Peter 1:3-9

1. Our trials help us to grow, change or learn!
2. God does not allow the demons to defeat us!
3. Faith is refined as gold

II. Forces at Work For Us

A. Satan: The Defeated One

Colossians 2:14-15

1. Jesus won the battle for our souls when He died!
2. He removed our sin and slavery to Satan!
3. He triumphed over Satan's host through the cross!

B. God's Plan Hidden From Satan

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

1. If Satan had known God's plan:
 - a. He wouldn't have killed Jesus
 - b. He would've protected Christ, preventing Him from fulfilling the Law for us!
 - c. But we have the victory through Christ!
 - d. God fought the battle Satan himself didn't understand!

C. The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

1. What shall I do?
 - a. The Holy Spirit's Call: *Acts 2:38*
--Obedience to the Gospel:
Sin leaves; God moves in!
 - b. Our Christianity depends upon the Holy Spirit living in us! (*Eph 1:13-14*)
2. We Need His Leadership (*Rom. 8:13-14*)
 - a. Through the Word
 - b. Through prayer for wisdom, strength, etc.
3. He Strengthens Us (*Eph. 3:16-17*)
 - a. He offers us personal strength
 - b. We don't have enough strength to undergo major battles in our lives!

Conclusion: Don't Lose Him!

1. Without the Spirit, you will be unprotected!
2. Don't grieve the Holy Spirit by:
 - a. by living according to your sinful desire!
 - b. Participating in sinful activities!
 - c. Allowing your relationship with God to wane!

SMALL GROUP STUDY

Warm-up:

Give an example of things (or situations) that influence us to act or think in a certain way. Respond in detail. You may want to use a personal example.

See To It

Romans 8:13-14

- 1- Who must we allow to lead in our lives? Why?
- 2- What benefits does His leadership bring? What benefits does our own leadership bring?
- 3- Can we crucify the flesh on our own? Who must be actively involved in our lives?
- 4- How do we allow Him to lead or guide us? Where do you go to inquire His guidance?
- 5- Why is it more difficult to live by the Spirit-controlled mind? Who are speaking at the same time in our minds?

Seeing It Closer: Psalm 119:11-15,27,46-48, 97-100, 148

- 1- How do we train ourselves to listen to the Spirit?
- 2- List the ways the psalmist learned to hear the Spirit more clearly? Discuss them.

Getting To It:

For the penitent Christian, the Spirit indwells (*Acts 2:38*), guides (*Rom. 8:13-14*), intercedes (*Rom. 8:26-27*), and strengthens (*Eph. 3:16-17*). Be encouraged to pray for His guidance! Meditate on the Word of God. Pray for wisdom and understanding so you will be able to make godly decisions as you walk in this life! Thank Him for His intercession. Pray for the strength that comes from His power! Don't ignore or doubt Him! Love Him and give in to Him! He is the *Spirit of God* and the *Spirit of Christ*!!!

Thank you, God, for your Holy Spirit who leads us and fights along with us in the war that rages around us!

FAITH IS OUR VICTORY

MONDAY

“These (trials) have come so that your **faith** - of **greater worth than gold**, which perishes even though refined by fire - may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” (*1Peter 1:7*) The faith that you have, which comes from the message of Christ (*Romans 10:17*), is worth more than anything the world has to offer! Last week we read *1Peter 1:3-9* and gained insight into our faith. Read v. 9 again. What is the goal of our faith? Read *Ephesians 2:8-9*. What are we saved through or by? Why does God not save us through our works? What role does faith play in baptism? Read *Colossians 2:9-12*. Where are we buried with Christ and how are we raised with Him? Who is working in baptism? What role does our faith play? Read *James 2:14-26*. What distinguishes our belief or faith from that of the demons? Do not let anyone deceive you into thinking salvation can be had without obeying the gospel. Those who have faith in God will do what He says and their faith will lead to their salvation. Dwell on *1Peter 3:13-22*. What saves you? Why? Be able to answer these questions with certainty for yourself and your hearers!! Realize the power of the FAITH God has given you!!

TUESDAY

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**’” (*Acts 2:38*). Besides the salvation that the Lord provides us through our faith He also gives His most precious gift -Himself!! Read *2Corinthians 6:14-18*. Why is it that we should not be yoked together with unbelievers? Why should we be different from those in the world? Now read *1Cor.6:12-20*. Why is your life no longer your own? Why is immorality so wrong? Write *1Corinthians 3:16* on an index card and memorize it. Praise the Lord for His indescribable gifts!!

WEDNESDAY

Satan’s attempts to destroy are too often successful because our hearts are a perfect breeding ground and source of deception (see *Jeremiah 17:9*). However, there is someone else at work within our hearts! Read *2Corinthians 1:19-22*. Who do we belong to? What is the proof of this? Who has God put in our hearts? Read *2Corinthians 3*. What work is the Spirit doing in our hearts? What does He give? Where does our confidence and competence come from? What does the Spirit’s ministry bring (see v.9)? What does the Spirit unveil to us? Who is the Spirit (v.9)? What is He doing in your life on a continuing basis (v.18)? **Recognize the Spirit within you** for who He really is!! Recognize who is in you and who is transforming you!! **Stand in awe of God** and let your life reflect the glory of the One who has made His home in you!!

THURSDAY

Let’s examine some more of the workings of the Holy Spirit today. Read *Titus 3:3-7*. Look up the words *regenerate* and *renewal* to gain better understanding of what the Spirit is doing in your life. Now read *Romans 5:1-5*. What are we to rejoice in and why? How does the love of God enter into our hearts? Do you see why Satan wants to harden your heart against the Lord? He is jealous because of all the awesome and wonderful things that God is doing and can do in your hearts! That is why Paul admonished the Ephesians to flee from sin (see *Ephesians 5:3-18*). Sin hardens the heart and crowds out the Spirit. God writes His Word on our hearts, renews us, strengthens us, fills us with hope, loves us and saves us through the Holy Spirit. Listen to Paul’s admonition in v.18- don’t be filled with the spirits of this world- rather **be filled with the Holy Spirit of God!!**

FRIDAY

Read *John 20:28*, *Matthew 11:25*, *2Corinthians 3:17-18*, *Ephesians 4:5*: and *Deuteronomy 6:4*. Write down who is Lord from each of these verses. How can Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit all be one? As Terry Rush said in his book The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense, it may not make earthly sense, but it makes **perfect heavenly sense!!** They are one and they are in us just as Jesus prayed (see *John 17:20-23*)!! Read *John 14:15-21* and understand that God has fulfilled the promise of the Holy Spirit given through Jesus. Pray that God truly open the eyes of your heart so that you may know the hope to which you were called (see *Ephesians 1:18*)!! Finally, read *1Corinthians 2:10-ff* and learn of more of **the awesome work of the Holy Spirit within us!!**

EMOTIONAL WORD PICTURES

Communication is the ability to share emotions effectively. When successful it should increase our intimacy and provide us with a gateway for further sharing of our emotions. Through the Holy Spirit, these loving relationships can show the world we are disciples of Jesus.

Emotional Word Pictures help us communicate without sounding judgmental. We're sensitive to judgment. We close up when we feel rejected—an offended brother is like a fortified city.

(Proverbs 18:19-20) "An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel. {20} From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied."

Example about the dad in "The Wonder Years" and how his children reacted to him when he didn't want to sell the car and his wife defended him even though she knew what the dad was doing. She later approached the dad on her own and gently validated his efforts and his emotion and reassured him that he had done what nobody would expect him to do. He went beyond the calling. She helped him realize it was time to move on.

Validating the person's actions or emotion shows our concern and our love for someone. It helps us capture the person's attention and bring them to a path of healing. It shows tact and gentleness:

(Eph 4:15) "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

(Eph 4:29) "Do not let any unwholesome talk[1] come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs[2], that it may benefit[3] those who listen."

1 "TALK": Many times I have spoken because I want to be listened to--I want to be considered wise, bold and mature. These next passages teach me that what must come out of my mouth should be only what builds other's up. Whether I feel comfortable or not is not the case. Neither is what I would like to say, or what I feel like saying. What must come out should reflect benevolence, compassion and maturity. ---> love (agape).

2 "NEEDS": I have to address the needs of those who I'm speaking of, not my opinions or theirs. NO GOSSIP!

3 "BENEFIT": The kinds of things that must come out of my mouth must benefit all who are listening and all those who will listen thereafter. My words will be echoed by others so I must speak with wisdom and charity (agape). Whatever I talk about must benefit the hearers

(Prov 12:16) "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult."

(Prov 12:18) "Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."

(John 12:49) "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me **what to say and how to say it.**"

Emotional Word Pictures activates both sides of our brain. Gets the emotional side and the thinking side going at once. Whenever we "feel" something, whether it's good or bad, it makes an impact on us. Our memories work better when they are associated with a strong emotion.

“That just blows me away!”
“Lights are on but nobody's home”
“A couple of French fries short of a happy meal”

Jesus used *parables*. The definition of a parable as a comparison drawn from nature or from daily life to teach a spiritual truth, or as "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning," covers the majority of the N.T. parables. The parable centers on a single truth, and the details may or may not be significant. Hence, since many details only serve to embellish the parabolic method, no theological significance is to be read into the local coloring. The application to life, which the parables have, must be sought in the message and mission of Jesus, not in first-century Judaism, since what Jesus intended to say and what His Jewish hearers understood were not always the same.

par·a·ble (p→r⊕m-bm) *noun*

A simple story illustrating a moral or religious lesson.

[Middle English, from Old French, from Late Latin *parabola*, from Greek *parabolē*, from *paraballein*, to compare : *para-*, beside. See *PARA*⁻¹ + *ballein*, to throw.]

These parables helped people “feel” what Jesus was talking about. It got the people involved in what He was saying.

Definition of an Emotional Word Picture:

It is a method of communicating that uses a story or object (like a flag, a song, violin, a rock) to activate both sides of the brain. It causes people to feel our feeling and understand our words.

FIVE THINGS THAT THE EMOTIONAL WORD PICTURES DOES:

1- It has the power to dramatically change lives

Use objects or stories that your mate has emotions attached to and make a story about them to illustrate your situation.

The husband shared a story about a little dog that gets lost and is excited to come home but grandpa beats him with a stick.

The wife shares a story about her husband giving of himself to everyone but she gets soggy doggy bags.

2- It focuses our attention on what is being said. A story directs our undivided attention to the words being said.

3- It brings communication alive--it causes you to be eager to change your behavior.

4- It locks our words into a person's memory. It causes the other person to feel the emotion that you are communicating.

5- It is a gateway to intimacy.

THE STEPS TO CREATING WORD PICTURES:

1- Decide *what* your purpose is. What do you want to use it for? Do you want to become more intimate? Do you want to praise someone? Do you want to correct someone?

2- Find out the person's interest.

The boss whose big interest is "the country", "the flag", etc. The employee built a word picture about how him and the boss are fighting in the trenches and the boss shares how great he is but then he shoots him... reality...: boss said that employee was going to receive a raise and a new position but then gave it away to someone else.

3- Draw from one of four wells:

- a- nature: plants, animals, streams...
- b- objects: non-living things, like cars
- c- stories: hiking expedition, etc..
- d- history: something that happened in the past.

4- Practice it

5- Pick a time to share this word picture. Set a convenient time for both parties involved. No distractions!

6- Be persistent! Maybe one word picture won't strike the person. Keep trying until you connect.

This kind of communication floods our roots and enriches the relationship like water to a plant. Intimacy flourishes. You can make the decision to be close and intimate to someone, you don't have to wait 'till it happens.

(John 13:34-35) ""A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. {35} By this all men will know that you are my **disciples**, if you **love** one another.""

John 13:34: (vv. 34,35) The new commandment is "new" in contrast to the old (cf. Lev. 19:18; Luke 10:27) and has a new motive ("as I have loved you") and a new scope. **The whole world is to distinguish Christ's disciples not by mighty acts, but in the kind of love Jesus exhibited as seen in His disciples' acts of love and concern** (cf. 1 John 3:14).

(1 John 3:14) "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."

1 John 3:14: While Cain's actions typify the malice of the demonic realm; Christ's life is the paradigm of Christian love. Since a believer's conduct should imitate the ministry of Christ (2:6), believers ought to love one another as Christ loves the church.