The Fundamentals of
Knowing God,
Growing and Being Productive
in Our Walk with Him

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1:1-9 (NIV)

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

James 4:8 (NASB)

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

Philip F. Benedict
A servant of the Lord Jesus Christ

P.O. Box 496
Ridge, MD 20680
The Purpose of This Study

This study is not written for those who are satisfied with a casual walk with the Lord. It is for those who desire to draw near to God and to walk closely with Him. I (Phil Benedict) will freely admit that in some ways I feel totally inadequate to put this study together. I have often been frustrated with my own shallow walk, but I am committed to growing in my own walk with the Lord. It is my prayer that this study may be helpful to some who want to draw near to God.

This study is written in simple to understand language. This is not written for scholars and theologians, but instead for ordinary laymen who want to understand what the Word teaches and to put it into practice.

It is my (Phil Benedict) intent to let Scripture speak for itself. The Word of God speaks clearly on the key issues of life. It is my conviction that the Word of God is far more powerful and effective than my own advice or counsel. For this reason, I have kept my own “commentary” to a minimum and have quoted many Scriptures that pertain to the subject being covered.

About Phil Benedict

I (Phil Benedict) grew up in a godly Christian home and was saved as a young child. I was active in our church youth group in Boise, Idaho, where I met my wife, Linda. We married when we were young and God has blessed our marriage. We have now been married for over fifty-four years (as of January 2021). We have four children, all of whom are actively serving the Lord. We both graduated from Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois, and from Boise State University in Boise, Idaho. I have also taken classes in secondary school administration at the College of Idaho in Caldwell, Idaho, as well as classes in Cherokee heritage from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and classes in drug and alcohol counseling at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma. We have served as “full time” Christian workers for over thirty-five years. We have been members of UIM International (United Indian Missions) for over twenty-five years.

Thanks to My Wife

God has given me an exceptional wife. She is a very talented person and she chose to be a stay-at-home mom and to be a ministry partner with me. She has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life. Without exaggerating, she has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding this and other study guides that we have put together. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

My Prayer

It is my prayer and my desire that the Lord Jesus Christ will be honored and glorified through this Bible study. I pray that the Spirit of God will draw some close to Himself as they go through this study. I pray that there will be some who, empowered by the Spirit of God, will be committed to living a transformed life of obedience and faithful service to our Lord Jesus Christ.
How to Get the Most from This Study Guide

God gave us the Bible to teach us how to know, to serve, and to walk close to Him. This study guide is designed to help individuals understand and put into practice these fundamental truths.

The subject matter in this study deals with fundamental Biblical truths but it is not a light study. Take your time as you go through these studies. If you go over the material too quickly without much thought, it will have little or no lasting impact on your life.

It is important that one take time to read, to digest, and to absorb the Scriptures in this study guide. Take time to carefully read and think about them. Meditate on them and the truths they teach. Regularly ask God for a right understanding of Scriptural truths and then make them part of you. Learn to love God and His Word. Commit yourself to making Biblical truths the foundation of your life and to putting them into practice every day of your life.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

Translations Used in This Study

There are five different translations used throughout this study. The translations used are the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), and the English Standard Version (ESV).

When quoting Scripture, I have tried to use the translation which most clearly states the Biblical truth being covered in that part of the study. Therefore, no particular translation has been favored. After each verse that is quoted, the translation is identified by giving the initials of the translation.

Scripture quotations followed by (KJV) are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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Scripture quotations followed by (ESV) are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
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Chapter One

Our Foundation --The Bible –
God’s Revelation of Truth to Man

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1:1-6 (NIV)

To be a Christian or to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is to put into practice truths we learn from the Bible which is the Word of God. The Bible teaches us how we can know God and it teaches us how to walk close to Him. It teaches us how to be a disciple or a follower of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our beliefs and faith are all based on truths we learn from the Bible. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we commit our entire lives to learning, understanding, and obeying the Word of God -- the Bible.

... “Blessed...are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” Luke 11:28 (NIV)

So, Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32 (NASB)

Those who love Your law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.
Psalm 119:165 (NASB)

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. John 15:7-8 (NIV)

Those who love God’s Word and submit to it have a solid foundation and secure anchor for life here on earth and for eternity. They are blessed by God. They can have peace, be productive, and look forward to an eternity secure in heaven with God.

Accepting the Bible as the true Word of God and insisting that the Bible be correctly interpreted is not the “in” thing today. Many “Christian” churches don’t believe correct doctrine is important. However, God repeatedly tells us that it is important. Over three hundred verses in the New Testament alone warn us against wrong teaching. In this study I (Phil Benedict) have tried to be very Biblically accurate. We are dealing with our eternal destiny. Nothing is more important than that.

Since the Bible is the foundation of our faith, the first chapter in this study is about the Bible itself.
We will go over fundamental truths relating to the source, the purpose, and the reliability of the Word of God.

**The Bible is inspired by God.**

*Divine inspiration is the activity of the Holy Spirit whereby He enabled the Biblical authors to receive God’s special revelation and to speak it and write it in their own language and style, without any error or omission.*

The speakers and writers of God’s Word were inspired in the sense that they were acted upon by the Holy Spirit to produce God’s truth in human language. The words written by Biblical authors are, in fact, the very words of God.

**All Scripture is inspired by God...** 2 Timothy 3:16a (NASB)

**All Scripture is God breathed...** 2 Timothy 3:16a (NIV)

*For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.* 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB)

All parts of Scripture are from God and are all equally true. The words of Jesus are not more inspired or more true than the book of Jonah. Paul is not more inspired than Peter. The New Testament is not more inspired than the Old Testament. All parts of the Bible are equally inspired.

**“All” scripture is given by inspiration of God,** ... 2 Timothy 3:16a (KJV)

Every word in the original manuscripts were inspired. God inspired the actual words used by the writers of the Bible, not just the thoughts behind the words.

**Every word of God is flawless.** Proverbs 30:5a (NIV)

Jesus recognized the inspiration and the authority of the Old Testament. He quoted it many times to establish the truthfulness of what He was teaching. Most of the other New Testament writers also used Old Testament quotes to establish the truthfulness of what they taught.

In the Old Testament well over 1000 times there are phrases such as “the Word of the Lord came to me saying”, or “thus says the Lord”. Look at the following examples.

These verses clearly show that these Old Testament writers solidly believed that what they were writing was, in fact, the Word of God. If these claims are not true, then all these writers were fake and they were deliberately deceiving their readers.

In each of the following Bible verses and in many, many more, the writer claims that what he is writing came to him from the Lord. There are well over 1000 Bible verses that make this claim.
The Word of God is true. It is our record of truth that God has made known to man. It is inerrant and infallible.

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17 (NKJV)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

The teachings and the historical records that are in the Bible, as they were originally written, are true, right, and accurate. They do not and cannot contain error.

The Bible is the only authoritative written source of spiritual truth that God has given to man.

Our human opinions and our understanding of the Bible may be inaccurate at times, but the Bible itself is always right, accurate, and without error.

Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Proverbs 30:5 (ESV)

And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times. Psalm 12:6 (NIV)

Now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are truth, and You have promised this good thing to Your servant. 2 Samuel 7:28 (NASB)

From Psalm 119 (NIV)

The statutes you have laid down are righteous; they are fully trustworthy. Verse 138

Your righteousness is everlasting and your law is true. Verse 142

...all your commands are true. Verse 151

All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal. Verse 160

Jesus, as a member of the trinity, is the divine author of the Bible. Jesus identified Himself as “the truth”.

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6 (KJV)
As we have already seen, God inspired the Bible. Note that God “cannot lie”.

...in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,
Titus 1:2 (NKJV)

God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. 19 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain,
Hebrews 6:18-19 (NIV)

The Word of God is true. God, the author, does not give untruths, half-truths, or distorted truth. There is no other source of spiritual truth. Anyone or anything that contradicts it is false. It is and always will be the solid foundation on which we build and anchor our lives.

Many reject, distort, or ignore all or parts of the Bible. However, our attitudes and beliefs do not affect the Bible’s truthfulness. The Bible is true whether you or I believe it or not. We cannot simply ignore it, or take it lightly, and we cannot just “interpret” it to fit our own way of thinking. The Bible is all from God and all of it is true. We must accept Biblical truth as it is written, and submit and conform to it. There is no other way to seek Him, to know Him, and to walk near to Him.

Either God is the source of the Bible and it is God’s revelation of truth to man or the Bible is the biggest forgery ever developed by man himself. What a blessing that it is not a forgery. It is, in fact, God’s genuine revelation of truth to man.

Before 1455, when the Gutenberg press printed the first Bible, the Bible had to be copied word by word by hand. It would take about a year to make one hand written copy of the Bible. Parts of the Bible were reproduced by hand copying for over two thousand years.

It may be well to note here that there were some errors made in the early hand copying process. However, Biblical scholars have studied the thousands of Biblical manuscripts in great detail and accurately diagnosed essentially all of these errors. These errors are small and insignificant and there is no question that our translations such as the NKJV, the NASB, the ESV, and the NIV, are extremely accurate and very trustworthy. When you pick up your Bible and read it, you are, in fact, reading the very Word of God.

The Word of God is eternal and unchanging.

Man’s word, his ideas, and his teachings change as time passes. As knowledge is gained and as circumstances change, man’s ideas and understanding change. Today’s scientific beliefs may be laughed at tomorrow. What one culture accepts as true is not believed or accepted by others. However, all this is not true about the Word of God. It is eternal, unchanging and true in every generation and in all cultures.

Your word is eternal, it stands firm in the heavens. Psalm 119:89 (NIV)

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Mark 13:31 (NIV)
...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:23-25 (ESV)

*Other evidences indicate that the Bible is true.*

There are other things that strongly support the fact that Scriptures are inspired of God and are true.

Consider the Bible itself. It has some 40 different authors. It was written over a period of some 1500 years. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. The authors came from many different walks of life. Some of the Bible writers were fishermen, prophets, tax collectors, doctors, shepherds, church leaders, priests, judges, and some were kings. Some were very well educated; others had no education at all. Some were poor; others were very rich.

Some of the Bible was written in a cave; some in a desert; some in a jail; and some in a palace. Some of the Bible is historical narrative; some is poetry; some is theological; some are proverbs; and some is allegory. The authors wrote on many different subjects and wrote in many different styles of writing. Yet in spite of these vast differences, there is not one genuine contradiction in the whole Bible. It all comes together as ONE united Bible.

This is a miracle. It would be unusual if two people of similar backgrounds independently wrote on the same subject without there being some differences; yet the Biblical authors, in spite of their great differences, were in complete harmony with each other. The reason is that they were all inspired by the same God. Praise the Lord for His Word, the Bible!!!

Fulfilled Biblical prophecy demonstrates the divine origin and truth of Scripture. In the Old Testament there are many passages which predict various things which relate to the birth, life, and death of Christ. These were written hundreds of years before Jesus was born; yet they all came true. The following verses are examples of Old Testament prophecies relating to the life of Christ:

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be born of a virgin.

**Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.** Isaiah 7:14 (NASB)

Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.** Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

Isaiah 53 is a remarkable chapter. In this chapter there are numerous prophesies relating to the life and death of Jesus.

He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Isaiah 53:3 (NASB)
He was oppressed and He was afflicted; Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearsers, So He did not open His mouth. Isaiah 53:7 (NASB)

In the Old Testament book of Daniel, it foretells many of the events and battles that took place following the breakup of the Greek empire. These prophesies were made some four hundred years before they were fulfilled and they were all fulfilled with remarkable accuracy.

Archaeology has also repeatedly shown the historical accuracy of the Bible.

*The Word of God is powerful and effective.*

Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces? Jeremiah 23:29 (NIV)

By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Psalm 33:6 (KJV)

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Hebrews 4:12 (NASB)

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:11 (NASB)

*The Word of God gives victory over sin and Satan.*

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith ... 1 Peter 5:8-9a (NIV)

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. Psalm 119:11 (ESV)

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. James 4:7 (NASB)

In Ephesians 6:10-18 we are given specific instructions in how to fight Satan and all his forces. It is important to note that every piece of armor, in one way or another, depends on our knowing and using the Word of God. Our offensive weapon in our battle with Satan is “…the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God”.
The Results of Neglecting or Rejecting the Word of God

In spite of its great importance, many Christians have a casual attitude toward the Bible. For many, it’s not really important enough to regularly read or to pay much attention to at all. Even more “mature” Christians can grow cool in their attitudes. We must diligently guard against this. The Bible is God’s message and instructions to us. When Christians ignore it, it leads to trouble, heartache, and fruitless living.

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 1 John 1:5-6 (NKJV)

The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4 (NIV)

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Hebrews 10:26-27 (NIV)

In the Bible, God reveals the only way to know Him. There is no other way. Men who reject or ignore Biblical truth face severe consequences. They will face God’s wrath, judgment, and eternity in hell forever separated from God, with no chance of ever escaping.

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32 (NASB)

A Word About Bible Translations

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek and also a little Aramaic. Bible translation is a process which makes God’s revelation (the Bible) available for people to read and to study in their own language. Since only a few people speak and read Hebrew and Greek, it is necessary to translate the Bible into languages that people know and understand today. All Bibles that are written in English are translations from the original Hebrew and Greek.

We are commanded to make disciples of all nations. A disciple is a learner or a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)

It is difficult to make disciples if the people do not have the Word of God in their own language.

We, here in the United States, can easily get a Bible. If we want, we can even get it in many different translations. This is not true for many in the world today. Many do not have any of the Bible in their
own language. Today, many men and women around the world are working to translate the Bible into some of these languages. This is a difficult and thrilling ministry. To give God’s Word to people who do not have it is a very noble and fulfilling lifetime ministry.

**Warnings Against False Teachings**

Unfortunately, there are many so-called Bible teachers and preachers who teach false, or inaccurate, or misleading “Biblical” teaching, all the while claiming they are accurately and correctly teaching the Word of God.

God repeatedly warns us in His Word to be on guard against wrong teaching. There are some three hundred verses in the New Testament alone that in one way or another warn us against false or wrong teaching. We must be very careful about who we listen to and who we believe.

*Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.* Hebrews 13:9a (NIV)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 2 Timothy 4:3 (NIV)

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Matthew 24:10-11 (NIV)

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping. 2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV)

**He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.** Titus 1:9 (NIV)
Bible Study Aids

When you begin your Bible reading, you need to pray and ask the Lord to enable you to correctly understand what you are reading. Confess any sin and submit yourself to His leading and to His teaching.

The following verses are excellent prayers to pray as you begin your daily Bible reading:

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! Psalms 139:23-24 (ESV)

Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Psalm 119:34 (NIV)

There are many Bible study aids and books written to help us correctly understand the Word of God.

Before mentioning a few of these, again a word of warning is in order. There are many books and so-called study aids that do not accurately or correctly teach Bible truths. They often quote a Bible verse saying that it means something that the verse simply does not teach.

Before purchasing a Bible study aid, ask God for direction and wisdom. It would be a good idea to learn some about the author first.

There are some very good commentaries written to help us understand Biblical truths.

Within Scripture there are certain words that need to be understood if we are to understand the truths taught in the Word of God. Words like grace, redemption, salvation, repentance, believe, and faith all have meanings somewhat different or very different than their everyday usage in the English language today. A good Bible dictionary such as The New Unger's Bible Dictionary or The Wycliffe Bible Dictionary can be a big help in understanding the Biblical usage of words. For a more precise definition of Biblical words, an expository Greek dictionary of Biblical words can be very helpful. Four good ones are The Complete Word Study Dictionary by Zodhiates, The New Strong's Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words by James Strong, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words by W.E. Vine, and Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words by William D. Mounce. Regular English language dictionaries like Webster’s normally give definitions of words as they are used in everyday speaking, rather than how they are used in Scripture. A good Bible dictionary is much better.

The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 19:7-11 (NASB)
Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1:1-6 (NIV)
Chapter Two

Created in the Image of God

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1 (NASB)

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
Psalm 119:13 (NIV)

To be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important to understand that we are created by God and that He has a purpose and a plan for each one of us.

The very first verse of the Bible states that God created the heavens and the earth. This teaching is restated many times throughout the Bible.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:1 (NASB)

The reference to the “heavens” in this verse is not a reference to heaven where God lives, but rather to the atmosphere that surrounds the earth and all the universe beyond.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. Hebrews 11:3 (ESV)

By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. Psalm 33:6-9 (NIV)

Notice that in the following verses, it states that “all” things were made by Him.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. John 1:1-3 (KJV)

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. Colossians 1:16-17 (NASB)

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. Hebrews 1:2 (ESV)
God created man and woman in His own image.

To correctly understand who God is and how to know and to walk with Him, we must understand that God is our creator and that He created us in His own image.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:26-27 (NASB)

In these verses are some of the most profound truths in all of Scripture. You and I are created in the image of God. Being created in God’s image gives every human, both men and women, a value far beyond all the rest of creation. No other living thing -- whether it is an animal, fish, insect, or anything else -- is created in God’s image, only men and women.

God is absolutely pure and holy. This is stated many times in the Bible. He is sinless and pure -- one hundred percent holy. There is not the slightest tint of evil in His character.

"Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you -- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?" Exodus 15:11 (NIV)

Holy and awesome is His name. Psalm 111:9b (NASB)

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." Isaiah 6:3 (NIV)

No one is holy like the LORD ... 1 Samuel 2:2a (NKJV)

When God created man and woman in His own image, they too were sinless and pure. Since God created Adam and Eve in His own image, they brought glory to God and there was a perfect love, harmony, and fellowship between God and man. At this point, Adam and Eve did not experience sorrow, pain, trouble, or unhappiness of any kind. Rather, they experienced all the blessings and joy of walking in fellowship and harmony with God.

In Genesis 1:26, it states that God created man in “His own image” and “Our likeness”. The words “image” and “likeness” mean essentially the same thing. The two words repeat the same truth. Repeating is a way of emphasizing an important truth. It’s as if God is saying, “This is important; I want you to listen and to understand it”. God doesn’t want us to miss it. An accurate self-concept recognizes that we as human beings, are, in fact, created in the image and likeness of God.

The emphasis on male and female in verse 27 makes it very clear that both men and women are created in the image and likeness of God.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Genesis 1:27 (NASB)

It is clear that God created Adam and Eve, the first two people. However, God also creates each one of us and He has a plan and purpose for each one of us. Not only did God create all mankind in His image and likeness, He creates each one of us as individuals. We did not come into being by chance.
We are not just an accident and we are not worthless in God’s eyes.

13 For you created my inmost being;  
   you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
   your works are wonderful,  
   I know that full well.  
15 My frame was not hidden from you  
   when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,  
16 your eyes saw my unformed body.  
   All the days ordained for me  
   were written in your book  
   before one of them came to be.  

Psalms 139:13-16 (NIV)

In these verses we see that God creates and forms us in our mother’s womb. Before we are born, He has determined what kind of a person He wants each of us to be. He has a unique special plan and purpose for every individual. He even determines the length of a person’s life before he is born.

This verse states that God is in control, even in our conception. “You knit me together in my mother’s womb.” This truth is repeated in several other verses.

Thus says the LORD who made you and formed you from the womb ...  
Isaiah 44:2a (NKJV)

Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: ...  
Isaiah 44:24a (ESV)

Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him.  
Isaiah 43:7 (NKJV)

You and I are individually a special creation of God and we individually have value to God. He has a plan and a purpose for each one of us. This gives us a genuine purpose for living, and the deepest needs of our heart and soul are satisfied. Real satisfaction comes when we know God and serve Him in the way He planned for us.

The word of the LORD came to me, saying, Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.  
Jeremiah 1:4-5 (NIV)

God has a clear purpose for each one of us who choose to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as their Savior.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.  
2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (NIV)
God will also reward us according to our faithfulness, and He has all eternity to show us His appreciation for our commitment to faithful service to Him.

God has also given every believer a spiritual gift that we are to use to build up and encourage fellow believers.

**As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** 1 Peter 4:10 (NASB)

Sometimes our situation in life may seem unfair to us, but God’s promises of care and provision apply to everyone and He will provide for our needs (See Matthew 6:25-34) no matter what our situation.

**How are we created in the image of God?**

In this section we are going to look at some ways that we are created in His likeness and give some suggestions as to how we should respond to each of these likenesses. Again, this is very important since being created in the image of God is foundational in our understanding of who we are. This understanding effects essentially every part of our life.

A. **Like God, we have feelings such as love, joy, and the desire for fellowship. Like God, we also have feelings such as anger and wrath.**

Many times, in Scripture God is identified as a God of love. He loves us and seeks to fellowship with us.

**We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.** 1 John 1:3 (NIV)

**God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.** 1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV)

When God created us in His own image and likeness, He gave us the capacity to love and to fellowship with Him and also to have fellowship with fellow believers.

**If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.** Philippians 2:1-2 (NIV)

This capacity to know, to love and to fellowship with God is unique to man. No other part of God’s creation has this capacity. No animal has the capacity to know and to fellowship with God.

After creating Adam and Eve, apparently God would come down in the “cool of the evening” and talk and fellowship with them. What a demonstration of God’s desire for fellowship with man! Today in spite of all our sin and all our weaknesses, God still loves us and He wants us to walk and fellowship with Him!!! Can we grasp that? Can we understand that God loves us with the same love that He loves His own son? (John 17)
The following verses from John 17 give us some insight into just how deep that fellowship with God can be. Carefully read and think about these passages. They contain profound truths that will take some time to grasp what is being said.

Here Jesus is praying for all who were believers at that time and He is also praying for all of us who would believe on Him in the future.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.  

John 17:20-24 (NASB)

In these verses it states that Jesus wants us to be with Him where He is.

Not only are we to love and fellowship with God, we are to love and fellowship with fellow believers.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.  
1 John 4:11 (KJV)

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.  
1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.  
Romans 12:10-11 (NIV)

B. God created man with these feelings and emotions.

In Scripture God expresses feelings such as love, joy, delight, hate, sorrow, grief, and anger. When God created man, He also made us with feelings. Since we are to be conformed to the image of Jesus, we must learn to love the things He loves; we must hate what He hates; we must be angry at what makes Him angry; we can have joy at what gives Him joy.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.  
John 15:11 (ESV)

"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.  
John 17:13 (NIV)

But you have this in your favor: you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I (God) also hate.  
Revelation 2:6 (NIV)

The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. 36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."  
John 3:35-36 (NKJV)
C. God made man an intelligent being.

God is the designer and creator of man, the earth, and the entire universe. This took a tremendous amount of intelligence. Obviously, we, as humans, fall far short of the intelligence of God; however, when God created us in His own likeness, He made us by far, with the highest degree of intelligence of all the living things on earth that He created. We can acquire knowledge, gain insight, understanding, and wisdom. We have the ability to think, to reason, to solve problems, and to design.

God gave us this intelligence and these abilities so that we, empowered by the Spirit of God, can serve Him in the capacity He calls us to and we can worship Him in a way that glorifies Him.

The Holy Spirit lives in and gives direction to those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. However, this does not mean that we do not need to exercise the mental abilities that God gave us. He gave us a capable brain and He expects us to use it. Many times, in Scripture we are instructed to actively seek and use knowledge, understanding, discretion, insight, and wisdom.

In the Bible, wisdom is the highest form of intelligence. Wisdom is a result of knowing the Word of God, being led by the Spirit of God, and of faithfully serving the Lord over a significant period of time.

The following verses express the intensity of our pursuit of godly understanding, discernment and wisdom.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,... Proverbs 2:1-8 (ESV)

D. God made man with a conscience and a sense of morality.

God is a holy God. There is not the slightest tint of sin or evil in the character of God. God has also given man a built-in moral consciousness. While man’s conscience can be severely hardened or altered and it is far short of God’s holy standard, we still have a consciousness of right and wrong. This separates us from the animal world and is a likeness to God. Man’s conscience, especially when given direction from the Word of God, leads us to act in a way that honors our creator.

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:22 (NIV)

But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1:5 (NASB)

Therefore, since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every
man's conscience in the sight of God.  2 Corinthians 4:1-2 (NIV)

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.  Romans 2:14-15 (NIV)

E. God made man with creativity and an appreciation for beauty.

God’s creation of the beautiful earth and all the descriptions of heaven and the New Jerusalem all indicate that God is a creative God who loves beauty. When we see a beautiful sunset, or majestic mountains, or a beautiful bird, or see and smell a fresh rose, we are often awed by their majesty and their beauty.

When God created man, He gave us an appreciation of beauty. Our appreciation of beauty causes His followers to praise and honor the God of beauty.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.  Psalm 19:1-4 (NIV)

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him?  Psalm 8:3-4 (NASB)

God also gave man an ability to be creative. Man’s creativity enables him to write music and serve Him in many ways. God is honored and glorified when we use our creativity to uplift and praise and worship Him through our music and other creative works.

Sing to the LORD a new song; Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless His name; Proclaim good tidings of His salvation from day to day.  Psalm 96:1-2 (NASB)

...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.  Ephesians 5:19-20 (NASB)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.  Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

...and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord, ...  2 Chronicles 5:12-13 (ESV)
Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Psalm 150:3-6 (NASB)

F. We are not created in a physical likeness of God.

Being in the form of God does not mean we have a physical likeness to God.

We have a physical body. John 4:24 teaches that God is a spirit. As a spirit, God does not have a body. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that we are not created in a physical likeness of God.

It is certainly true that Jesus took on a human body when He came to earth, and our future heavenly bodies will be like Jesus’ resurrection body.

Again, all people, both men and women, are created in the image and likeness of God. The words "likeness" and "image" indicate that we are like God in some ways, but not an exact copy. If something is "like" something else, it is similar but not exactly like it. Only Jesus is the "exact representation of His (God's) being" (Hebrew 1:3). Jesus, being God, is exactly like God.
Chapter Three

Sin Comes Between God and Man

After God created Adam and Eve, they had perfect fellowship with God. There was nothing that came between them and God. Adam and Eve also had a perfect marriage, companionship, and fellowship with each other. Together they served God and they fulfilled all that God had created them to do.

Adam and Eve also lived in a perfect environment. They had plenty of good food, the climate was perfect, and there was indescribable beauty all around them. Adam and Eve had the responsibility to care for the Garden of Eden, but at this time the earth did not have weeds, thorn bushes, or anything else that would make their work unpleasant.

Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis 1:29-31 (NASB)

Initially there was no sin or rebellion anywhere on earth. There was no crime, no jails, no police, no war, and no armies. There was no sorrow or grief. There was no physical or emotional pain. There was no anger, no fear, no guilt, no shame, and no regret. There was no neglect or abuse of children and no addictions. There was no cancer, no heart disease, no sexually transmitted diseases nor any other kind of diseases or sickness. There were no financial problems, and there was no debt. There were not even any taxes to pay. There were no corrupt governments or judicial systems. There were no prejudices or disharmony between the sexes or between different races.

At this point, there was no death. Even the animals did not die and they did not fight or kill and eat each other and people did not kill animals for food. Adam and Eve were not ageing. There was nothing more that could have made their lives better.

The Temptation

With all of this, how could Adam and Eve be dissatisfied or possibly want more? Yet Satan came and tempted them. He told them that God was keeping something good from them.

As we look back and see what happened, we want to go back and scream at Adam and Eve and say, “Don’t blow it.”, “Don’t sin.”, “Don’t bring pain and unimaginable suffering on the billions of people who will follow you.” Yet, that is exactly what they did. However, it does no good to blame Adam and Eve. We, too, choose to sin, and if any one of us were in Adam and Eve’s place, it is highly doubtful that any of us would have remained perfect.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat
freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."  Genesis 2:15-17 (NASB)

God had put only one restriction on Adam and Eve. He told them they could freely eat from any tree in the garden, but they could not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In this one way they had a choice as to whether they would obey or disobey. As long as they obeyed, they would continue in their sinless perfect situation. If they disobeyed, they would die spiritually. They would be separated from God, and sin would enter the human race. There would also be physical death, and the process of ageing and dying and all the pain and suffering that goes with it, would begin.

**for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die**  Genesis 2:17 (NASB)

To understand this passage, we need to understand that the Bible speaks of three different kinds of death. Each of these are a result of sin.

1. Spiritual death. To be separated from God.

2. The second death. When spiritually dead people stand before God in judgment, they will be forever cast into hell. This is identified as the second death.

3. Physical death. This is normal physical death.

Note: These three kinds of death will be more fully explained and covered in the next chapter of this study.

Satan, a created angel that sinned and rebelled against God, is an enemy of God. He hates God with a bitter passion. Satan knows he is bound for an eternal hell. He desperately wants to stop as many people as possible from knowing and walking with God and from spending an eternity with God in heaven. In the Bible, Satan is identified as a murderer, a liar, and a deceiver.

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.  John 8:44 (NIV)

Satan came to Eve in order to entice Eve into sinning. Coming in the form of a serpent or snake seems odd to us, but before the fall into sin and the judgments that came with the fall, the snake was not feared and disliked as it is now. It was apparently quite an attractive animal.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden’?” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”  Genesis 3:1-5 (ESV)

The first thing that Satan did was to plant doubt in Eve’s mind. This is still a major strategy of Satan. He always tries to cast doubt on God and on His Word.
Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?

Genesis 3:1 (NIV)

Notice that when Eve answered she added to what God had said. Compare Genesis 2:16-17 with Genesis 3:1-2.

The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.' "

Genesis 3:3 (NIV)

When Eve added that they could not touch the fruit, it seems to show a hint of resentment against God was already beginning to form in Eve’s mind.

Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, …

Genesis 3:4-5 (NKJV)

Satan moved from questioning God to outright contradicting God. He called God a liar. God had said to Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of that one tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, they would spiritually die, or be separated from God. Satan said that would not happen. According to Satan, they would not die.

Satan told Eve that God was keeping something good from them. He told her that she would be like God Himself if she ate of the fruit of that one tree.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:6 (NASB)

This has to be the most painful verse in the whole Bible. Both Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God and eating the fruit that God had instructed them not to eat. Eve looked at the fruit and saw that it looked good. Because it looked so good and looked so appealing, she followed Satan’s advice and ate some of the fruit and then gave some to her husband who was with her. Adam also ate some of the fruit.

Sin and rebellion against God had now entered the human race. At that moment, Adam and Eve and all mankind that was to follow, spiritually died. They were separated from God; evil had now begun its insidious course.

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Genesis 3:7 (NIV)

In verse 7, we see the first effects of sin--shame and guilt. Adam and Eve made a useless effort to hide their guilt. Even though their nakedness had nothing to do with their sin, they saw that they were naked and they made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves.

Their physical nakedness had nothing at all to do with their guilt, but they tried to cover themselves. They somehow thought that by covering their physical bodies they could somehow cover or hide their sin.
This is the first example of man’s fruitless attempts to use his own effort to appease God. It did not work then; it has never worked since then; and it will never work in the future.

**Adam and Eve’s Refusal to Repent**

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He (Adam) said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He (God) said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Genesis 3:8-13 (NASB)

After their sin, God came to Adam and Eve, confronting them with their sin and seeking their repentance. Adam and Eve, now sinners, like multitudes of sinners who would follow them, refused to acknowledge and repent of their sin.

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:8 (KJV)

This is man’s first attempt to hide from God. Instead of admitting their sin, they tried to hide. It did not work then; it has never worked since then; and it will never work in the future.

Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Genesis 3:9-10 (NKJV)

God did not call to Adam and Eve to find out where they were. God is God. He already knew where they were. Notice that God came to them with gentleness and love. He could have immediately come in anger and severe judgment. When God called to them, He wanted them to come to Him and admit and confess their sin.

Instead of confessing their sin, Adam made an excuse for hiding. He did not come to God admitting his sin. He lied and said he was hiding because he was naked. The real reason Adam was hiding was because he sinned, and he did not want to admit it. Here, for the first time, man felt fear.

And He said, "Who told you that you were naked?" Genesis 3:11a (NASB)

In verse 11, God confronted Adam’s excuse. He asked, “Who told you that you were naked?” Here it seems that God is saying to Adam, “Adam, what has your nakedness got to do with it? Stop making excuses and confess your sin.” God wanted them to confess their sin to Him and repent; however, Adam and Eve did not even answer.
Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"  

Genesis 3:11b (NASB)

Then God directly confronted them with their sin. He asked them, “Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat?” Again, they refused to admit or to confess their sin. Instead of confession, there is excuse-making and blaming others.

The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"  

Genesis 3:12-13 (NASB)

Instead of admitting their sin they both made excuses.

Adam blamed Eve and He even blamed God. The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

Eve blamed the serpent. And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Notice the tragic progression of sin and rebellion in both Adam and Eve. Within a single day they had gone from perfect fellowship with God to outright rebellion and blaming God and blaming each other. Their marriage also went from perfection to blaming and making accusations.

Notice this disastrous progression from total perfection to outright sin and rebellion.

1. Instead of fleeing from temptation, they stayed and listened to what Satan had to say.
2. Adam, who was with Eve, made no attempt to intervene. He, too, was apparently interested.
3. Eve added to what God said.
4. Eve showed resentment against God.
5. Eve began to doubt God’s goodness.
6. Eve rebelled against God by eating the forbidden fruit.
7. Adam was not deceived. He knew that what Eve was doing was wrong, but he did not try to stop her.
8. Adam joined in the rebellion and ate the fruit.
9. Instead of repenting of their sin, they made a fruitless self-effort to take care of the problem by covering themselves with fig leaves.
10. They tried to hide from God.
11. When God called to them, they did not come out and admit their sin, but made up an excuse for their hiding.
12. When God confronted their excuse, they still refused to admit their sin.
13. When God directly confronted Adam with his sin, Adam still refused to repent, and he blamed Eve and he blamed God.
14. When God confronted Eve with her sin, she refused to repent and blamed the serpent.

Judgment

Adam and Eve refused to repent or to admit their sin and guilt. Not once in this whole account did either Adam or Eve admit their sin, or even show any remorse. One characteristic of God is that He is absolutely just. God could not just pretend that their sin never occurred and just ignore it. As a holy
God, He cannot overlook sin and rebellion. In Genesis 3:14-19, there are a series of judgments pronounced. These judgments were all the result of sin.

These judgments seem harsh to us, but they set in motion the plan of God in which we will have the opportunity to be free from the penalty of sin and Satan will be defeated and will be bound in hell forever.

The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:14-19 (ESV)

The most tragic result of Adam and Eve’s sin is that from then on all people would be born with a sin nature. All people are born spiritually dead, and unless they are saved, they will experience eternal separation from God in hell.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: Romans 5:12 (KJV)

For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:17 (NIV)
Chapter Four

Understanding God’s Plan of Salvation

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (KJV)

Even in our sin and rebellion, God still loves us and He provides a way for us to be saved from the penalty of sin, which is death, and to be given eternal life. This is the greatest truth of all time. What a cause for joy and rejoicing!!!

The purpose of this chapter is to explain in simple steps how we, as sinners, can be forgiven from our sin and escape eternal judgment. We can know and walk with God. This is the most basic fundamental teaching of the Word of God. This is the foundation. If we do not have this straight, all the rest of the Word of God will have little meaning for us. We must be diligent to get this straight. Our eternal destiny, heaven or hell, is at stake.

All of Adam and Eve’s descendants, which is all of us, are born sinners.

In the last chapter (chapter three) we learned that Adam and Eve, the first two people whom God created, sinned and rebelled against God.

Once Adam and Eve sinned, they passed on a sin nature to all of their descendants. As a result, all of us have sin natures, and each of us are sinners. We sin because we have a sin nature and we sin because we individually choose to sin.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned... Romans 5:12 (NASB)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 (NKJV)

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23 (NASB)

As it is written:
"There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands,
no one who seeks God.
All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one." Romans 3:10-12 (NIV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)
For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” Mark 7:21-23 (ESV)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. Isaiah 64:6 (NIV)

This verse (Isaiah 64:6) states that our “good side” – our righteous acts – are like a pile of filthy rags. It does not say that our bad side is like filthy rags, but rather this is God’s description of our good side. God is not impressed with our goodness. In His sight, our righteousness is nothing but a pile of filthy rags.

There is a huge moral gap between the holy God and sinful man. We will never be able to come to God on the basis of our own goodness. Even “little” sins separate us from God.

Since we have all sinned, we all stand guilty before God and we all face God’s judgment. The consequence or the penalty of all sin (“large” or “small”) is death.

For the wages of sin is death... Romans 6:23a (NKJV)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 (NKJV)

When you were dead in your sins... Colossians 2:13a (NIV)

In Scripture there are three kinds of death. Each one is a consequence of sin. Every unsaved person who has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ is under the penalty of all three kinds of death.

These three kinds of death are:

A. Spiritual Death

Spiritual death is to be separated from God because of our sin.

Every person who has not made the choice to believe and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior is spiritually dead. He is separated from God.

When you were dead in your sins... Colossians 2:13a (NIV)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12 (NASB)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons
of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

B. The Second Death

The second death is to be cast into hell with no hope of ever being reconciled to God. All who are separated from God by sin, or all who are spiritually dead, will spend an eternity separated from God, suffering eternal judgment and punishment in hell.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15 (ESV)

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

C. Physical Death

The third kind of death is normal physical death. At the end of our life on earth, our bodies will die. This also came as a result of Adam’s sin. Before sin, there was no physical death. Eventually the bodies of all people, saved and unsaved, will be resurrected from the dead.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. Luke 16:22 (NIV)

While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?" Mark 5:35 (NIV)

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Mark 14:55 (NIV)

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. Luke 23:32 (ESV)

As a result of sin, we all face the penalty of spiritual death, which is eternal separation from God. As unpleasant as it is to talk or write about, being eternally separated from God means that one will spend an eternity in hell as a punishment for his sin, with no chance of ever getting out.

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in
them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.
Revelation 20:13-15 (NIV)

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." Revelation 21:8 (NIV)

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV)

You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?
Matthew 23:33 (ESV)

"Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:28 (NASB)

The person who sins will die. Ezekiel 18:20 (NASB)

In spite of our sin, God still loves us and provides a way to escape or to be saved from the sentence of death.

Because God still loved us, He sent His own sinless Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross to pay the penalty of death for our sin. For those who choose to believe in Him, God promises forgiveness of sin and eternal life with Him.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. Romans 5:8-11 (ESV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

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 (NIV)

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22 (KJV)

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), ... Ephesians 2:4-5 (NASB)
For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. Romans 5:19 (NIV)

Here, in simple steps, are the Biblical truths which explain the God-given plan of salvation.

As we have already stated, the greatest truth of all time is that you and I, even though we are sinners, can be saved from the penalty of sin that God pronounced on all people.

Even if we are “the worst of all sinners”, all our sin can be totally forgiven and no longer be under the sentence of death. We can know and walk with the holy God. God, who created and sustains the universe, even adopts us into His own family. We are His children! We can know and fellowship with Him while we are on this earth, and then we will spend an eternity with Him in heaven. It can’t get any better than that!!!

God still loves us and He sent his sinless Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die and pay the penalty for our sin.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8 (ESV)

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. 1 Peter 3:18a (NIV)

He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

… so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; Hebrews 9:28 (NIV)

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6 (NASB)

He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. Romans 4:25 (NIV)

Jesus was absolutely sinless; therefore, He did not have to die. However, He chose to die so that He could pay the penalty of death for our sin. He was our substitute. What a blessing that is!!! Because Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, we can escape the judgment of death that we are under. We do not have to spend eternity separated from God in hell.

God accepts the death of Jesus as full payment for the penalty of our sin.

He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)
In Him (the Lord Jesus Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us...
Ephesians 1:7-8a (NASB)

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.  Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB)

The penalty or the price for our sin has been paid. Jesus paid it in full. God, who pronounced the judgment of death on every human because of his sin, accepts the death of Jesus as full payment for our sin.

The only way to be forgiven is to accept God’s forgiveness of sin as a free gift. There is absolutely nothing you can do to earn or to make yourself worthy of the forgiveness of your sin.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 6:23 (NASB)

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.  Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, …. Romans 4:4-5 (NASB)

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,
2 Timothy 1:9 (NASB)

But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.  Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)

It does absolutely no good to try to improve yourself or to “clean up your act” before you come to God for forgiveness. We are all sinners and we cannot change that. We can only come to Jesus exactly as we are – as sinners. All the goodness in the world cannot change that.

It is very important to recognize that we will not be saved and have eternal life because we are a good person or because of the good things we do or the lifestyle we live. Believing on the Lord Jesus is not a work, it is a mental choice we make.

When God forgives our sin, He also credits us with righteousness.

Another great truth is that when we choose to believe or accept His free gift of forgiveness, God credits us with His own righteousness or goodness. Our record before God becomes absolutely clean.

God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.  2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)
But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, … Romans 4:5 (NASB)

This is why "it was credited to him (Abraham) as righteousness." The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness--for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Romans 4:22-24 (NIV)

Again, when God forgives our sin, He also credits us with His own righteousness. We can be saved, not because we are so good, but rather we can be saved because when we choose to believe, God will credit His righteousness to our account. Wow, that is hard to grasp!!!

To be saved, you must individually choose to put your faith or trust in Jesus Christ alone to pay the penalty for your sin. We choose to “believe” in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to make a deliberate personal choice to put your trust in His death on the cross as the full payment of the penalty for your sin. You can either pay the penalty yourself by spending an eternity in hell separated from God, or you can accept His death as the payment for your sin and have eternal life with God. The choice is yours!!!

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved,... Acts 16:31a (ESV)

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, … John 1:12 (NASB)

Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses. Acts 13:39 (NIV)

... and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. John 6:37b (NASB)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. John 5:24 (NKJV)

When one makes the choice to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, he may pray a prayer something like the following prayer. The exact wording is not critical, but the attitude of his heart is.

Lord Jesus, I have sinned against you and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You are the sinless Son of God and I believe that You died to pay the penalty for my sin. I accept your offer of the free gift of salvation. Thank You for dying for me. I want to learn more about You and Your teaching and I desire to follow You.

It is important to understand that simply reciting this prayer or any other prayer is not what saves a person. It is the genuineness of our heart and attitude that God sees and responds to.
He saves those who sincerely want to be forgiven and follow the Lord.

In the next chapter, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is more clearly defined.

When one comes to Jesus for forgiveness of sin, he commits to turning away from a lifestyle of sin and to being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to put our trust in His death on the cross as the full payment of the penalty for our sin, is to commit to turning from our lifestyle of sin and to being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. We leave our past sinful way of life to follow Him. That does not mean we will be perfect or even close to perfect, but it does mean that we are committed to being His follower. The Lord Jesus Christ becomes supreme in our life and we choose to follow and be obedient to Him.

Again, we need to emphasize that we are not forgiven of our sin or saved from the penalty of death because we are good people or because we can work our way into heaven. We accept forgiveness as a free gift without working for it. However, once we accept that free gift, we choose to honor and glorify our Lord by the way we live our lives.

In the following verses the word “repent” is used several times. Fundamentally the word “repent” means to change our mind about living a sinful lifestyle.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in Him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:20-24 (NIV)

"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Luke 13:3 (NASB)

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. 2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV)

Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Acts 8:22a (NIV)

Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Luke 5:31-32 (NKJV)

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Luke 24:46-47 (NIV)

Once you choose to put your faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as the payment for sin and
begin to follow Him, you never know where He will lead you. It is exciting!!! Hold onto your hat and let’s go. You have begun an incredible journey!

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV)

**What Salvation Is Not**

The God-given plan of salvation is not hard to understand. However, many have misunderstood it because it has been muddled, perverted, twisted, and added to.

Many have not been taught straight and many have misunderstood the Biblical God-given plan of salvation. One result is that many who think they are saved are not genuinely saved.

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7:22-23 (NIV)

"'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' Matthew 15:8-9 (NIV)

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man. John 2:23-25 (NASB)

Following is a list of things that people have claimed when asked if they are saved. They believe that these things will somehow gain them merit with God. Some of these are good things but they will not save us. The truth is that a person could do or experience all of these things and still not be genuinely saved. Here is a list of things that *salvation is not*.

1. It is not “going forward” in church, “making a decision for Jesus”, or being baptized.
2. It is not attending, joining, being a deacon, or serving in any other way in a church.
3. It is not having a “relationship with Jesus” or “connecting with Jesus”.
4. It is not knowing what is in the Bible.
5. It is not being “religious”, being sincere, being a good person, or keeping the golden rule.
6. It is not doing the best you can or turning over a new leaf.
7. It is not when your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds.
8. It is not having a “spiritual experience” or a “spiritual awakening”.
9. It is not giving all your problems to Jesus.
10. It is not “speaking in tongues”.
11. It is not taking communion or the sacraments.
12. It is not being born in a Christian family or in a Christian country.
13. It is not keeping the ten commandments or following any other set of rules.
14. It is not tithing or giving money to worthwhile causes.
15. It is not having an uncle who is a Baptist preacher or having a grandmother who donated the land on which a church was built.

Absolutely none of these things will result in our being saved. The only way to be saved is believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and accept God’s forgiveness of our sin as a free gift.
Chapter Five

What It Means To “Believe in Jesus”

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (KJV)

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. John 5:24 (NASB)

They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, ... Acts 16:31a (NASB)

God offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all people. The only condition is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Because this is so important, this chapter explains in greater detail what it means to genuinely believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Defining “Believing”

There are a lot of people who misunderstand the Biblical teachings about believing. Many have been incorrectly taught and there are some who just “believe” what they want to believe. Genuine belief accepts God’s instructions from the Bible rather than making up or choosing other ways of believing.

“Faith” and “believe” come from the same Greek root word. It is used about 475 times in the New Testament. To better understand the word “believe” from a Biblical perspective, here are definitions taken from several different expository Bible dictionaries.

To believe in Jesus is:
...to have faith in God or in Christ.
...to rely on.
...to place confidence in or to trust in.
...to be convinced of something.
...to be firmly persuaded.
...to accept as true.

I believe the best definition I found was given by William D. Mounce, “To believe is not simply to give mental assent, but to turn one’s whole being over to God.” (Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary. page 62)

It is clear that genuine Biblical believing is more than just having a head knowledge. It is “turning one’s whole being over to God”.

Believing -- The Only Condition for Salvation

Believing is extremely important. At stake is where we will spend eternity. If we genuinely believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will spend an eternity with Him. If we do not genuinely believe, we will
spend eternity separated from God suffering His wrath in hell.

Those who believe can also know and walk with Him here on earth and enjoy all the blessing of being a child of God now. In a later chapter in this study, we will cover some of the blessings of knowing and serving the Lord while we are still here on earth.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.   John 3:16-18 (ESV)

He (the jailer) then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They (Paul and Silas) replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...   Acts 16:30-31a (NIV)

And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.   John 11:26a (NKJV)

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:   John 1:12 (KJV)

...but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.   John 20:31 (NKJV)

I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.   John 6:47 (NIV)

Throughout much of the Bible, God expresses anger with sin. He often severely judged sinners, even to the point of destroying all of mankind except for Noah and his family.

As was stated in the last chapter, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is to make a deliberate personal choice to put your trust in His death on the cross as the full payment for the penalty for your sin. You can either pay the penalty yourself by spending an eternity in hell separated from God, or you can accept His death as full payment for your sin and have eternal life with God. The choice is yours!!!

Remember, we are not saved and have eternal life because we are a good person or because of the kind of life we live. Believing will certainly affect the way we live, but we are not saved because of our way of life. We are saved by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and accepting salvation as a free gift.

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—9 not by works, so that no one can boast.   Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)

There is a shallow or misplaced “belief” or faith that does not result in salvation.

The major reason for including this chapter (chapter five) is because there are many who have an incorrect or shallow “belief” in Jesus or God that does not result in being genuinely saved. This is serious, because there are apparently many who think they are saved, but they are not. They have never genuinely believed as the Word of God defines believing.

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in
vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.  Mark 7:6b-7 (NIV)

The following verses describe a scene from the “great white throne” judgment, when unsaved people stand before God and give an account of their life to God.

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.  "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'  "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'  Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

According to the following verse, God knows what our real attitudes and motives are.

But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.  John 2:24-25 (NASB)

You believe that there is one God.  You do well.  Even the demons believe—and tremble!  James 2:19 (NKJV)

Examine Yourself

Paul gave the following critically important instructions to his readers:

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.  Test yourselves.  2 Corinthians 13:5a (ESV)

As you go through this chapter you should examine your own faith and beliefs.  Are you a genuine child of God?  Are you genuinely “saved” or have you had some kind of an experience that is not genuine salvation?  Have you come to God on His terms or have you come on your own terms?  There is only one way and that is God’s way.  Many, many people are confused and have false ideas as to what God has said in the Bible about knowing and believing in Him.

Biblical Teachings About Believing

To genuinely believe is not complicated.  We make the choice to trust in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as full payment for the penalty of our sin and to turn away from our lifestyle of sin.  When we were saved, very few of us understood much of what the Bible teaches.  However, when God genuinely calls us to Himself in salvation, He gives us the faith to believe some fundamental truths relating to salvation.

If a person cannot accept these fundamental truths, it is an indication that he/she is not genuinely saved.  Again, one does not have to be a theologian to be saved, but the following four fundamental truths are an inherent part of genuine belief or saving faith.

Again, we do not have to be a Bible scholar to be saved.  The fundamental teachings on believing are
not complicated. In fact, they are really quite simple.

1. **To believe is to accept the teaching in the Word of God as true.**

When Jesus was here on earth, many people genuinely believed when they heard His teachings. They believed what He said and taught. Others went along with the crowd, but never genuinely made the choice to believe in Him.

Jesus Himself identified God’s word as truth.

*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.*  John 17:17 (NKJV)

*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*  John 5:24 (NASB)

*As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.*  John 8:30 (NKJV)

*And many more believed because of His own word.*  John 4:41 (NKJV)

*You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him (Jesus) whom He (God the Father) sent.*  John 5:38 (NASB)

One cannot genuinely “believe in Jesus” without believing He spoke the truth. It would be false to the core to say that “I believe in Jesus” but believe that what He taught was false.

Our knowledge of the words of Jesus comes from the Bible. A new believer will most likely not understand very much about the Bible or how it came into being. However, he must accept its fundamental teaching relating to salvation as truth. As he/she grows in his faith he will develop a deeper understanding and confidence in the truthfulness of all Scripture.

2. **Genuine belief believes that Jesus is the sinless Son of God.**

One of the fundamental teachings of Jesus is that God is His father. The only reason Jesus could come and die to pay the penalty for our sin is because He is the sinless Son of God. If He were a sinner, He would have to die for His own sin, not for ours.

Again, one does not have to be a theologian to be saved. One certainly will not understand all about the trinity. None of us do. However, one must believe that Jesus is the sinless Son of God. If Jesus was a normal human, He could not die to pay the penalty for our sins.

*Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God,* … 1 John 5:1a (ESV)

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*  John 20:30-31 (ESV)
One reason Jesus performed so many miracles was to demonstrate that He was, in fact, the Son of God. Jesus demonstrated His power over sickness and disease, over death, over Satan, and over nature.

**For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even your faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.** 1 John 5:4-5 (NIV)

**Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.** 1 John 2:22-23 (NKJV)

In the Old testament, God identified Himself to Moses as the “I Am”.

**And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.** Exodus 3:13-14 (KJV)

In the following verses Jesus identifies Himself as the “I Am”. These verses refer back to Exodus 3:14 where God identifies Himself as the “I Am”. Jesus clearly states that unless you believe that He is the “I Am”, or believe that Jesus is God, you will die in your sins.

**Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."** John 8:58 (NKJV)

**Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."** John 8:24 (NASB)

3. **Genuine belief believes in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.**

To believe that Jesus is God and that His words are true, one must believe in His resurrection from the dead. Before He died, Jesus claimed He would resurrect from the dead. After He was resurrected, He again reminded his disciples about His teaching and again taught them about the resurrection.

After Jesus died on a cross paying the penalty for our sin, His body was taken off the cross, prepared for burial and then placed in a tomb. On the third day after He died, His body was resurrected from death and He came to life again. (See Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20.)

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead proved beyond any doubt that Jesus is God, and that His death was not a normal human death.

The resurrection is an essential part of the gospel. To believe in Jesus is to believe in His resurrection.

**...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ...** Romans 10:9 (NASB)

**Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received**
and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, … 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NKJV)

That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, … Romans 4:22-24 (NIV)

...and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, … Romans 1:4 (NIV)

In the Word of God our salvation is confirmed by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Without the resurrection, there would be no salvation. One cannot genuinely believe on the Lord Jesus Christ without believing in the resurrection.

For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 1 Corinthians 15:16-17 (ESV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, … 1 Peter 1:3-4 (NASB)

4. When one genuinely believes, he turns away from a lifestyle of sin to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sin is disobedience and rebellion against God. God created the first man and woman absolutely perfect, with no sin. Adam and Eve had perfect unhindered fellowship with God and they glorified Him in all they did. However, all of this was ruined with the entrance of sin. It was sin that destroyed their relationship with God and brought about the spiritual and physical death to all of mankind.

In order for a person to be reconciled to God (to be saved) he/she must deal with the sin in his life. The heart of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is acknowledging that we are sinners and trusting in His death to pay the penalty for our sin. After genuinely believing, one seeks to live a life that honors and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. If one continues unchanged in a lifestyle of sin, it may be because that person never genuinely believed.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV)

Once we genuinely make the decision to believe (be saved), the Spirit of God gives us the ability, the strength, and the direction that we need to live a godly life and be a productive follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not something we do on our own. It is a result of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, leading us, and empowering us.

Again, it needs to be emphasized that one is not saved by being a good person or by doing good
works. Our own works will never save us from the penalty of sin. However, when one is genuinely saved by faith and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, his way of life will change. He/she will seek to live in such a way as to please and glorify our Lord.

_No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother._ 1 John 3:9-10 (ESV)

_No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him._ 1 John 3:6 (NIV)

_Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him._ 1 John 2:15 (NKJV)

None of us are perfect. We will all sin, but we will not have an on-going continuing lifestyle of sin. When one believes, he turns from a lifestyle of sin to serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Making that choice to turn from a lifestyle of sin is sometimes identified as “repentance” in the Word of God.

Genuine Biblical repentance is turning from a lifestyle of sin to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a total change in the direction of one’s life.

Repentance is a fundamental change of attitude. Repentance does not mean we will be perfect, but it does mean that the focus of our life changes. In the past we were controlled by sin, but now we are yielding control of our life to our Lord.

_I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish._ Luke 13:3 (NASB)

_Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, …_ Acts 3:19 (NIV)

_Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord._ Acts 8:22a (NIV)

_I (Jesus) have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance._ Luke 5:32 (NIV)

Repentance is not a “work” that is necessary for salvation. We are not saved by trying to be a better person. When we are genuinely saved, the Spirit of God comes and lives in us. Then we are empowered to live God-honoring lives. Without the Spirit of God living in us, we cannot live a life that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we are saved, we become a disciple or a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Word of God does not allow one to intellectually believe without having a fundamental change of attitude. As His followers, we acknowledge that He is our Savior and Lord. We do not “make Him Lord”, because He already is Lord. As believers, we choose to follow Him. It is impossible to be a genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ without changing our attitude about sin.
“Genuine confession is not just repeating words, it is a deep conviction of the heart.”
(The Theological Wordbook. page 68)

“To believe is not simply to give mental assent, but to turn one’s whole being over to God.”
William D. Mounce (Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary. page 62)
Chapter Six

Biblical Tests to Determine if One Genuinely Believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, or if One Is Genuinely Saved

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.  
2 Corinthians 13:5a (ESV)

The apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, instructed his readers to “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith.” This chapter is written to assist you in following this important instruction from the Word of God.

“Am I genuinely saved?” This is an extremely important question. It determines whether we will spend eternity with God in heaven or eternity forever separated from God in hell.

God instructs us to be very careful about what we believe. In the New Testament of the Bible there are some three hundred verses that in one way or another warn us about wrong teaching.

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.
2 Timothy 4:3 (NIV)

Hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.  
Titus 1:9 (NIV)

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.  
Matthew 24:10-11 (NIV)

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!  
Acts 20:29-31a (NIV)

Today there is a tremendous amount of distorted, shallow, or just plain false teaching about how to know and to walk with God. God’s plan of salvation is not made clear and many people do not correctly understand how to be saved. On television, on radio, and from many pulpits, distorted teaching is on-going. It is likely that many people who are listening are following their teaching and are trusting in a false hope for their salvation.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. 16 Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly. 17 Their teaching will spread like gangrene.  
2 Timothy 2:15-17a (NIV)

But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them--bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways
and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.  2 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

Many of these pastors or teachers appear to be teaching the truth. Many use Scripture verses but do not accurately teach them. Many can appear godly but, in reality, they are not teaching Biblical truth. Many mix truth and error. There is enough truth to make it sound right, but, in reality, they are not teaching accurate Biblical truth.

Many people think or feel like they are saved but there is little or no evidence of a changed life or little evidence that they have the Spirit of God living in them. This is an extremely dangerous position to be in. If there has been little or no spiritual fruit or evidence of a changed life, then it may be that they were never genuinely saved.

... having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.  2 Timothy 3:5 (ESV)

If someone questions or doubts their salvation, there may a good reason for that doubt. It’s time to “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.”.

A fundamental Biblical truth relating to salvation is that *we are not saved by our own efforts, or by our own goodness, or because we deserve it.* We must understand that the Bible makes it very clear that we are not saved by our own good works or any other human effort. We must receive salvation as an unearned free gift. God gives us the gift of salvation because of His own love, His grace and His mercy. He does not give us salvation because we earn it or somehow make ourselves worthy or deserving of salvation. We are undeserving sinners who must accept forgiveness as a free gift. There is no other way of salvation -- none.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*  Ephesians 2:8-9 (ESV)

*But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*  Ephesians 2:4-5 (NKJV)

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*  Romans 6:23 (NASB)

*Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness, …*  Romans 4:4-5 (NASB)

**Examining Ourselves**

*As evidence of salvation, the Bible never talks about such things as being baptized, going forward in church, asking Jesus into your heart, having a good feeling, having a spiritual experience, “speaking in tongues”, or “having a relationship with Jesus”.*
However, the Bible does give some very clear criteria to use in examining ourselves to see if we are in the faith. A major purpose of the Biblical book of 1 John is to give tests by which one can determine if he/she is, in fact, a genuine believer.

_These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life._ 1 John 5:13 (NASB)

Following are Biblical tests from the Bible that we can use to determine if we are genuinely saved.

**Test 1. Do you acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God?**

The Biblical teaching that Jesus always has been and always will be the sinless Son of God is one of the most fundamental teachings in the Word of God. One simply cannot deny that Jesus is the sinless Son of God and be genuinely saved.

A person does not have to be a theologian to be saved. He will not understand all about the trinity. None of us do. However, he must be in agreement with the fundamental Biblical teaching relating to Jesus. Jesus is the sinless Son of God who came to earth to die to pay the price for our sin. He lived a sinless life, and He died to pay the penalty for our sin, and He was buried and rose again on the third day.

_If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God._ 1 John 4:15 (NIV)

_Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name._ John 20:30-31 (NASB)

_Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also._ 1 John 2:22-23 (NKJV)

_Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, …_ 1 John 5:1a (NIV)

...because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9 (ESV)

...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. 1 John 5:4-5 (NIV)

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is the heart of the gospel. Only the sinless Son of God could die to pay the penalty for our sin, which is death or eternal separation from God. If He were only a human, He would be a sinner who would have to pay the penalty for His own sin. However, Jesus is the sinless Son of God who came to earth in the form of a human, and died to pay the penalty for our sin. This allows us to be saved from eternal separation from God.
denies these Biblical teachings about Christ, there is no way he can be saved.

**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.** Philippians 2:5-8 (NASB)

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 2 John 1:9 (NKJV)

**Test 2. Do you regularly absorb the Word of God and continue in its teaching?**

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." John 8:31-32 (NASB)

By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:2 (NIV)

Genuine believers love the Word of God, the Bible, which is God’s revelation of truth to us. They continue or they “abide” in the Word of God. The Word of God teaches truth about God and tells us how to live in order to please God. The Word frees us from bondage to sin. If one has no desire to learn, to understand, and to put into practice the Word of God, it is an evidence that He may not genuinely know God.

**Test 3. Do you “walk in the light” or do you “walk in the darkness”? Do you live a life of obedience to the instructions given in the Word of God?**

Being saved results in a changed life. If there is no evidence of a changed life, then our salvation is highly questionable.

However, again it needs to be made very clear that these verses are talking about an on-going lifestyle of sin. And again, we need to remind ourselves that we are not saved by being good or by our good works. However, once we are saved there will be a genuine change in the way we live our life.

This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:5-7 (NASB)

To walk “in the light” is to live a life committed to obedience and honoring our Lord. To “walk in the darkness” is to live a life of on-going disobedience to God’s instructions. If we walk in the light, it is evidence that “the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin”.
Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.  1 John 2:6 (NIV)

The Word of God is clear that if we live a lifestyle of on-going disobedience, it is evidence that we do not know God.

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; … 1 John 2:3-4 (NASB)

You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. 1 John 3:5-6 (ESV)

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:9-10 (ESV)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?... ...In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. James 2:14 and 17 (NIV)

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. 1 John 2:19 (NKJV)

Genuine Christians look forward to the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. This causes us to seek to live holy lives.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. 1 John 3:2-3 (NASB)

Being saved results in a changed life. If there is no evidence of a changed life, then our salvation is highly questionable. However, it again needs to be made very clear that these verses are talking about an on-going lifestyle of sin. All Christians commit sin. This is made clear in the following verses which are written to Christians and are referring to Christians.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John 1:8 (KJV)

If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (God) a liar, and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:10 (KJV)

At first these may sound contradictory to the verses given in the first part of this section; however, they are not contradictory at all.

All Christians will sin, but they will not have an on-going lifestyle of sin. It is that on-going lifestyle of sin that is evidence that our faith is not genuine and that we do not know God. Genuine believers should be growing in their walk with God. They should quickly confess any sin in their life. There
should be a decreasing pattern of sin in their life.

Test 4. Do you love the things of this world?

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.  

1 John 2:15 (NKJV)

One cannot love both God and the things of this world at the same time. Many who claim to “love the Lord” spend far more time enjoying things that satisfy or feed the flesh rather than seeking to glorify God and to grow in their walk with God. Many who identify themselves as “Christians” seem to love what God hates. Do the television programs we watch center on violence, sensuality, and God-dishonoring humor, or do they glorify God? Does the music we listen to glorify God, or satisfy the flesh? Does what we read glorify God? What do we think about? Does our thought life glorify God or does it feed our sinful nature?

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, Jesus Christ, …  

Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.  

Philippians 4:8 (NASB)

Test 5. Do you love fellow believers?

God instructs us to love fellow believers. According to the following verses, if we do not do this, we are not really genuine believers. It is also very clear that if anyone hates a brother (a fellow believer) then he is not a believer.

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.  

1 John 3:14 (NKJV)

We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.  

1 John 4:19-20 (NIV)

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.  

1 John 2:9-10 (NIV)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.  

1 John 4:7-8 (ESV)

Many times, in the Word of God we are instructed to “love one another”. The Bible goes on to give
more detailed instructions in how we are to love each other. We are to...

...pray for one another.  James 5:16
...accept one another. Romans 15:7
...be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:32
...forgive one another. Ephesians 4:32
...show hospitality to one another. 1 Peter 4:9
...wash one another's feet. John 13:14
...encourage one another and build each other up. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
...not give up meeting together. Hebrews 10:25
...teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. Colossians 3:16
...spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Hebrews 10:24

This is not a complete list of the “one another’s”. There are more.

This list helps us to understand how God designed our relationship with fellow believers. If we isolate ourselves from God’s people or if we make no attempt to love them as God instructs us to love them, it is an indication that we do not know God.

Remember, in the Word of God we are told to “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith.” How did you do as you went through this lesson? Can you say with assurance that, “Yes, I passed each of these Biblical tests.”? If so, then rejoice. It is tremendously satisfying to know that our eternity with God is assured. Now concentrate on seeking to know God better and to grow in your walk with Him.

These five Biblical tests are given by God in the Word of God -- the Bible. If you went through this lesson and are being bothered by some of them or if you are feeling anger about them, then it may very well be that you need to make sure you are saved. First, review chapter three of this study. Make sure that you understand salvation, and then make sure you are saved by making the choice to genuinely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.**
2 Corinthians 13:5a *(ESV)*

*Putting your faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as full payment for the penalty of your sin, accepting His forgiveness, and making the choice to turn from that sin and follow Him is the only way to be saved. There is no other way – none.*

**I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.** 1 John 5:13-14 *(NIV)*

*If you have doubts about your salvation, we urgently ask you to make sure that you are saved. Your eternal destiny is at stake. Repent and believe now, while you have the opportunity to do so. Tomorrow may be too late.*
Chapter Seven

Once One is Saved, Can He Ever Be Unsaved Again?

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13 (NIV)

There are some who have been saved who have given up serving the Lord because they believe that they have lost their salvation. Some have become discouraged and just quit trying because they feel that they simply don’t have what it takes to be a Christian.

I (Phil Benedict) very clearly remember talking to a high school student in one of my classes who stated that she once was a Christian but was not a Christian now. She was discouraged and had given up “trying to be a Christian”. She stated that she was not going to try to be a Christian anymore because she did not believe that she could be good enough to be a Christian.

Does this way of thinking square with what the Word of God teaches? Is our salvation dependent on our continually living up to a certain standard of goodness or godliness?

Once we are saved, can we ever be lost again?

Is it possible for genuine Christians to commit such bad sin that God would take back their salvation and, as a result, they would spend an eternity in hell when they died?

Will God unadopt those He has adopted into His family?

If a saved person commits suicide, will he automatically spend eternity in hell?

The Word of God answers all of these questions. The answer is a loud “no”. A genuinely saved person cannot lose his salvation. He is secure. There are very clear Scriptures that speak to this issue.

Does this give Christian’s freedom to sin???

An immature Christian might conclude that if our salvation is secure in spite of our sin, then sin is not really a very serious issue in the life of a Christian. This is a very false conclusion. As we will see, we will not lose our salvation because of sin; however, sin in the life of a Christian is serious and can have devastating results.

Scripture instructs us to live a life worthy of our calling and not to use the grace of God as an excuse to sin.

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Romans 6:1-2 (KJV)

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Romans 6:15 (KJV)
If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; … 1 John 1:6 (NASB)

For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. Jude 1:4 (NIV)

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. Colossians 2:6-8 (ESV)

Many, many times in the Word of God we are instructed to seek to live a godly life. When a person who claims to be a Christian habitually sins and then downplays, rationalizes, or justifies it, he is rebelling against God. He most likely was not a genuine believer to begin with. There will be serious consequences to this kind of rebellion in the life of a Christian.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3 (NIV)

What happens when a Christian sins?

Perhaps the most serious result of on-going sin in the life of a Christian is that we smear and dishonor the name of our Father and of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who loved us and gave His own life so that we can know and fellowship with Him and escape the corruption of the world.

There are many unhappy consequences of deliberate ongoing sin in the life of a believer.

1. Sin and rebellion harden hearts and grieve God.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 (NIV)

But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; … Isaiah 63:10a (NASB)

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” Hebrews 4:7 (ESV)

2. Unconfessed sin can cause one to lose many of the blessings of knowing and walking with God.

When the Spirit is grieved and hindered, we cannot expect to experience the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives. We cannot expect to be a happy person or to have any joy or peace.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22-23a (NKJV)

When repenting of his sin, David prayed, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; Psalm 51:12a (KJV)

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Psalm 32:3-4 (NIV)

In the context of this verse, “When I kept silent” is referring to David’s refusal to confess and turn away from the sin he had committed.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:6 (NASB)

3. Unconfessed sin hinders our growth and interferes with every aspect of our walk with God. It hinders the Spirit of God from working in and through us.

Quench not the Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (KJV)

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2 (NASB)

Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:1-3 (NIV)

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. Proverbs 28:13 (NIV)

In John 17, in His prayer Jesus speaks of an amazing unity between Jesus and His followers. We are “in” Him, and, as amazing as it is, we share in the glory that God gives to Jesus, His Son. When we deliberately sin, this oneness with our Lord is ignored and belittled. Do we really want to short change our relationship with our Lord in this way?

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world... ...so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." From John 17:20-26 (NASB)
4. **Unconfessed sin keeps our prayers from being answered.**

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.  1 Peter 3:7 (ESV)

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:  Psalm 66:18 (KJV)

Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.  Isaiah 59:1-2 (NASB)

5. **A true believer may be chastened or disciplined by God for his sin.**

...because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.  Hebrews 12:6 (NIV)

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.  Hebrews 12:9-11 (ESV)

6. **Christians will reap the consequences of their sin. Sin brings pain, suffering, and trouble into our lives.**

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.  Galatians 6:7 (NASB)

He who sows wickedness reaps trouble, ...  Proverbs 22:8a (NIV)

Christians should not think that they can sin and then simply confess that sin and expect all the consequences to be gone. Confessing sin restores fellowship, but it does not necessarily remove the consequences of our sin. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that God’s parental forgiveness means that we will not suffer the consequences of sin.

The LORD replied, "I have forgiven them, as you asked. Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times – not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it."  Numbers 14:20-23 (NIV)

King David is another very good example of this. God forgave David’s sin, but from that time on in David’s family there was rape, incest, murder, and rebellion. Before his sin there is no record of all this taking place. I suspect there were many times that David mourned the day he committed sexual immorality with Bathsheba.
7. *Sin causes us to lose eternal rewards and treasure in heaven.*

Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully.  
2 John 1:8 *(NIV)*

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.  
2 Corinthians 5:10 *(KJV)*

...each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.  If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.  If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.  
1 Corinthians 3:13-15 *(NASB)*

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.  
Revelation 22:12 *(NKJV)*

There are eternal rewards waiting for those who serve the Lord.  All saved people will spend eternity with God in heaven, but some will eternally enjoy the rewards of their loyalty and service to Him.

8. *We teach others to sin by our example.*

None of us are totally isolated from everyone else.  What we do affects others.  By our example, when we sin, we encourage others to sin, even when we attempt to hide it or rationalize it.  After King David’s immorality with Bathsheba, David’s sons caught on and there was immorality, including rape and incest, in David's family.  This led to continual trouble, pain, and heartache in the life of David and his family.

Children see and copy the attitudes and actions of their parents.  There are exceptions, but most of the time children will follow the example set by parents.

9. *Sin snowballs and hurts others as well as ourselves.*

One sin leads to another and another and another and...  David’s sin with Bathsheba led to his attempts to cover it up, to lying, to deceit, to murder, and to ongoing rebellion against God.  David’s sin led to the destruction of a marriage, the death of Uriah and others in the army, the death of the baby that was born, and to the death of David’s sons Abijah, and Adonijah.  There was not one member of David’s family that did not suffer because of David’s sin *(2 Samuel 12:7-18).*

Abraham’s sin with Hagar, some 3000 years later, still results in death and conflict between the Jews and Arabs today.

10. *When a Christian continues to sin, he no longer has a credible testimony.*

Nobody believes or respects a hypocrite.
What should a Christian do when he sins?

Christians should make an active commitment to grow in their walk with God. They should seek to know God better and to draw near to Him. However, while on earth, we will never reach a state where we never sin anymore. As we draw nearer to Him, we will sin less and less. When we do sin, we must quickly admit it and deal with it.

1. Confess that sin to God.

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:8-10 (NASB)

The book of 1 John is written to Christians. The purpose of this confession of sin is not to get saved again, but to get rid of the defilement of that sin. We must keep the channels of communication with God open and we must determine to continue growing in our walk with God.

2. Repent of that sin.

Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. Revelation 2:5 (NIV)

This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word. Isaiah 66:2b (NIV)

Rather than justifying, rationalizing, excusing, or just ignoring our sin, we need to repent. Admit that it was sin and determine to turn away from it. Determine that with the Spirit’s empowering, you will not continue in that sin.

3. If your sin has caused another person to be hurt, you need to make it right with that person, when possible.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24 (ESV)

Part of serving God is to have a clear conscience in our relationship with others. If we have, in some way, harmed another person, either intentionally or unintentionally, we need to do what we can to make it right. Along these same lines, we must also be willing to forgive others who have sinned against us and not hold on to resentment and anger.
4. We must forgive those who have wronged us or sinned against us.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12 (NASB)

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Matthew 18:21-22 (NKJV)

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to “forgive and forget”. We are absolutely not to keep on holding a grudge or have resentment, but chances are that, being human, we will not completely forget what happened.

When we forgive, we do not seek revenge; rather we let God handle the revenge.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. Romans 12:17-20 (NIV)

Truths from the Word of God that Relate to the Security of Our Salvation

Now we will take a look at some key teachings in the Word of God that relate to the certainty of God’s promises of eternal life to those who genuinely believe in Him. These truths are cause for joy in the life of a Christian. If, from time to time, you feel like shouting “Hallelujah” or “Praise the Lord”, then let ‘er rip. 😊

1. The Forgiveness of Sin

The following verses show how completely God forgives “all” sin:

...and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7b (NKJV)

God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, Colossians 2:13b (NIV)

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Hebrews 8:12 (KJV) Also see Jeremiah 31:34 and Isaiah 43:25.

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12 (NASB)

You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Micah 7:19 (NKJV)

...though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)
But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.  1 Corinthians 6:10-11 (NIV)

Notice the number of times that “all” is used in these verses. All means all -- past, present, and future. Nowhere in Scripture does it indicate that He forgives all past sin but not our future sin. Again, all means all.

Since all our sin is forgiven, then on what basis could we lose our salvation and spend eternity being punished for sin that has been forgiven? God will not, He cannot, condemn forgiven people to hell to be judged for sin or sins that He has forgiven.

In these verses there are no conditions attached. When a person makes the choice to genuinely believe, all his sin is forgiven. It does not say that sins a Christian commit after being saved but doesn’t confess, are not forgiven. We simply cannot add that condition to the Biblical teaching in these verses. All means all -- there are no conditions attached.

Individuals who believe that they can lose their salvation because of sin committed after being saved must make a distinction between sins that do not cause one to lose their salvation and sins that do cause one to lose their salvation. Apparently, a little white lie will not cause them to lose their salvation but murder or immorality will. This is purely a man-made distinction. It has no Biblical foundation whatsoever.

All sin is serious and the penalty for all sin is eternal death or separation from God. If Christians are still to be judged for “big” sins after being saved and forgiven, then we are all in danger of spending eternity in hell because the penalty of all sin is eternal separation from God.

To understand Biblical forgiveness, we need to understand that in the Word of God we see two applications of the mercy of God in His forgiveness of sin. The terms “judicial forgiveness” and “parental forgiveness” are not Biblical terms, but they do describe these Biblical truths.

A. Judicial Forgiveness

When an unsaved person genuinely repents of his sin and puts his faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for his sin, then that person’s sin is forgiven. All his sin -- past, present, and future -- is forgiven. This is judicial or legal forgiveness. When his sin is forgiven, an individual is justified, and righteousness is credited to his account. He becomes a child of God, and he will spend eternity with God forever.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.  Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.  Colossians 1:13-14 (NIV)

B. Parental Forgiveness

When a person who is already genuinely saved makes a choice to sin, his fellowship with God and his
joy are interrupted. He will bear little or no genuine spiritual fruit. When he confesses his sin, the Spirit again has control of that person’s life and his fellowship with God is restored, and that person can resume growing in his walk with God.

This restoration of fellowship with God is sometimes called “parental forgiveness”.

Christians must regularly confess sin to have ongoing fellowship with God, and so that they can have joy and they can be productive servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One excellent example of parental forgiveness is in the life of King David. David was a child of God; yet he sinned grievously. Later, when David was confronted with his sin, he admitted his sin and repented.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD" – and you forgave the guilt of my sin.  

Psalm 32:5 (NIV)

David confessed his sin and then prayed for renewed joy. David would still suffer many consequences of his sin, but the joy of walking with God was restored when he confessed his sin.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.  

Psalm 51:12 (NIV)

In the following verse it is referring to God’s parental forgiveness. When believers sin by refusing to forgive others, their fellowship with God is broken. When we obey and forgive others, we experience God’s parental forgiveness and our fellowship with God is restored.

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.  

Matthew 6:14-15 (NASB)

2. Is the death of Jesus sufficient to pay the price for all sin, or just our “little” sins?

Did the death of Jesus on the cross pay the price for all our sin or just our “little” sins? Are sins that we commit after being saved, but we do not confess, covered by His death or are the “big” sins not covered? To believe that one could lose his salvation because of sin after being genuinely saved, one has to believe that these unconfessed sins are not covered by the death of Jesus on the cross.

What does the Word of God have to say?

...and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.  

1 John 1:7a (NASB)

God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ...  

Colossians 2:13b (NIV)

...though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.  

Isaiah 1:18 (ESV)

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.  

1 Corinthians 6:10-11 (NIV)
...who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.  

Titus 2:14  

(NASB)

3. God “justifies “or “declares righteous” all those who choose to believe (be saved) in Him.

Justification is the act of God by which a sinner is declared righteous. This happens the moment that we make the choice to believe in Him. This declaration of righteousness is made possible by the death of Jesus on the cross. It cannot be worked for or earned. We cannot make ourselves worthy of justification. It is based only on His love and His grace.

When one is justified, he/she is acquitted from all guilt. Legally we have a clean record before God. We have no rap sheet. This satisfies God’s demand for holiness and qualifies us to be His child and to spend eternity with Him. Sometimes justification is defined as meaning “just as if I have never sinned”.

Justification is an ongoing action. The tense of the verb indicates that it is, in fact, a continuing action by God. This truth should bring joy and rejoicing to the heart and life of every believer!!!

The Biblical meaning of justified does not refer to our actions, but instead it describes our legal standing before God. We have been declared righteous and God continues to declare us righteous. Remember, justification is an ongoing action. We are continually being declared righteous by God.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Romans 5:1  

(KJV)

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.  

1 Corinthians 6:10-11  

(NIV)

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:  

Romans 3:23-24  

(KJV)

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!  

Romans 5:9  

(NIV)

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.  

Romans 3:28  

(KJV)

For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.  

Hebrews 10:14  

(NASB)

Notice that in this last verse it states that we are perfected “for all time”. What a truth!!!

Being justified is not conditional on our maintaining a standard of righteousness. It is one hundred percent based on His love, grace and mercy.

Again, we must ask the question, “Will God send someone to hell whom He has declared righteous?”  

Will God send a righteous person to hell???
4. Is our salvation based on our own righteousness (goodness) or on God’s imputed righteousness?

Righteous is a term often used in the Bible to refer to God’s sinlessness or His perfection. God is holy, absolutely righteous, just, and sinless. He is perfect, without the slightest tint of sin or evil.

As we have already seen, when we are saved, we are justified, meaning that we have the righteousness of God credited to our account. It is a gift. It is not something we earn.

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.
Titus 3:5a (NIV)

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ...
Romans 4:4-5a (NKJV)

For a person to believe that he can lose his salvation because of sin, he has to believe that salvation is to some degree based on his own righteousness or goodness, not on God’s gift of justification.

The ultimate answer as to whether a saved person can be lost again rests on the question of who does the work of salvation. If salvation depends on the finished work of God and our being credited with His righteousness, then our salvation is secure. If salvation depends on our keeping some unknown standard of goodness, then we are all bound for a godless eternity in hell forever because we all continue to sin, and the wages of all sin is eternal death.

We cannot trust in our own faithfulness and God’s imputed righteousness at the same time. It is either one or the other.

Let’s take a look at what God thinks about our righteousness.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.
Isaiah 64:6 (KJV)

Notice that it is our righteousness that is like filthy rags in God’s sight. It’s our good side that is rags in God’s eyes. To believe that we are kept saved by our own righteousness is like depending on a pile of dirty filthy rags to make us clean in God’s sight.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Romans 3:10-12 (NIV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?
Jeremiah 17:9 (KJV)

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride,
foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."  Mark 7:21-23 (NKJV)

These are not very nice descriptions of us. They show what God thinks about our righteousness. If we are to be saved by our own righteousness or maintaining a certain level of goodness, the best we can do is to offer God filthy rags or a filthy garment to somehow atone for our sin. Fortunately our salvation is not based on our own goodness or righteousness (filthy rags).

These verses and many others make it clear that our salvation is not dependent on our own righteousness. There is no Scripture that says that receiving or keeping our salvation is dependent on our own goodness or our own righteousness, which in God’s eyes is nothing but filthy rags.

Fortunately for us, when we choose to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God credits us with His own righteousness. It is this imputed righteousness that qualifies us to know and live for Him and to spend eternity with Him. It is this righteousness from God that is the basis of our salvation.

He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.  2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."  Romans 4:4-8 (NIV)

Notice the last sentence in this verse. “Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” How can someone read and understand this verse, and then say that the Lord will count big sins against those who have God’s righteousness credited to their account?

That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.” But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.  Romans 4:22-25 (ESV)

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for 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.  Romans 3:22-24 (NIV)

When we are saved, two important things take place. One is that all our sin -- past, present, and future -- is forgiven. The second is that God credits us with His own righteousness. All the verses above make that very clear. Saved people stand before God absolutely clean and righteous (justified), not based on our own righteousness but on the righteousness that comes from God Himself. We are saved not because we keep a certain standard of goodness, but because God credits us with His very own righteousness.

To say that one can lose his salvation is to say that God’s own righteous perfection is not enough to satisfy God. If God’s righteousness is not enough to keep us saved, then our own righteousness certainly will never keep us saved. If God’s righteousness is not enough for us to be
saved, then all people, without exception, are bound for eternal punishment in hell forever.

If your salvation depended on your keeping a certain standard of goodness, you would lose your salvation very quickly because all Christians keep on sinning and the wages of all sin is eternal death. However, we stand before God absolutely clean because He credits all saved people with His own righteousness.

**For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.**

Hebrews 10:14 (NASB)

In this Scripture, we are the ones who are sanctified. Here it clearly states that He has made us perfect for all time. Saved people with God’s righteousness are perfect now and they always will be perfect in God’s eyes. What a truth!!

5. What is everlasting or eternal life?

**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.** John 3:16 (KJV)

**For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.** Romans 6:23 (KJV)

...a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ... Titus 1:2 (NIV)

God very clearly promises eternal life to those who choose to believe in Him. Many Scriptures confirm this. Eternal life is life that never ends. Everyone who has eternal life will spend eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ and will enjoy His grace and rich blessings forever.

The very meaning of eternal life is life without end. Eternal life cannot end. If God were to give eternal life and then later take it back or in some way or another, we “lose” it, then God would have lied because He promised eternal life, not six months or two years of life. Six months of life is not eternal life. It is a contradiction of the promise itself to say that a Christian can be given six months of eternal life. Eternal life is life forever -- life without end. Eternal life cannot stop after six months, a year, ten years, or even ten quadrillion years.

**And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** John 10:28 (KJV)

This is a very clear and simple statement by Jesus. To perish means to spend eternity in hell. It would be hard to misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. He is clearly saying that He gives his followers eternal life, and they will never spend eternity in hell.

We might ask ourselves what “never” means. Never means never!!! It won’t happen. When it says we will never perish, it means just that. Those who have been given eternal life will never, for any reason, perish or spend an eternity in hell.
"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.  John 5:24 (NIV)

Here Jesus clearly states, “I tell you the truth”.  Jesus always tells the truth but here He is emphasizing it because He wants us to clearly understand what He is saying.  The truth that He wants us to understand is that those who hear and believe have eternal life, and they will not be condemned (sent to hell) because they have crossed over from death to life.

Notice in this verse that eternal life is a present possession.  We have eternal life now.  It doesn’t say that one will get it in the future if he doesn’t sin real bad.  It states that the one who hears and believes has eternal life now and that he will not be condemned.

These verses are very clear in their meaning.  If, in fact, a person genuinely believed and God gave that person eternal life, but then, for whatever the reason, that person died and went to hell, then God would have lied.  If God lies, then He is no longer God and His Word is worthless.  This cannot and will never be.  God is truth and His Word is true and trustworthy.

In the Bible, no unsaved person is ever said to have or have had eternal life.  Instead, all unsaved people will suffer the “second death” (Revelation 20:14-15, Revelation 21:8) which is an eternity in the “lake of fire”, or hell.  Only those who genuinely believe are given eternal life which is life forever with our Lord Jesus Christ.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.  My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.  John 10:27-30 (NASB)

Here again, all those who hear and follow Jesus are given eternal life and they will never perish.  It could not get much more clear than that.  It makes it even more emphatic by saying that no one can take one who has eternal life out of the hand of Jesus or the hand of the Father.  After receiving eternal life, no one, not Satan, not even ourselves, or anyone else, can take us out of the hand of Jesus and out of the hand of God.

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness -- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, Titus 1:1-2 (NIV)

God promised eternal life to those who believe (the elect) long before they were born – before the beginning of time.  Is it possible that God who promised us eternal life before the beginning of time would give us eternal life as He promised, and then break that promise and take eternal life away from us?  Could God send someone to hell that He had promised eternal life long before they were even born?  If this is possible, then we cannot trust any of the promises of God.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.  He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.  And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.  Do you believe this?"  John 11:25-26 (NKJV)
He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.  John 3:18 (NKJV)

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1a (KJV)

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.  John 3:18 (NASB)

Here it clearly states that a person who believes will not be condemned which means he will not be sent to hell. It does not say that believers will not be condemned as long as they don’t do any bad sins.


For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:38-40 (ESV)

God draws unsaved people to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are saved by believing in Jesus.

In these verses it clearly states that it is God’s will that all who come to Christ have eternal life and be resurrected. Notice the last phrase, “and I will raise him up at the last day”. Here Jesus clearly states that those who God gives Him will have eternal life and He (Jesus) will resurrect them from the dead. This is clear. He does not say that some who God gives to the Son will have eternal life or that those who live a good life will be resurrected. The emphasis here is that none of them are lost, none. There are none who have been given eternal life that Jesus will not raise up from the dead to be with Him forever.

Here it is very clear that it is the will of God and the will of the Son that no one who comes to the Son be lost. No one whom God entrusts to the Son will be lost. No one will be cast out – no one. Jesus will resurrect all to whom the Father has given eternal life.

To believe that some genuine believers will lose their salvation is to believe that Jesus is failing to do the will of God, because it is God’s will that they all have eternal life.

7. 1 John 2:1-2

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2 (NIV)

These two verses contain amazing truth. For a moment, picture a courtroom. God is the judge, Satan is our accuser (prosecutor) and Jesus is the defense lawyer. This verse clearly states that when we sin, Jesus speaks to the Father in our defense. Say a Christian commits a “serious” sin like murder.
(Actually, all sin is serious.) Picture Satan going before God and accusing us of murder or any other sin. Jesus then speaks to the Father, saying that He (Jesus) died for this person’s sin and this person has already been completely forgiven and he has been declared righteous. “I (Jesus) died for this man and he has been washed in My blood and has been made clean.” God, the judge, agrees and the case is dismissed because the defendant (us) has already been declared to be righteous, clean, and forgiven.

This is amazing. When we sin, Jesus, who died for us, actually defends or makes intercession for us, based on His own death on the cross. Jesus, who died for us, will never turn away from us or let us spend eternity being punished for sin that He already died and took the punishment for.

In the book of Hebrews, the same truth is expressed in the following verses:

...but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:24-25 (NASB)

Jesus is a permanent high priest. He will never stop being our high priest. Therefore, He is able to completely save us forever because He is always interceding for us. Notice that He saves “forever”, not just for six months or a year. He saves completely and forever. If we were to lose our salvation because of sin, it would mean that Jesus failed in His ministry of intercession for us.

There is no distinction made between big and little sins. It doesn’t say that He intercedes for us or defends us when we sin “little” sins but does not do so for “big” sins.

8. Sealed by the Holy Spirit

When a person wishes to buy something such as a car or a house, he will often put down money as a deposit guaranteeing that he will buy the item as soon as he gets the necessary paper work or funding together. God gave us a deposit guaranteeing that He would fulfill His promise of eternal life. Humans often fail to keep their promises, but God who cannot lie, cannot break a promise, and He gives us His own Spirit as a guarantee that He will keep His word.

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV)

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (NIV)

He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 2 Corinthians 5:5 (ESV)

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Ephesians 4:30 (KJV)
And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:28-39 (ESV)

This is a loaded passage of Scripture that we cannot fully develop in this short study. This passage deals with the absolute certainty that those whom God foreknows will be glorified, and this passage deals with the impossibility of saved people being separated from the love of God. Read this passage carefully several times and meditate on it. You cannot understand this passage and conclude that it is possible for a genuinely saved person to lose his salvation and experience the wrath and anger of God. This passage tells us very clearly that nothing in all the universe (this includes our own selves) can separate us from His love.

A sobering Biblical truth is that those who reject Christ are under the wrath of God. If a genuine believer were to lose his salvation, he would again be the object of God’s wrath. He would be separated from God’s love, and the wrath of God would “remain on Him”.

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. John 3:36 (NIV)

What this passage in Romans 8 is teaching is that we cannot be separated from His love. If we could be, we would again be made objects of His wrath.

This passage in Romans 8 begins by stating that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose”. Notice the “all”. In all things God will work things out for the good of those who are called and those who love Him. This is an amazing statement. All that occurs in our life will be used by God to bring about something good. He works for our good, not for our condemnation. We do not have to worry about God rejecting or condemning us, because He works for our good – not for our condemnation.
Now let’s take a closer look at verses 29-30.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. Romans 8:29-30 (ESV)

Carefully think about and digest these verses. In eternity past, God determined who would be recipients of eternal life. These were known by Him before the world and man were ever created. All of those whom God foreknew, He predestined to be like His Son so that the Son would be glorified. (Predestined simply means that God planned ahead of time.) All those God predestined, He called to Himself. All those God called, He also justified. All those God justified, He also glorified. All of these are in the past tense of the verbs. He has already done each of these actions. For us, glorification is a future event when God gives us our new glorified bodies and we will be with Him forever. However, in God’s eyes, we are already glorified. It’s already done. Will God send some of His glorified saints to an eternity in hell?

Notice that each of these actions of God are all inclusive. It does not say that some of those that God foreknew He would also justify. It clearly states that “those God foreknew He also predestined”. Nobody gets left out. This same pattern is followed in each of these statements describing the actions of God. All those whom God foreknew are called, justified, and glorified. All those that God foreknew will be glorified with Him in heaven forever. Nobody gets left out along the way.

These verses are powerful. All those whom God foreknew in eternity past will be glorified in heaven with Him. This is true of every individual that God foreknew and called to Himself. If someone that God foreknew, called to Himself, justified, and glorified, were somehow to lose his salvation somewhere along the line, then this Scripture is false and God is wrong. Since God’s Word is true, we cannot and we will not ever lose our salvation. We will be glorified!!! Praise the Lord!!!

These verses go on to say, “God who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all”. God who gave Jesus to die for us so that we can have eternal life will not condemn us. Neither will Jesus “who died--more than that, who was raised to life--and is at the right hand of God interceding for us”. If neither God the Father nor Jesus the Son will condemn us, then who will or who could?

These verses also state that neither “trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword” will be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

In a final glorious statement these verses (Romans 8:28-39) end with “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. Wow, it can’t get any more clear than that.

10. Romans 11:29

This is a short but powerful statement.
...for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. Romans 11:29 (NASB)
God called us (Romans 8:28-30) and He has given us the gift of salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). This verse (Romans 11:29) clearly states that God’s call and His gifts cannot be revoked or rescinded. God cannot and will not change His mind and take back His call and His gift of salvation.

11. Are we adopted children of God or are we temporary foster children?

The experience of some, not all, foster children is heartbreaking. One of the hardest and most damaging things for a child to experience is to be a foster child, passed from person to person with no sense of belonging or security. Some foster children grow up with little sense of self-worth and they never develop the qualities that go into being a well-adjusted stable individual. The best thing for a child that, for whatever the reason, cannot be raised by his own family, is to be adopted into a caring loving family who will give him love and stability.

We, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been adopted into the family of God. Praise God with all your being for this truth and for all the blessings that go with being adopted into the family of God.

...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us...

Ephesians 1:4-8 (NASB)

God deeply loves us; He saved us; and He adopted us into His family in accordance with the riches of His grace.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" Romans 8:15 (NASB)

“Abba” can be translated “daddy”. Our heavenly Father is our “daddy”. Daddies protect, love, and forgive, and our heavenly “daddy” is the ultimate forgiver of all sin, not just the little ones. An adopted son had all the rights, all the privileges and the affections of a son and of an heir.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4-5 (ESV)

Will the love, the grace, the mercy, and the compassion of God allow Him to “unadopt” His children whom He has adopted into His family? Is not the love, the grace, and the mercy of our Father sufficient to cover all our sins? Or is God’s rich grace only sufficient to cover “little” sins? Does God’s grace end and He casts His very own adopted children into hell for their “big” sins?

God sent His Son to pay the price for our redemption, so that He could adopt us into His family. Again, the price of our redemption was the death, the shed blood, of His own Son -- Jesus.

Will God, who paid so dear a price so that He could adopt us into His own family, turn around and “unadopt” us? Will our loving Father adopt us and then turn around and unadopt us, and then adopt us again, and then turn around and unadopt us again, and then adopt us again, and then turn around and
unadopt us again, and then adopt us again, and then turn around and unadopt us again, and then adopt us again, and then turn around and unadopt us again, and then...? That’s what you have to believe if you believe that we can be saved and lost over and over again. Is that the kind of “daddy” our heavenly Father is?

Our Father loves, cares for, provides for, protects, and guides us. He loved us so much that He suffered and died on the cross, paying the price for all our sin. The holy God became sin so that He could adopt us into His family. He will never remove us from His family after dying to bring us into His family. His death is more than sufficient to cover all our sin.

I (Phil Benedict) have several adopted grandchildren. They are not perfect kids, but I cannot imagine “unadopting” those children and sending them back into the situation from which they were removed. God’s love is much deeper than mine and we can rest assured that He will never “unadopt” us.

12. What about the unfaithful Christian?

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 (NIV)

God will judge the work or the service of all genuine believers. There are some who apparently are genuine believers but they do not put much effort into serving Him. In these verses it states that every Christian’s work will be tried by fire. The work of some will stand the test, but the work of others will be burned up. Notice that those whose work is burned up are still saved. The most they will be able to say is that they escaped the flames, but even in their unfaithfulness God is still faithful to His children and they are still His -- they are still saved.

13. God’s promises of eternal life to believers are unconditional.

In the Word of God there are conditional and unconditional promises. Following are examples of conditional promises:

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. 1 John 5:14-15 (NIV)

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. John 15:7 (NIV)

These two verses are examples of conditional promises. God will answer our prayers if certain
conditions are met. However, the promises given to genuine believers that relate to the security of our salvation are unconditional.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. **I and the Father are one.** John 10:27-30 (NASB)

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." Hebrews 8:12 (NKJV)

There is no “if” with these promises. They are not conditional. They are not given to us if we maintain a certain level of goodness, or if we don’t sin really bad. The promises are based in the trustworthiness and the faithfulness of God, not on our faithfulness.

14. Is God trustworthy?

Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness -- a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, Titus 1:1-2 (NIV)

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Hebrews 6:13-20 (ESV)

These are tremendous verses. God, who cannot lie, wanted those of us who have put our hope and trust in Him to know the certainty of His promises. God swore by Himself and His unchanging Word that He will never change His mind and that our hope is secure. Our hope is as secure as God Himself. Our hope is anchored in God and in our forever high priest -- Jesus Christ Himself who continually intercedes for us in the presence of God Himself. This hope is the anchor of our souls, as secure as God Himself. Wow!!! We can’t get any more secure than that. With this anchor to encourage us, we can be at peace. Our salvation is as secure as God Himself.

What About Suicide?

I have been asked numerous times if a Christian who commits suicide can go to heaven. We need to remember that our eternal destiny, heaven or hell, is determined by whether or not we believe in or put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we believe in Him, we will be saved and spend eternity with
Him. If we do not believe in Him, we will be lost and will spend an eternity in hell, separated from God. While we certainly do not condone or justify suicide, suicide has nothing to do with where we spend eternity. Remember, all our sins -- past, present, and future -- are forgiven. Suicide, like every other sin, is forgiven. There is absolutely no genuine Biblical teaching that would justify believing or teaching that a genuine Christian who commits suicide will not go to heaven.
Chapter Eight

Reading and Absorbing the Word of God

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Psalm 1 (NIV)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17 (NIV)

Long Term Growth in Our Walk With the Lord

Some Christians begin a walk with the Lord and after many years they are still strongly committed and enjoying a satisfying and productive walk with Him.

There are others who choose to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and begin a life of serving Him, but as time passes their commitment to Him dims and cools. There is little if any growth, satisfaction, or joy in their walk with God. This doesn’t mean that they no longer know God, but they are certainly feeling spiritually dry, unproductive, and they may be deeply discouraged.

What makes the difference???

This question could be answered in a number of ways: however, one thing is quite sure. Those who are still committed and productive in their walk with God regularly absorb the Word of God (the Bible) and desire to put it into practice. Those who become dry and unproductive most likely do not make absorbing and applying the Word of God a regular part of their lives.
Are you satisfied with your walk with God?

To consistently walk with God and spiritually grow over a long period of time, four things are important. They are:

1. To regularly absorb the Word of God and commit to putting it into practice.
2. To develop good Biblical prayer habits.
3. To regularly participate and serve in a solid, Bible teaching and practicing church.
4. To be careful about what you allow into your mind and what you think about.

These four things are as important to our spiritual life as air, food, and water are to our physical life.

Each of these four things are important. This lesson concentrates on number one, the absorption of the Word of God and putting it into practice.

Absorbing the Word of God

The Word of God leads us to a deep faith in God and through it we learn how to live a God-honoring productive life. Through the Bible we gain understanding, encouragement, and strength, and it leads us to spiritual growth, fruitfulness, and peace.

However, some make an effort to read and put the Word into practice, but for some reason or another they become discouraged or dissatisfied with their study and lose their zeal and commitment to reading and absorbing the Word.

The purpose of this chapter is to suggest ways to read, study and absorb the Word of God so that it bears good fruit in your life. It is not always easy and it does take time and commitment.

God, who is the author of the Bible, expects us to read, to absorb, and to live His Word. We need to be willing to change attitudes and behavior patterns as we grow and see areas of our life that need changing.

To regularly read and study the Bible requires effort and discipline. Spiritual growth and walking with God does not come automatically. It is not a passive activity. It is an active pursuit.

Neglecting the Word of God leads to staleness, frustration and defeat in our walk with God.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. Psalm 1 (NIV)
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.  Colossians 3:16-17 (NIV)

Sanctify them by Your truth.  Your word is truth.  John 17:17 (NKJV)

To sanctify is to set apart to God and to be godly or holy.

How can a young man keep his way pure?  
By keeping it according to Your word.  Psalm 119:9 (NASB)

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.  Psalm 119:11 (ESV)

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.  2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

The law of his God is in his heart;  
His steps do not slip.  Psalm 37:31 (NASB)

Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path.  Psalm 119:105 (NASB)

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither.  
Whatever he does prospers.  Psalms 1:2-3 (NIV)

To be effective, our Bible reading/study needs to be regular. We must discipline ourselves and put effort into developing consistency—over long periods of time. Solid spiritual growth takes time. We cannot expect instant growth.

Now take the time to read Proverbs 2. In this passage the pursuit of wisdom can be equated with an active reading and absorption of the Word of God.

From verses 1-4, (Proverbs 2) what are eight activities that describe an active pursuit of wisdom?

In verse 5, what is the result of this pursuit?

From verses 6-8, how does God respond to our pursuit?

From verses 9-22, what are the results of this pursuit in our lives?

From these verses what can happen to those who do not pursue growing in their walk with God?

It is important that we regularly take time to read the Word and to think about what we read. As you
read, ask God to give you a correct understanding of what you read. Don’t expect to understand it all. None of us do. However, we can certainly understand enough to keep on growing and maturing in our walk with the Lord.

The reason many of us do not spiritually grow very much is because we don’t put much effort into it. We are not saved by our good works or by our own efforts; however, spiritual growth takes consistent effort and discipline on our part.

Now, seeking the Spirit's direction, determine what actions or attitudes in your life need to be changed and brought into line with what you have learned from His Word. Then determine that with His strengthening, you will make those changes.

**Absorbing the Word Through Meditation on Biblical Passages and Truths**

To meditate on Scripture is to quietly and unhurriedly think about or to ponder on Biblical passages and Biblical truths. We ask God for a right understanding and then commit to putting into practice the Biblical truths that one absorbs.

As one reads the Word of God, he/she needs to not be in a hurry. Rather we need to take the time to think and meditate on what is read.

*Meditating on the Word of God has absolutely nothing to do with Hinduism or things such as transcendental meditation, yoga, or any other form of meditation promoted by various secular or “religious” organizations.*

The Word of God instructs us to meditate on His Word. Carefully read and think about (meditate on) the following passages.

In following passage, we are told that meditating on the Word is a key to living a fruitful and productive walk with the Lord:

**Blessed is the man**
- who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked  
- or stand in the way of sinners  
- or sit in the seat of mockers.  
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
- and on his law he meditates day and night.  
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
- which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither.  
**Whatever he does prospers.**  
Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

There are quite a number of passages which instruct us to meditate on Biblical truths.

**Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.**  
Joshua 1:8 (NIV)
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
Be acceptable in Your sight,
O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14 (NASB)

Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long. Psalm 119:97 (NIV)

I will meditate on all your works
and consider all your mighty deeds. Psalm 77:12 (NIV)

When I remember You on my bed,
I meditate on You in the night watches, ... Psalm 63:6 (NASB)

I will remember my song in the night;
I will meditate with my heart,
And my spirit ponders. Psalm 77:6 (NASB)

I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. Psalms 119:99 (NIV)

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.
Philippians 4:8 (NKJV)

From these verses we learn some of the value of meditation on Biblical passages and on Biblical truths. Some of these blessings are:

...Having a productive and fruitful walk with the Lord.
...Having peace and joy in our walk with Him.
...Having spiritual understanding, insight, and discernment.
...Having a clean thought life.

**Questions That Can Enhance Our Mediation on God’s Word**

To be more thorough in your reading and meditation, it is helpful to ask yourself some questions about the passage. Following are some suggested questions.

If you write out the answers they will sink in deeper and you will have the study written out for future use or reference. It seems that when we write something out, it sinks deeper into our brain.

What are the major truths in this passage?

Were there any instructions or principles to live by?

What do we learn about God?

Are there any direct or implied promises or warnings?
Are there any commands in this passage?

What was the key verse in this passage?

What blessings or insights did you gain from your time of study and meditation?

What attitudes or behavior patterns should you work on to be more in tune with the Word of God?

What can you share with someone else that would be helpful or a blessing to them?

What truths are there in this passage that should cause us to thank and praise God?

At the end of this study following the last chapter there is a form with all of these questions and space to write down the answers. Filling out this form makes one think and it keeps a record for future use. You may make all the copies of this form that you want.

Now take some time to pray through this passage with commitment, praise, and thanksgiving.

One passage of Scripture that I (Phil Benedict) enjoy thinking about or meditating on is Psalm 23. The very first verse of this psalm is:

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.** Psalms 23:1 (KJV)

Each word in this verse is important and can bring blessing as we think and meditate on that word.

The first word is “The”. “The” Lord is my shepherd. It is not “some” Lord or “a” Lord but “the” Lord. God who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, and who deeply loves me, is my Lord. What a truth!!

The next word is “Lord”. The “Lord” is my shepherd. This is mind boggling when we stop and think about it. My shepherd is not some weak incapable individual, but rather my shepherd is the Lord, who created all of us, and who is all powerful and all-knowing and a God of love.

The third word is “is”. This is in the present tense. It doesn’t say that the Lord has been my shepherd or that the Lord will be my shepherd sometime in the future, but rather He is my shepherd right now. What a blessing!!!

The fourth word is “my”. The Lord is “my” shepherd. I know that He can be your shepherd too, but the emphasis here is that He is “my” shepherd. Again, what a blessing!!!

The fourth word is “shepherd”. Most of us do not fully appreciate the role of a shepherd. Shepherds have not been part of our life. However, we can understand that the well being of the sheep is in the hands of the shepherd.

Our lives, and all that we are, are in the hands of our Father and Shepherd who is the God who deeply loves and cares for us. Because this is true, we have all our needs supplied and we are secure. What a blessing and cause for joy in our lives now!

Meditation is an important part of a productive and fruitful joy filled walk the Lord that is often
neglected in our busy way of life. Because we are so busy, or perhaps just undisciplined, we have allowed ourselves to be robbed of this productive and satisfying part of absorbing the Word of God and walking with the Lord.

**Suggestions for an Effective Daily “Quiet Time” of Bible Reading and Prayer**

Many Christians set aside a time each day to have a “quiet time” or to have their “devotions”. The idea is to have a time each day to read the Bible, to think and meditate about what you read, and to have a time of prayer. This is extremely important. If you regularly spend time with God, you will grow in your walk with God.

Many Christians feel frustrated in their attempts at being consistent and productive in their daily “quiet time” with God. Following are some suggestions that may help. If you don’t know where to begin your Bible reading, then you can use the two-year reading program at the end of this paper.

If you have already developed a healthy pattern of time with the Lord and you are growing in your walk with Him, then there is no reason to change. However, if you are struggling with this, then putting into practice the following suggestions may well be one of the most important things you can do to grow in your walk with the Lord.

1. Start your daily quiet time by finding a time and place where, as much as is possible, you can clear your schedule and be alone and uninterrupted. Once you figure out the time and place, do your best to keep this time as if you had a daily appointment to meet with God.

2. Now, as much as possible, clear your mind of everything else that would distract you or interfere with your time with God.

   
   Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
   test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
   See if there is any offensive way in me,  
   and lead me in the way everlasting.

4. Think back over the last few hours or days. Confess any known sin that you have not already confessed.

5. Now carefully and thoughtfully read and re-read the passage of Scripture in your reading schedule. The two-year reading program for new Christians is an excellent place to start.

6. Spend some time meditating on what you have read and learned. *Pray through the passage with thanksgiving and commitment*. Worship and praise God in relation to the truths you learn from this passage.
This time of meditation can be a precious time of allowing God to speak to you, deepening your love for Him, and giving you understanding and insights that will sustain and strengthen you.

Note: You may wish to jot down any blessings or insights you received. It is amazing how quickly we forget things. By writing them down, it also helps us to have them available to share with others who can be encouraged and benefit from what has blessed us.

Four Approaches to an Ongoing Pattern of Reading and Absorbing God’s Word

The following four approaches to reading and studying the Word of God is meant for the “average” or “ordinary” person who is not a Bible scholar. Anyone who has just a minimum reading ability can follow this pattern.

If you have limited reading skills or understanding, a Bible like the New International Readers Version may be helpful.

**Approach One—Repetitive Reading**

Approach One centers around the idea of repetitive reading. Pick out a part of Scripture that you would like to know and understand better. Read that passage over and over and over again. Read it carefully and thoughtfully. Think, meditate, and pray about what you read. Ask God for understanding. As you read, be thankful and give God praise for the truths you discover. The more you read, think and meditate on it, the more it begins to sink in and the longer you will remember what it teaches.

New Christians should start out reading in the New Testament. There are four books (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John) that record the life of Jesus. This is a good place to start your reading.

This approach means that you may spend fairly long periods of time in a short passage. That is okay. It is much better to spend a longer period of time in a short passage than to cover more material and not absorb or remember much of what you read or what the passage teaches.

It can be helpful to read in several different versions. This helps in understanding the passage and it also adds some variety to your reading. The King James Version, New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, New International Version, and New International Reader’s Version, are all translations that are reliable and helpful.

If you are not sure where to begin reading, then you can begin with the two-year reading program at the end of this study. It is an excellent way to start.

Following are some ways to pick out passages for your reading:

**A. Individual Verses or Paragraphs**

You may wish to select a single verse or paragraph for your meditation and study. Use the repetitive
reading process. You will end up reading the passage a good many time. That is okay. As you begin to probe and absorb its depths, you will be richly rewarded.

B. Individual Chapters

You may want to start with one chapter or perhaps one psalm. Read that one chapter several times a day for at least a week. Don’t read it hurriedly. At the end of a week’s time you will have read that chapter fifteen to twenty times. As you read it over and over, your understanding and appreciation of that passage will increase. Each time you read it, you will understand and appreciate those truths a little more. Each time you read it, it will sink in a little deeper and you will remember it longer. Remember---do not read in a hurry. Take time to slowly read, think, meditate and pray about what you read.

C. A Book of the Bible

The same approach that we used for an individual chapter can be used for an entire book of the Bible. For example, the book of Ephesians has six chapters. The first day, read chapter one several times. The second day, read chapter two several times. The third day, read chapter three several times. Repeat this pattern until you have read the entire book. In Ephesians, this would take six days, one day for each chapter. When you have finished the first six days, repeat this whole pattern, reading the whole book at least three or four more times. From time to time you may wish to vary the routine and read several chapters in a row or even the whole book at one time. Reading different versions will add some variety and help in understanding some parts of the book. That means you will be spending about a month reading the book of Ephesians. All this may sound like a lot of time in one book; however, each time it is read, your understanding will increase and you will remember it longer.

D. Longer Books

The same process can be used for longer books of the Bible. The book of John has twenty-one chapters and some of those chapters are quite long. You may wish to read only a half chapter a day and take about forty days or so to read through the whole book one time. Again, that is okay. We are not in a hurry. Now read the book again using the same pattern. Again, from time to time you may wish to vary your reading by reading several chapters in one day. By the time you repeat this process four or five times, you will spend three or four months in the book of John. After absorbing the book in this manner, you will have a deeper appreciation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Several months is not too long to get to know the One who brought us salvation and whom we are to pattern our lives after.

Option: Keeping a Written Record

If you would like to take your program a step farther, you may wish to keep a written record of your study and your discoveries from the Word. To do this you may want to use the form given at the end of this chapter.

Filling out these forms is not necessary for a quality time in the Word. The value of these forms is that it makes us think about what we have read and it keeps our observations for future reference. It also
makes a deeper impression on our memory, and therefore we remember it longer.

These forms can be very valuable if you are teaching someone else. In fact, these forms can be an excellent way to prepare for teaching a particular passage.

**Approach Two---Using Basic Reference Materials**

Simply reading the Word of God does not always mean that one will automatically have a right understanding of the Word. You may want to use some trusted Bible study aids. As you understand Biblical truth, be thankful and give God praise for the truths you learn. Then put what you learn into practice.

When you have questions, you may also want to ask a pastor who is a good Bible teacher. You need to be careful. Today there are a lot of preachers, pastors, and evangelists who do not teach the Word correctly. Many put more emphasis on impressing people and growing a bigger church than they do on accurately teaching the Word of God. Be especially careful, even skeptical, when listening to TV preachers and evangelists. Many totally misrepresent Scripture and teach error with some truth mixed in.

At times it can be helpful to have some basic Bible study aids to help us understand and appreciate a text of Scripture. Following are basic Bible study aids that can be helpful:

**A. Study Bibles**

A study Bible is a basic Bible study aid. It gives all kinds of information that can be helpful. It gives short explanations of the text, historical backgrounds of the books and their authors, maps and charts, explanations of unfamiliar words, and explanations of weights, measurements, distances, etc.

There are many different study Bibles. One very good one is the *MacArthur Study Bible*.

**B. Bible Dictionary**

A Bible dictionary gives information about key Bible words and topics. There are a number of Bible dictionaries available, but an old trusted Bible dictionary is called *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, or the *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*.

**C. Concordance**

A concordance is a book that is used to find a Scripture when you cannot remember the reference. If you can remember a key word from a verse, you can look up that verse by looking up that key word. Some concordances also give a very short Hebrew or Greek definition of the word. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* is the old standby.

**D. Nave’s Topical Bible**

This is a very helpful tool, especially for teachers and pastors. All the major topics of the Bible are listed along with the Bible verses that deal with that topic. It is very helpful when preparing a lesson on a particular topic.
E. Word Studies

Word studies take key words of the Bible and give more complete Hebrew or Greek definitions. They will often explain the word’s usage in a particular verse of the Bible. Some word studies are difficult to understand and use correctly, but with time and practice they can be very helpful for a more in-depth Bible study. The *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* by Lawrence O. Richards is a fairly easy-to-use word study and is a good one for first time users.

F. Other Bible Study Aids

There are literally hundreds of commentaries and other books written about every conceivable Bible topic. Some are good, some are not so good, and others are just plain bad. We need to be careful what we read and accept. It is a good idea to check with somebody who should know before buying or using a Bible study book that you are not familiar with.

**Approach Three—Reading Through the Bible, an Overview**

In a sense, this is the opposite of Approach One. In this approach we begin reading through the entire Bible. If you average about two chapters a day, it will take you just over a year and a half to read through the entire Bible. This reading approach will give you a broad overview of Scripture. You will not understand or grasp all you read and in places you may feel overwhelmed or get bogged down. Keep on reading anyway. You may wish to alternate between reading Old Testament and New Testament books.

It may not be the best to use only this approach in your reading and study of the Word. Approach One should be the foundation of your Bible reading program. Once you have Approach One going and you want to absorb more, then a through the Bible reading program can be very beneficial.

**Approach Four---Memorizing God’s Word**

There is nothing like memorizing key verses of the Bible. Verses you memorize will deepen your absorption of the truths involved. A good way to do it is to commit and discipline yourself to memorize one verse of the Bible a week. Regularly review what you have memorized, or it will slip away. Children memorize very quickly and what is memorized as a child may stay with them for a lifetime.

**Correctly Understanding God’s Word**

Long term growth comes as we correctly understand and put into practice what God teaches in His Word. Today there is a tremendous amount of incorrect Bible teaching going on that is most often a mixture of error with some truth mixed in. Be very careful who you listen to and what you accept as Bible truth. Carefully evaluate what you are taught. We have to be especially leery of television preachers and evangelists. Only a few teach the Word of God straight.

It takes time, effort, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2) to understand spiritual truth. Understanding does not normally come from a single light reading of a passage in the Bible. We
need to take time to read and re-read, again and again, and to meditate, and to pray for understanding, all in an unhurried and thoughtful manner. We need to give the Spirit a chance to work and illuminate our understanding. This process does not happen in a hurry. However, the rewards are tremendous as one begins to see God at work in his life.

As you read, there will be parts you don’t understand. That is okay. Nobody understands all the Bible. After you read it a number of times and have asked for the Spirit’s illumination, if you still don’t grasp it, you may wish to read some reference books or ask someone who can help. You probably will not completely understand it yet and you may need to leave that passage of Scripture for now. At some point in the future, you may understand it better. There are some things that we will never totally understand while we are here on earth. Even good Bible scholars regularly debate many things they simply do not understand.

A Note to Parents, Teachers, Pastors, and Anyone Else Who Teaches God’s Word

Many times, in a Sunday School class or a Bible study very little learning takes place. Nobody has studied or prepared, and nobody really understands the text, and, as a result, nobody teaches very much. In the place of good teaching, questions like, “What do you get out of this verse?”, or, “What do you think this means?” are asked. The resulting discussion is often a pooling of Biblical ignorance and misunderstanding. The overall result is little or no spiritual growth. Sometimes more harm than good is done because wrong ideas are suggested and accepted. It is a dangerous thing to mishandle the Word of God.

When we have the privilege of teaching the Word of God, it is a tremendous privilege, but it also is a tremendous responsibility. It would be well for all teachers to seriously look at the warning given in James 3:1.

When we teach the Word, the passage we are teaching must be fresh and meaningful to us. When we have been blessed and challenged by a Scripture passage, then we can pass on that blessing to others. If we have not prepared and have not been blessed by a passage of Scripture ourselves, it is highly unlikely that we will be very effective in teaching that passage. When we are spiritually dry, we are not good teachers of spiritual truth. If a teacher will follow the suggestions given in this lesson, it could make a tremendous difference in his/her teaching.
Chapter Nine

Developing Biblical Patterns of Prayer

Developing our prayer life is fundamental to our commitment to being a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prayer is natural for a believer. To walk with God is to talk with God.

God directs us to regularly pray and He hears our prayers.

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.  Colossians 4:2 (NIV)

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.  1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (KJV)

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.  James 5:16b (NIV)

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.  Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV)

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.’  Jeremiah 33:3 (NKJV)

You do not have, because you do not ask God.  James 4:2b (NIV)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”  1 Peter 3:12 (ESV)

The LORD detests the sacrifice of the wicked, but the prayer of the upright pleases him.  Proverbs 15:8 (NIV)

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,  Luke 18:1 (NASB)

...rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; …  Romans 12:12 (NKJV)

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.  Ephesians 6:18 (NIV)

It is clearly God’s will for us to regularly (continually) pray.

Psalm 139 and many other passages teach us that God is with us at all times. We must develop a consciousness of the presence of God and get in the habit of talking to Him throughout the day. You don’t need to close your eyes or be in any certain posture. Thank Him for who He is and what He has done for you. Even learn to thank Him for the difficult times which help you to grow in your walk with Him. Pray for your brothers and sisters in the Lord. Pray for your family and friends. Pray for the unsaved. Talk to God about your problems and your worries and let Him take care of them. Tell
Him about the things you need. When you have decisions to make, ask Him for direction. Talk to Him about anything and everything!!

A God-given Pattern for Prayer

Jesus gave us a pattern to follow when we pray. We should get into the habit of often following this pattern when we pray. Obviously, we will not follow this pattern every time we pray or speak to the Father; however, it should be the overall pattern for our prayers.

Notice what Jesus says in the next two verses.

This, then, is how you should pray: Matthew 6:9 (NIV)

And He (Jesus) said to them, “When you pray, say: Luke 11:2 (NIV)

Following is the pattern for prayer that Jesus gave us:

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.]
Matthew 6:9-13 (NASB)

Notice that this is a pattern for prayer. It is not given as a prayer to be repeated word for word. It is not necessarily wrong to repeat it word for word but that is not the reason Jesus gave us this pattern for prayer.

Now let’s take a quick look at each part of this prayer.

Our Father who is in heaven,

God is the Father of all those who choose to believe on Him. He is our personal loving compassionate Father. He has adopted us into His own family. When we were lost and helpless, He adopted us as His own children and He loves us like He loves His own Son.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, … John 1:12 (NASB)

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 3:1 (NIV)
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
1 Corinthians 1:3 (NIV)

As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. Psalm 103:13-14 (ESV)

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, 17 encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 (NIV)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV)

God is not an earthly human father. He is our Father “who is in heaven”. If we were to focus only on God as our loving Father, we could easily forget that He is the eternal sovereign God who created the universe and who has all power and who has all knowledge. He is the creator. He is sovereign over all. We must not let ourselves become casual or light in our attitudes about God.

Carefully read the following Scriptures. They are just a few out of many that teach the sovereignty of God. Let them deepen your awe and reverence of God. Never let your thinking or your attitudes about God become shallow or casual.

Because He is the sovereign God, the creator of the universe, we must have a deep reverential fear, awe, and respect for God. He is to be worshiped and honored in every part of our life.

Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, ... Deuteronomy 4:39-40a (NASB)

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. 1 Timothy 6:15b-16 (NASB)

Hallowed be Your name.

The root meaning of “hallowed” is holy. The eternal sovereign God and creator of the universe is holy. He is completely separated from all that is sinful or evil. The word “hallowed” also carries with it the idea of reverence. We must revere God because of His holiness.

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory! Isaiah 6:3b (ESV)

Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders? Exodus 15:11 (NASB)

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth; 1 Chronicles 16:29-30 (ESV)
This part of the prayer lifts God up to majestic heights that we, as sinful man, cannot begin to fathom. As a holy God, there is no hint of evil in His character. He is absolutely pure. He is totally and completely separated from all that is sinful or evil. Our human nature is so prone to sin and we are so surrounded by a world of sin that we cannot begin to fully grasp what it means to be holy. Even though we cannot fully grasp what it means to be holy, we must recognize and acknowledge God as pure and holy. If we do not have a deep appreciation of God’s holiness, we will never even begin to correctly understand God. We will never be able to walk with Him in the way He desires us to walk, or to pray as He would have us to pray, or to worship as He would have us to worship.

When we pray “hallowed be Your name”, we are recognizing that God is a holy God and we as individuals must have a deep reverence for Him.

If we do not understand His holiness, we will never understand how far He went to bring us salvation. When we recognize God as an absolutely pure holy God, it causes us to realize how sinful we are. Recognizing God’s holiness should cause us to repent and confess our sin, enabling us to come into His presence with a clean heart, ready to receive direction and blessing from Him.

When we worship God by living a godly life, we hallow God’s name. When we recognize God as a holy God and we glorify Him by living clean pure lives, we hallow God’s name.

An Old Testament Biblical word that is the opposite of hallow or holy is “profane”. To profane God’s name is to treat Him as if He were a common ordinary being. To profane His name is to treat Him as if He is not holy and as if there is no reason to reverence His name.

Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy. Leviticus 22:32 (NIV)

They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Leviticus 21:6a (NIV)

If we are to seek God with all our hearts, and draw near to Him, we must grow in our understanding and appreciation of the holiness of God. We must acknowledge His holiness by the way we live, and not profane His name.

It must be the prayer of our hearts that we will revere God’s holy name. We cannot genuinely pray “hallowed be Your name” without committing ourselves to living a holy and godly life.

Your kingdom come.

The “kingdom of God” is speaking of the reign and of the authority of God. God is eternal and He is sovereign. God has always been in control of all that exists and He always will be in control. In this sense, the Kingdom of God has always existed and it always will exist.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. Psalm 145:13 (ESV)

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 1 Corinthians 15:25 (NASB)
When we pray, “Your kingdom come”, it is a prayer of submission to the authority of God in our own life. We cannot genuinely pray, “Your kingdom come”, and then resist His rule in our own life. *Praying “Your kingdom come” is a commitment to action.* We cannot pray, “Your kingdom come”, and then do nothing to promote the reign of God on earth. When we pray this prayer, it is a prayer of total commitment to working to advance the kingdom of God on earth. We do not seek to promote our own agenda; instead, our whole vision and our goal is to advance the kingdom of God.

Jesus will also physically rule on earth for one thousand years following the great tribulation. Praying “your kingdom come” is also a prayer that Jesus will return to earth soon and set up His eternal kingdom. We look forward to the day when Jesus will rule on earth and there will be righteousness and peace on the whole earth.

*Your will be done,*

Praying “Your will be done” is clearly a prayer of commitment to doing the will of God. It is a complete giving up of our own will and totally surrendering to the will of God. It would be hypocritical to the very core to pray “Your will be done” and at the same time be unwilling to do the will of God.

Jesus Christ Himself is the ultimate example of submission to the will of God. The following verses show the depth of Jesus’ commitment to doing the will of God:

*He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* Mark 14:35-36 (NKJV)

Each individual Christian needs to carefully and honestly evaluate his/her motive for praying. Are you praying because you want God to do what you want or think is right? Are you trying to badger or manipulate God into doing your own will? Is your prayer focusing on your self-centered desires or is it focused on glorifying God?

*This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.* 1 John 5:14-15 (NASB)

*On earth as it is in heaven.*

This pattern for prayer given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ is apparently written in typical Jewish poetic style. This parallel writing style indicates that the phrase, “on earth as it is in heaven”, applies to all three of the petitions that come before it. In other words, we can very legitimately pray each of the following prayers:

“hallowed be Your name on earth as it is in heaven”.
“Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven”.
“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”.
God wants His name to be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven. He wants His kingdom to rule on earth as it does in heaven, and He wants His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Bless the LORD, you His angels, Mighty in strength, who perform His word, Obeying the voice of His word! Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, You who serve Him, doing His will.
Psalm 103:20-21 (NASB)

Give us today our daily bread,

So far, the prayer has very clearly and directly focused on God. This part of the prayer deals with our physical needs.

However, we still need to recognize that God is the provider of our needs. One practical reason we revere, worship, and serve God is because He is our provider. When we pray for our daily needs, we are recognizing that we are completely dependent on Him for all of our daily needs.

In order to live and to serve Him, we need things such as food, a home, shelter, clothing, health, and transportation. With these needs provided, we are physically able to serve Him, to revere His name, to promote His kingdom, and to do His will.

Forgive us our debts, (Matthew 6:12)  Forgive us our sins, (Luke 11:4)

To pray “forgive us our debts” is the same as praying for forgiveness of sin. When we sin, we incur a debt to God. When we genuinely confess sin and ask for forgiveness, the sin and the debt are forgiven.

When an unsaved person genuinely repents of his sin and puts his faith in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for his sin, then that person’s sin is forgiven. All his sin – past, present, and future – is forgiven. When his sin is forgiven, he is justified, and righteousness is credited to his account. He becomes a child of God, and he will spend eternity with God forever.

When a person who is already genuinely saved chooses to sin, his fellowship with God and his joy are interrupted. He is still a child of God, but the Spirit of God is being hindered. When a Christian confesses his sin, the Spirit again has control of that person’s life and his fellowship with God is restored, and that person can resume growing in his walk with God.

as we also have forgiven our debtors

Christians are clearly instructed to forgive one another. These instructions are given in numerous passages of Scripture such as in the following verse:

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
Ephesians 4:32 (ESV)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion,
kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

When we pray, “as we also have forgiven our debtors”, we are recognizing our responsibility to forgive and it is a commitment to obey these instructions. If we are unwilling to forgive, we are being disobedient and cannot honestly and sincerely pray this God-given pattern for prayer.

Many people, including Christians, have trouble forgiving someone who has wronged them. For Christians, one big step to forgiveness is to choose to let God handle the revenge. God promises that He will repay and that He will do it justly.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:17-19 (NIV)

We, as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are not to hold onto anger or want to get revenge. In the preceding verses we are clearly told to let God handle revenge.

A simple practical definition of forgiveness is: Choosing not to hold on to anger or to desire revenge. We choose to let God handle the revenge. Once we make this choice it is not hard to forgive someone.

Cease from anger and forsake wrath; Do not fret; it leads only to evildoing. Psalm 37:8 (NASB)

To forgive is a mental choice. Once we choose to let God handle the revenge and we make the mental choice to forgive, we may still have negative feelings, but, with time, the feelings will come into line with our mental choice to forgive. However, if we never make that mental choice to forgive, our feelings of anger and unforgiveness may never completely leave us.

Lead us not into temptation

When we pray “lead us not into temptation”, we are committing ourselves to living a holy life – separated from sin and evil. We don’t want to sin and we want to avoid temptations to sin.

Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak. Matthew 26:41 (NIV)

Since Jesus Himself was tempted, He is able to help and strengthen those who are being tempted.

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16 (ESV)

God promises us that He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to resist.
No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.  1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

When Jesus was tempted by Satan, He drew strength from the Word of God. In all three of the recorded temptations, Jesus quoted Scripture to Satan. Our source of strength in times of temptation is the Word of God. We need to daily absorb the Word so that we can be strong in times of temptations.

Christians continually need to be on guard, ready to resist temptation.

In order to live a clean life and grow in our walk with God, we should avoid situations where we know we will be tempted. If we are overweight, we should avoid the kitchen and fast-food restaurants. If we are tempted to drink, we should avoid driving by what was our favorite bar. If we are tempted to look at pornography, we should avoid places where it is sold, and avoid being alone while on a computer. If we know that certain friends or acquaintances tend to drag us down spiritually, we should find new friends. This list could go on and on. Each one of us needs to look at our own life and commit ourselves to doing whatever is necessary to gain victory over temptation and live a life that glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.

Deliver us from the evil one

It is fitting that the final request in this prayer is that we be delivered from Satan and all his evil influences and deception. Satan is the archenemy of God. He is “full of fury”. He hates God and he hates God’s people. If he could, he would destroy every Christian; he would destroy the Word of God; he would destroy every non-Christian to keep them from coming to God; and, if he could, he would destroy God Himself.

However, I do not believe that we need to focus on Satan, nor is it wise to do so. If we keep our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan will have no power over us.

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.  1 John 4:4 (NASB)

Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

This prayer ends with a powerful victorious statement of praise for our Father who is the supreme sovereign Lord over all.

Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all.  1 Chronicles 29:11 (NIV)

Remember, the “Lord’s Prayer” is a pattern for prayer. It was not given as a prayer to be repeated word for word. When we pray, we need to remember this pattern and customize it to fit our individual situation, but always keeping in mind the fundamentals as given in this prayer.
God promises positive answers to prayer when basic conditions are met.

A. When we commit to living obedient righteous lives

God promises to answer the prayer of a righteous man. Christians cannot hold on to sin and rebellion and still expect God to answer all their prayers. None of us are perfect, but we can choose to make an ongoing commitment to honor the Lord by the way we live.

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.  James 5:16b (NIV)

Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.  Psalm 37:4 (ESV)

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; ...  Psalm 66:18 (NIV)

He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.  Psalm 145:19 (NKJV)

...if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.  2 Chronicles 7:14 (ESV)

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.  Proverbs 28:13 (NIV)

Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.  Isaiah 59:1-2 (NIV)

B. When we ask in accordance with His will

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him.  1 John 5:14-15 (NKJV)

In the pattern for prayer given to us by the Lord, we are instructed to pray as follows:

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.  Matthew 6:10 (NASB)

The Word of God reveals the will of God. When we regularly live in submission to the Word of God and follow the leading of the Spirit of God, we are doing the will of God. When we allow the Word and the Spirit to control us, our prayers will be more in tune with the will of God. This assures us of more positive answers to our prayers.
C. When we remain in the Word of God

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.  
John 15:7 (NASB)

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination. 
Proverbs 28:9 (ESV)

Those who regularly neglect the Word of God cannot expect God to answer their prayers.

D. When we pray in Jesus’ name

Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.  
If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.  
John 14:13-14 (NASB)

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.  
John 15:16 (NASB)

It is Jesus who died for us. He makes it possible for us to be declared righteous and to pray to the Father. We come to God in the name or authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus always acts in accordance with the will and purpose of God. Prayers that are genuinely offered in Jesus’ name are the prayers that are in tune with the will and purpose of Jesus and God. When we know and do the will of God and are praying in accordance with His will, we are praying in the name and authority of Jesus. We know that God will answer the prayer of His own Son, Jesus, and He will answer our prayers when we genuinely come in Jesus’ name.

E. When we pray without doubting

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.  
Mark 11:24 (NKJV)

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.  
James 1:6 (NIV)

He answered their prayers, because they trusted in Him.  
1 Chronicles 5:20b (NASB)

Answered prayer does not depend on the amount of faith that we can drum up from within ourselves, but instead it depends on faith given by God to us in order to accomplish His own will and purpose. When we are committed to glorifying God and walking with Him, then He gives us the faith to act and pray in accordance with His will and purpose.

The way to greater faith is not to superficially try to drum up more faith from within ourselves, but to develop a sound Biblical understanding of God’s purposes and to deepen our commitment to following Him. As we do, we also deepen our faith and confidence in Him.
When we are persistent in our prayers

Jesus taught two separate parables to teach us to keep on praying and not to give up and quit.

Then he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.'

'Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

'So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:5-10 (NIV)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

'For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!''

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?
Luke 18:1-7 (NIV)

Learning About Prayer from Biblical Men of Faith

In order to further develop Biblical concepts of prayer, it is very helpful to examine the prayers of Biblical writers and use their prayers to enrich our own prayers. There are many prayers recorded in the Word of God. We can learn from them all. Following are two of the apostle Paul’s prayers:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
Ephesians 3:14-19 (ESV)

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.
Colossians 1:9-12 (NASB)
Notice the content of these prayers. The Apostle Paul is praying for vitally important spiritual issues. We need to take a good hard look at our own prayer life and commit ourselves to learning to pray as Jesus taught us to pray, praying as the Apostle Paul and other Biblical men of faith prayed.

Praying Through a Passage of Scripture

Another way to greatly enrich your prayer life is to take essentially any passage of Scripture, read through it, think about it, and then pray through that passage, praying that you will put what is taught in that passage into practice.

Near the end of this study there is a list of Biblical prayer requests and commitments that are based squarely on teaching in the Word of God. In my own experience, this prayer list has been a key in growing in my own walk with the Lord.

Praying Alone and With Others

Private Systematic Prayer

There needs to be time that we set aside to be alone with God and devote all our attention to Him. This can be a time of Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and communion with God.

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.  Matthew 6:6 (ESV)

And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.  Matthew 14:23 (NASB)

We need to set aside a time to be alone with God for a time of Bible reading, meditation, prayer, and communion with God, and we also need to communicate with the Lord throughout the day. There is not hardly any time of the day that we can’t quickly pray for wisdom, safety, or any other need we might have. We don’t have to stop, bow our head, and close our eyes to pray. Just pray. God will hear us.

Prayer With Our Fellow Believers

The book of Acts records the beginnings of the church. It records that the early Christians often met together and prayed. God is pleased when His people get together and pray. To pray out loud in front of other people may be a scary step for some Christians, but just remember that you are talking to God, not to everybody else. Your heart’s desire is more important than what you say or how you say it. Most other Christians will be encouraged by your prayer, even if you do feel awkward and nervous.
They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.  Acts 1:14 (NIV)

When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God... Acts 4:23-24a (ESV)

And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray.  Luke 9:28 (NASB)

Family Prayer

The Word of God clearly instructs us, as fathers and mothers, to train our children and to teach the Word of God to our family. It has been said that families that pray together stay together. Husbands and wives need to pray together. It deepens their trust in the Lord and their love and respect for each other. We must also teach our children to pray. Having family Bible reading and prayer together is an absolute must in bringing up our children to love and to serve the Lord.
Chapter Ten

The Church -- It’s God’s Plan for Believers

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may 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. Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

God did not design His children to be spiritual hermits. He instructed them to meet together to be taught the Word of God and to teach others, to be encouraged and to encourage others, to be built up and to build up others, and to serve the Lord by serving fellow believers. God expects believers to function together as a unified group, or “body”. He called that body of saved people the “church”.

When we think about a church, we normally think of a church building where people “attend church”. However, to correctly understand Biblical teaching about the church, we need to understand that the church is not a building; it is all saved people. In the New Testament, the Greek word most frequently translated “church” means “called out ones”. All people, worldwide, who are genuinely saved, are part of the church.

In the Bible, the word “church” is also used to refer to a group of local believers who regularly meet together. This is often referred to as a “local” church. Many of the references to the church in Scripture do refer to a local group of believers.

Only genuinely saved people are part of the Biblical church. Others may attend meetings and even “join a church”, but “joining a church” does not make one part of the body of Christ, or part of the true Biblical church. Again, only genuine believers are part of the true Biblical church.

God planned for us to function together as a unified body of believers. To illustrate His plan, He used the human body. (Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12) Each part of our body (hands, feet, ears, nose, eyes, etc.) has a role to play in the overall functioning of our body. Each part needs other parts of the body to function normally. When one part is not fulfilling its role, the whole body suffers. In much the same way, we need to function together with fellow believers if we are to be all that God wants us to be.

One should never allow himself/herself to become a source of trouble or disunity in the church, or to be a discouragement or stumbling block to other believers. One sin that is a stench to God is being a source of disunity or sowing discord among His followers.

There are six things which the LORD hates,
Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Proverbs 6:16 (NASB)

The seventh thing which is an abomination to God is:

And one who spreads strife among brothers. Proverbs 6:19 (NASB)
Reasons for Meeting Together As a Church

1. The Word of God instructs us to meet together:

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may 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. Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

Here we are clearly instructed to meet together to encourage one another and to “spur one another on to good deeds”. This cannot be done in isolation. We must meet together. Things such as listening to Christian radio programs, watching television preachers, texting each other, or connecting by means of other social networking sites can have some value, but they do not override or take the place of God’s instructions to meet together.

2. The example set by the early believers in the Bible was to meet together often.

So then, those who had received His word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:41-42 (NASB)

The first church, led by the Spirit of God, continually met together for teaching, for fellowship, for prayer, and to celebrate communion. This was the pattern of Biblical churches throughout the New Testament. God knows what we need in order to faithfully walk with Him. Regularly meeting with fellow believers is still a major part of His plan for us.

3. To be taught -- To grow in our understanding and application of the Word of God

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching. Acts 2:42a (NASB)

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB)

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:11-16 (NIV)

Ephesians 4:11-16 is a passage that clearly describes a church that has been taught and is applying
what they have been taught.

It is the Spirit of God using the Word of God that equips us to do the work of God. If we are not regularly being taught and regularly absorbing and putting into practice the Word of God, then we are not being equipped to do the work of God or to fulfill the purpose for which He created and called us.

We cannot encourage and build each other up if we ourselves are not growing in our own understanding of the Word of God and growing in our walk with Him.

4. To be encouraged and to be built up in our walk with God, and to encourage and build up others

Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may 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. Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)

Therefore encourage one another with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:18 (ESV)

In the Word of God, Christians are repeatedly instructed to encourage and build up one another. We ourselves need to be encouraged and built up, and our fellow believers also need to be encouraged and built up.

5. To use our God-given abilities (spiritual gifts) to serve fellow believers.

God has equipped every genuine believer with a special ability (spiritual gift) to serve fellow believers.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10 (NASB)

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: Romans 12:6 (NASB)

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
1 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)

When a believer uses those special God-given abilities to serve fellow believers, those believers will be encouraged, strengthened, taught, admonished or helped in some way. The church will become more mature and unified. Christians will grow in their walk with God and through it all the Lord Jesus
Christ is honored and glorified.

6. To join together in prayer

When Christians pray together it can be a blessed time of fellowship and our Lord Jesus Christ is honored. By praying together, we demonstrate faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and we encourage and build up our fellow believers. Notice that their devotion to prayer and to the other activities was “continual”.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NASB)

So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Acts 12:5 (ESV)

When he (Peter) realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. Acts 12:12 (ESV)

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God... Acts 4:23-24b (NIV)

7. To join with fellow believers in worship and praise to God

...speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:19-21 (NKJV)

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! Psalm 149:1 (ESV)

I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You. Psalm 22:22 (NASB)

I will give you thanks in the great assembly; among throngs of people I will praise you. Psalm 35:18 (NIV)

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47 (NIV)

The Word of God records people often getting together to sing, to praise and to worship the Lord. They met together with glad and sincere hearts. It is a rich and rewarding experience to get together with other sincere Christians to sing, praise and worship our Lord Jesus Christ.
One result of being filled with the Spirit and letting the Word of God dwell in us richly is to sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

Colossians 3:16 (ESV)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

Ephesians 5:18-21 (NASB)

The following verses are an Old Testament example of corporate worship that pleased God so much that His glory filled the house of God:

...and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and kinsmen, clothed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps and lyres, standing east of the altar, and with them one hundred and twenty priests blowing trumpets in unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the LORD saying, "He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting," then the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

2 Chronicles 5:12-14 (NASB)

**8. To observe the Lord’s Supper with fellow believers**

And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood". Luke 22:19-20 (NASB)

This observance, which we often identify as “communion”, or the “Lord’s table”, or the “Lord’s supper”, was instituted by Jesus as a memorial of His death and shed blood. We are to “do this in remembrance of Me”. We, as Christians, so easily become casual or half-hearted in our appreciation of what Jesus has done for us. When we participate in this ordinance, it is a time to examine ourselves and our attitudes and to commit ourselves to worshiping and serving Him with all our heart.

As Christians, we are blessed beyond our understanding because He died so that we can have eternal life. Communion is a picture and a celebration of this profound truth. Communion was a regular part of the worship of the early church.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Acts 2:42 (NASB)
9. To be a part of the church’s ministry of world evangelism

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

God has given us the responsibility to take the message of salvation to all the people of the earth. As individuals we cannot possibly fulfill this responsibility, but as a church we can play a significant role in worldwide evangelistic outreaches. This is important to God and it should be important to us. One way we demonstrate our love for Him is by being part of world evangelism.

10. To develop Christian friends for ourselves and our children

Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (ESV)

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. Proverbs 13:20 (ESV)

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared. Proverbs 22:24-25 (NIV)

We are influenced by our friends. We enjoy being with them and sharing in their lives and activities. On a spiritual level, our friends can either build us up or they can tear us down. Friends who walk with the Lord can be a big encouragement to our spiritual growth. Friends who do not share our spiritual values can tear us down. While we cannot and should not isolate ourselves from the world, we need friends who walk with the Lord.

This is important for adults, and it is important for our youth and children. We all know how strong peer pressure is in the life of our young people. If you have children and youth, it is extremely important that you find a church where they can have friends that will be a positive influence in their lives.

11. To assist us in teaching our children to know and to walk with God

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Ephesians 6:4 (NASB)

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it. Proverbs 22:6 (NASB)

We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done. Psalm 78:4 (NIV)
And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. Deuteronomy 6:6-7 (NKJV)

God clearly instructs parents to teach and to train their children to know God and to live godly lives. Parents may pay a high price for their neglect of the spiritual training of their children.

While the church cannot replace the parents in giving spiritual instruction and training, the church can be a big help to parents.

Just like adults, children need teaching, encouragement, and building up. Churches must help in providing this. Too many churches simply entertain children so that they will not be a disturbance in the “adult services”. This is a horrible, irresponsible, ungodly attitude. What are they thinking? Is God not concerned with the training and instruction of children? Churches must do all they can to assist parents in teaching and training their children.

12. To be held accountable, both to the church leaders and to other members

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another... Colossians 3:16a (NASB)

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 (NASB)

The Biblical meaning of “admonish” is to gently reprove, to warn, to caution, and to give careful instruction. When we admonish, we are acting in love rather than in anger.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)

Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. Luke 17:3 (NASB)

Part of our responsibility to one another is to admonish one another and even to rebuke one another when it is appropriate. In a Biblical church, members are held accountable for the way they live. This accountability is a big motivation to be faithful in our service to the Lord. Without this accountability, many Christians will not be consistent in their spiritual growth and in their walk with God.

Rebelling Against God’s Plan

As we have seen, the church is very important in God’s plan for His people; however, many professing Christians, in ignorance or in rebellion, do not put much value in it. They may ask, “Why can’t I live a good life and be a good person without going to church?” Others will make statements like, “I can worship God at home”, or, “I feel closer to God in nature than I do at church.” The questions people raise about church and the excuses given for not participating are many. “Do I really need to sit
through long dull sermons?”. “I’m really tired on Sundays; it’s my only day off.” “Sunday is the only
day I have to go to the lake.” “I have to work on Sunday.” “I think the kids ought to go to Sunday
School, but I need to stay home and clean the garage.” “There are too many hypocrites in church.”
“All they want is money.” “I don’t have anything to wear.” And the list of excuses goes on and on
and on and on...

All of these questions or statements, in one way or another, imply that church is not really necessary or
needed. The truth is -- yes, on a human level you can be a good moral person without going to church,
but you can’t please God or be obedient to Him. God instructs us to regularly meet together with other
Christians. The church is important to God, and it should be important to us. To choose to live apart
from Christ’s body (the church) is to rebel against God. Essentially, an individual who does that is
saying that he knows better than God. This sin of rebellion gives Satan a foothold in our lives and
leads to unproductivity and defeat in our walk with God.

For a person to say or think that he can do God’s will or purpose without being involved with the rest
of God’s body is like a human hand saying, “I don’t need the rest of this body. Why do I need the
heart or the legs? I think I will leave this body. I can do just as well or better on my own.” God
designed us to be part of His body (the church) and we are to work together to accomplish His will and
purpose. He did not design us to be spiritual hermits.

We all recognize that there are some who, because of physical sickness or handicap, cannot regularly
get out to meet together with other Christians. These individuals may not be able to enjoy all the
blessings of meeting together but they can still grow in their walk with the Lord and draw near to Him.
Christians who are not physically restricted should make a special effort to minister to these
individuals.

**I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD."** Psalm 122:1 (NKJV)

There have been hundreds (thousands?) of books written about the church. Many are good, but many
are not so good. One good book that I would personally recommend is John MacArthur’s book,
The Master’s Plan for the Church.
Chapter Eleven

Facing Difficult Times and Trials in Our Life

But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel,
"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are Mine!
2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,
Nor will the flame burn you

Isaiah 43:1-2 (NASB)

Some have thought that once they became a Christian all their troubles would be over. It doesn’t take long before one realizes that this is simply not true. Many new Christians have found that soon after they put their faith in God, some kind of a trial takes place that puts their faith to the test.

The purpose of this chapter is to help prepare Christians for the trials that are bound to come in their life. Walking close to God is a life of peace, joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment—even when the down times come. There can be peace in the middle of the storm and in the middle of the battle.

Biblical Definitions of Words Relating to Trials

Following are definitions of words used in Scripture that refer to times of trouble and trials in the life of a Christian. There is not a clear-cut line that divides the meaning of each of these Biblical words and there can be a considerable amount of overlap in their meaning.

1. Trials: A time of trial is a time of trouble or difficulty that tests and develops our faith.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4 (NASB)

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4:12-13 (ESV)

It is not easy for most of us to rejoice in times of trial. Yet, we can look with eager anticipation to the results of our trials. God will bless us here on earth and He will richly reward us for eternity for faithfully serving Him now, even when we go through trials.
2. **Affliction:** This is a broad word referring to a wide range of hardships and trouble in life.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.  
Psalm 34:19 (NASB)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.  
2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NASB)

I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!  
Revelation 2:9a (NIV)

3. **Tribulation:** A time of tribulation is a time of affliction or oppression. Generally speaking, tribulations are a more intense time of trials and afflictions.

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.  
John 16:33 (KJV)

And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope;  
Romans 5:3-4 (NASB)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.  
Romans 12:10-13 (NASB)

4. **Persecute:** To persecute someone is to pursue someone with repeated acts of enmity with the intent to hurt them. Persecution is deliberate repeated attempts to harm, or even to kill.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.  
Matthew 5:10-12 (NASB)

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; ...  
John 15:20a (NASB)

Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.  
2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

5. **Discipline:** To instruct, to correct, and sometimes to chastise in order to correct. God disciplines us to bring us to a point of being faithful to Him and to growing in our walk with Him.
Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.  Revelation 3:19 (NIV)

My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.  Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV)

Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.  Deuteronomy 8:5 (NIV)

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.  Proverbs 12:1 (NASB)

**Biblical Teaching Relating to Times of Trial and Hardship in Our Life**

1. *Christians should expect to go through times of difficulty and trouble.*

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.  John 16:33 (KJV)

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.  1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also to suffer for his sake, …  Philippians 1:29 (ESV)

For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, …  1 Peter 2:21 (NASB)

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.  1 Peter 4:12-13 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.  Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

God never promised us an easy path, free from all trouble and pain. According to the Scriptures, we should expect to have times of trial in our life.

Preachers and teachers who teach that if we are a spiritual Christian, we will have continual health, wealth, ease, and blissful happiness, are simply not teaching Biblical truth. If you are a genuine
Christian, you should expect some difficult times and expect times when your faith will be tested.

2. *We do not have to face trials alone. God is always with us, giving strength, direction, and comfort.*

God has compassion for His followers who undergo trials and He gives us some very precious promises. God protects, sustains and comforts those who are undergoing trials of various kinds. God is faithful and will not allow us to have more trials than we can handle. His grace is sufficient for whatever trials He allows us to face.

Following are a few of the many such promises given in the Word of God. If you are experiencing difficult times, let verses like these sink into your heart and soul. They can be a huge source of strength and encouragement.

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** Psalm 46:1 (KJV)

*But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.* Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)

*A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;* Isaiah 42:3 (NASB)

There have been many times in my own life that I have felt like that dimly burning wick. I can honestly say that the Lord has been patient and has preserved and sustained me many times in life.

*These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* John 16:33 (KJV)

**He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.** Psalm 147:3 (NKJV)

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.* Psalm 34:19 (NASB)

*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.* Matthew 11:28-29 (KJV)

*If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.* 1 Peter 4:14 (NASB)

*And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."
Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* 2 Corinthians 12:9 (NASB)
The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.  Psalm 9:9 (KJV)

You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.  Psalm 32:7 (NASB)

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." Psalm 50:15 (NASB)

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.  1 Corinthians 10:13 (NKJV)

3. In times of trial, we are to pray.

The Word of God is full of examples of people who took their problems to the Lord in prayer. God does not expect us to face our trials alone. He is there with us, even when we don’t “feel” Him. It is a precious truth to know that He is always with us and that He hears and answers our prayers.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray...  James 5:13a (ESV)

When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles.  Psalm 34:17 (ESV)

Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.  Psalm 50:15 (NASB)

Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me, for my soul takes refuge in You; and in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge until destruction passes by.  Psalm 57:1 (NASB)

4. When we undergo trials in life, God wants us to be faithful and to keep trusting in Him.

In times of hardship, we must be faithful to the Lord. We must keep our commitment to absorb the Word of God, to pray, and to fellowship with fellow believers. These are the things that can keep us strong. Some neglect these fundamentals in hard times when they need them the most. There are times that we have to determine that we will do the right thing, even when every bone in our body doesn’t feel like it. God instructs us to be faithful, and He will richly reward those who are.

So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.  1 Peter 4:19 (NIV)

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.  Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV)

In Hebrews 12:2-3, we are instructed to keep our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. He underwent enormous suffering and set a pattern of faithfulness for us to follow. There is great reward ahead for
those who, like Jesus, remain faithful.

**Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast.** You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.  
James 5:11 *(ESV)*

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.  
Romans 12:9-13 *(ESV)*

It is a sad truth that some believers let trials weaken their faith. It is also true that some become disillusioned and they, at least for a time, loose their zeal for serving the Lord. By their attitudes and by their actions they invite more trouble, pain, and hurt into their lives.

**5. Trials cannot separate us from the love of God.**

God makes it clear that trials and suffering cannot separate us from God’s love. Even in the most severe trials, He is there and He continues to strengthen and to love us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
Romans 8:35-39 *(ESV)*

**6. Trials lead to a stronger faith and to growth in our walk with God.**

It is in times of trials that many of us have experienced meaningful growth. There are some kinds of faith and maturity that can only come when we see God provide for us and sustain us in times of trial.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.  
Psalm 119:71 *(KJV)*

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.  
James 1:2-4 *(NIV)*

More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ...  
Romans 5:3-4 *(ESV)*

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.  
1 Peter 1:6-7 *(NIV)*
7. **Take life one step at a time. This is especially true in times of trials.**

God instructs us to walk in faith. When we walk, we take one step at a time.

There are times, especially when we go through down times, that we get discouraged or fearful. We wonder and we worry about how things will work out. Instead of continual worrying, we need to learn to walk in faith and obedience -- one step at a time.

When we walk by faith, we can trust God and obey Him for the next step. We can trust Him for the next few minutes or hours, even for the next few days. As we do that, we can then discipline ourselves to put the future in God’s hands and stop worrying about it. This can be a tremendous relief.

**For we walk by faith, not by sight:** 2 Corinthians 5:7 (KJV)

**If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.** Galatians 5:25 (NASB)

**And Enoch walked with God:** ... Genesis 5:24a (KJV)

**Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.** Genesis 6:9b (ESV)

8. **God tells us not to worry; instead, we should let His peace rule in our hearts.**

One of the hardest lessons to learn in the Christian life is not to worry. I personally have found that to be a hard lesson to learn. Yet God does not want us to worry and He instructs us in how to have peace. We, as believers, have a choice to make. We can go through life being uptight and worrying all the time, or we can have faith in Him and have peace. It’s our choice.

**Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.** John 14:27 (NKJV)

...**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 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.** Philippians 4:6-8 (NIV)

In these verses we are told to pray and God’s peace will guard our hearts. In my own experience I would often pray about a situation, and then keep right on worrying. In the following verse we are told to “let the peace of God rule in our hearts”. We need to take things to the Lord and then have the faith to believe that He will handle the situation, and then deliberately choose to stop worrying about it. Putting it in God’s hands is a lot better than continual worry.

**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, ...** Colossians 3:15a (KJV)

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than
clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Matthew 6:25-34 (ESV)

9. God brings good from what seems like negative circumstances in our life.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. Romans 8:28 (NASB)

We do not normally view times of trials as “good” times in our life. It may be hard for us to see how good can come from these times. However, God is working and He will bring about good from situations that we see in a negative way.

This can be a big source of comfort and encouragement. We know that good will come from difficult times in our life. We can continue on in faith and being faithful to our Lord, even when we ourselves cannot see any good coming out of a situation.

10. It is important to keep an attitude of thankfulness.

A fundamental Biblical truth is that we are to be thankful people. We are to be thankful at all times, even when we are going through tough times. This does not mean that we are glad when we or other believers suffer, but we can be thankful that we have a loving caring God who is in total control, and that He is working in us to develop a deeper walk with Him.

At all times we can be thankful for God’s gift of His Son and the salvation He gives us. When we learn to focus on the blessings we have in Christ Jesus, the trials don’t seem to be as hard.

Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (KJV)

Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; Colossians 4:2 (NASB)

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your
hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:15-17 (ESV)

11. God, in love, will discipline His children.

At times we may experience some difficult times in life because we are being disciplined by the Lord. God disciplines His children. This is clear from the Word of God. He disciplines us because He loves us and He wants the highest good for us.

Discipline may come simply to mature us in our walk with Him. At other times, He disciplines us because of our disobedience or our refusal to submit to Him.

Genuine love for God results in obedience to Him. Disobedience may bring discipline.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John 5:3 (KJV)

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent. 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.' Revelation 3:19-20 (NASB)

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. Proverbs 3:11-12 (ESV)

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? Hebrews 12:5-7 (NIV)

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 (ESV)

The path from disobedience back to fellowship with the Lord and productive service to Him is not hard to follow. We confess our sin and commit to serving and obeying Him. We will never be perfect but we can regularly grow in our walk with Him.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NASB)
When we experience difficult times in life, it is important to let fellow believers know so that they can pray for us, encourage us, help build us up, and help in any other way possible.

As we have stated before, God did not design us to be spiritual hermits. He designed us to function together as a body of believers. This body (the church) is to help, to encourage, and to build up each other. When one person suffers, we all suffer together. Those who have been through various trials and difficult times are to comfort and encourage those who are currently experiencing difficult times.

**Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.**  
*Galatians 6:2 (KJV)*

**Encourage one another and build each other up, …**  
*1 Thessalonians 5:11a (NIV)*

**We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.**  
*Romans 15:1-2 (ESV)*

...that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.  
*1 Corinthians 12:25-26 (ESV)*

**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.**  
*2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NASB)*

**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, …**  
*Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)*

When a believer is going through a trial, the church can surround that person with love, prayer, and encouragement. However, when an individual does not seek the encouragement of fellow believers and never says anything, fellow believers may be totally unaware of what is taking place. Most of the time we, as brothers and sisters in the Lord, need to be more open with each other and let people know what is going on so they can pray for us and encourage us.

**Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another ...**  
*Hebrews 10:25 (NIV)*

13. **God is a just God. Wrongs will be dealt with. We must not desire or seek revenge.**

There may be times when we suffer because others, in one way or another, have wronged us. This may come from Christians or from non-Christians.

God lets us know that He will avenge the wrongs done to us.

**Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.**  
*Romans 12:19 (NIV)*

All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of
the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.

2 Thessalonians 1:5-7 (NIV)

Knowing this makes it easier to forgive individuals who have wronged us, and we must not hold on to anger, bitterness, or grudges. This truth frees us from anger and allows us to have tremendous freedom of spirit to enjoy life and to be productive in service to the Lord. Those who hold on to anger will grieve the Spirit of God and hinder His working through us. We must be very careful to avoid holding on to anger or bitterness and letting them take root in our lives.

14. God will richly reward and bless those who faithfully serve and walk with Him.

When we are faithful to Him in times of trouble and suffering, God is honored and He receives glory. God gives eternal rewards to those who are faithful to Him, especially in times of trials.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Romans 8:18 (NKJV)

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17 (NIV)

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12 (ESV)

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matthew 5:11-12 (NASB)

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

Jesus Himself was persecuted and suffered terribly so that we can be have eternal life with Him. However, in John 17, Jesus knew that beyond the cross there was joy and glory in the presence of His Father. He looked beyond His suffering and He looked forward to being with His Father again. We too need to look beyond our trials to the time we will be with Him and enjoy His presence forever. Carefully digest the following verses.
Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.  

Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV)
Chapter Twelve

Glorifying God, Having Meaning and Purpose in Life, and Being Productive in Our Walk with God

This chapter is for those who choose to make following the Lord Jesus Christ their priority in life.

There are many verses in the Word of God which challenge us and instruct us in living a godly life. Following are a few of these verses without a lot of added comments.

The second part of this chapter is a study of 2 Peter 1:3-11 which is a key passage that teaches us how to be faithful and productive in our walk with the Lord.

To be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must regularly read, absorb and meditate on the Word of God.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Joshua 1:8 (NASB)

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word. Psalm 119:9 (NIV)

Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You. Psalm 119:11 (NASB)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Colossians 3:16 (NIV)

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers. Psalms 1:1-3 (NASB)

Followers of the Lord Jesus are instructed to live holy lives, separate from the world.

The word sanctify means to be set apart from the world and unto God. To be holy.

In Jesus’ prayer in John 17, He prayed... They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. John 17:16-17 (NIV)
But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; 16 for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. Ephesians 1:4a (NIV)

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:15-16 (NIV)

...abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 (NASB)

Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. James 4:4 (NASB)

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV)

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ... 2 Corinthians 6:17 (KJV)

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. 7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. 8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. 9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Colossians 3:2-10 (NIV)

Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Hebrews 12:10-11 (NIV)

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ... 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 (NIV)

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
Christians are to be regularly filled with and controlled by the Spirit of God.

but be filled with the Spirit, ... Ephesians 5:18 (NASB)

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:25 (NIV)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23a (NIV)

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. Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

Jesus 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. Matthew 22:37-38 (NIV)

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts? Matthew 9:4 (NASB)

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:6-8 (NASB)
For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Romans 12:3 (NIV)

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; … Philippians 2:3 (NASB)

**We must be obedient to His commands.**

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. 1 John 5:3 (NASB)

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:3-6 (NIV)

**Christians cannot go on living a sinful lifestyle.**

No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. 1 John 3:9 (NIV)

In the verse above, the phrase “continue in sin” is talking about a lifestyle characterized by sin. We will all sin but a genuine believer will not be characterized by a lifestyle of sin.

We are sure God’s children do not keep on sinning. God’s own Son protects them, and the devil cannot harm them. 1 John 5:18 (Contemporary English Version)

**Christians are to keep growing in their walk with God.**

but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18 (NASB)

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good. 1 Peter 2:2-3 (NIV)

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. James 4:8 (NASB)

**We must not get discouraged and give up.**

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:3 (NIV)
We are to encourage and build up fellow believers.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NIV)

2 Peter 1:3-11 — A Biblical Guide to Spiritual Productivity

2 Peter 1:3-11 is a key passage of Scripture for those who are committed to being productive in their walk with the Lord and who are committed to growing in their walk with Him. The rest of this chapter is a fairly in-depth study of this passage.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:3-11 (NIV)

This passage of Scripture gives us some of the clearest instructions in all of the Word of God relating to how to live a godly life and how to grow and mature in our walk with God. Anyone who genuinely desires to seek God, to be productive, and to draw near to Him needs to understand this passage of Scripture.

In the final verses of this passage there are four blessings given that are the results of putting these instructions into practice. These four blessings are:

1. We will be effective and productive in our knowledge of God.
2. We will have assurance of salvation.
3. We will not stumble.
4. There will be rich rewards for us in heaven.

These four things should be the deep-down gut level desire of every Christian. They are keys to living a faithful, rewarding, and productive life that glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ.
Before proceeding through this study, you need to read over these verses (2 Peter 1:3-11) several times and begin to digest what they are saying.

This passage (2 Peter 1:3-11) can be divided into three major sections.

1. **What God has done** - Verses 3-4
2. **How we should respond to what God has done** - Verses 5-7
3. **The blessings that result from a correct response** - Verses 8-11

Now we will go through this passage of Scripture, section by section, verse by verse, and in some cases, word by word.

**What God Has Done (2 Peter 1:3-4)**

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.* 2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

These verses teach some profound truths. Let’s look at it a few words at a time.

**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness**

We are able to live a godly life because God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. It is not our own strength, will power, or abilities that enables us to serve Him. It is God’s “divine power” and His power alone that equips us to live for Him and to serve Him.

One of the most fundamental issues that plagues many Christians and many Christian ministries is that it is not God’s power at work; rather, it is their own. Many simply have not learned to depend on the Lord rather than on themselves. Often our motives are not to glorify and please God, but rather we choose in one way or another to glorify ourselves and to make ourselves look good. Christians are often driven by pride rather than the desire to glorify God. Christians may work hard and may even develop impressive ministries, but all too often it is founded on themselves rather than being a genuine work of God.

**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness**

“Has given” is past tense. All genuine Christians have already received everything we need to have eternal life and to live a godly life. Now we need to grow and learn to put into practice what God has already given us.

Notice that His power has granted (NASB) or has given it to us. We did not earn it nor did we buy it. It can only be received as a gift. If one tries to earn it, he will not receive it at all. Salvation and the Spirit of God, who is our source of power, are free. We cannot buy or earn them.
His divine power has given *us* everything we need for life and godliness

The word “us” is all inclusive. All genuine believers have been granted everything we need for life and godliness. It is not just the Christian “elite” who have power; it is all of us. God has given each one of us all the power we need to serve and glorify Him in the way He individually calls and leads us.

His divine power has given us *everything* we need for life and godliness

We have “everything” we need for life and godliness. It doesn’t say we have “some of what we need” or “most or what we need”; it says that we have “everything” we need for life and godliness.

Many of us sometimes feel that we need a lot more of something to do what God asks us to do or to be what He wants us to be. However, our need is not for more power or abilities; our need is to become better students of His Word and to be faithful putting what we learn into practice. As we grow in our knowledge and understanding of Him, the better equipped we are to effectively use what He has already given us.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness

When we make the choice to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are given eternal life. When God gave us eternal life He held back nothing. God gave us new life; He forgave all our sin; He credited us with His own righteousness; He justified us; He redeemed us; He reconciled us to Himself; He now lives in us; and He has permanently given us His Spirit. What more could He do? We have everything we need for eternal life.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness

Being godly is to make honoring God the priority in our life. We put Him above ourselves in every area in our life.

Once we have eternal life, we turn from the old sinful lifestyle and commit to living a godly life. Being godly is to live a life that is worthy of our calling. Being godly is being devoted to God. A godly person will revere and genuinely worship God. A godly person lives a life that honors, glorifies, and pleases our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every genuine believer has the Spirit of God living in them. We all need to pay careful attention to the following verses:

"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you.  John 14:16-17 (NASB)

Notice in the following verse the characteristics of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

*The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him (Jesus), the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of*
counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.  Isaiah 11:2 (NASB)

Here the Spirit of God is identified as the Spirit of knowledge, understanding, wisdom, counsel, strength and fear of the Lord. All this is available to us as we seek to live a godly life. We don’t need anything more.

… through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

Our appropriation of all that God has given us comes through the “true knowledge of Him”. We seek to gain greater knowledge and understanding of God and His Word so that we can be productive and effectively use everything He has already given us.

Knowing God in such a way as to effectively use what He has given us involves much more than a surface level casual knowledge of Him. This is a knowledge gained from an ongoing active commitment to seek to know, to understand, and to put into practice the Word of God. As we grow in the knowledge and understanding of God and His Word, that knowledge must determine the course of our lives.

This is the kind of knowledge that enables us to be all that God wants us to be and to do all that He wants us to do. Anyone who does not regularly grow in his understanding and application of the Word, will be a weak, ineffective, and unproductive Christian.

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.  Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV)

Today there is a tremendous amount of untrue or inaccurate Bible teaching being taught. Incorrect understanding and misguided zeal do not enhance genuine and true knowledge or understanding of God and His will.

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.  Colossians 2:8 (NASB)

For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.  Romans 10:2 (NKJV)

...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.  2 Timothy 3:7 (NASB)

Many, probably most, television teachers and preachers preach a distorted message about God and how we are to live. We need to be very careful about who we listen to and who we learn from. Again, genuine knowledge of God and His Word and a commitment to put it into practice will enable us to effectively use the resources and the power God has given us and to be all that He wants us to be.
... through our knowledge of Him *who called us by His own glory and excellence.* (NASB)

... through our knowledge of him *who called us by his own glory and goodness.* (NIV)

According to the expository dictionaries, the word “goodness” (NIV) or “excellence” (NASB) refers to the “moral excellence” of God. Glory defines who God is, while “goodness” or “moral excellence” describes His actions. God is sinless. His actions are always in sync with His glory, His holiness, His righteousness, and His justice.

The closest we can come to understanding and describing the moral excellence of God is to recognize the holiness, the righteousness, and the justness of God. Our response to these qualities of God must be to have a deep reverence and awe of God. We must respond in sincere worship, faithful service, and obedience to Him.

> whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV)

> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." Hebrews 12:28-29 (NIV)

**Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises,**

The “these” in this phrase refers back to His glory and moral excellence. Through His glory and His moral excellence, He has given us very great and precious promises.

The promises of God are described as being “very great and precious”. They are not like human promises which may or may not be kept. God cannot lie and He can be trusted to keep His Word. We do not understand all that God is doing and we may not understand His timetable, but He is faithful and He keeps His word.

The promises of God are unequaled in what they promise and the giver of these promises is without equal in His ability to keep those promises.

In the next chapter of this study, we look at few of the many promises God has given us in His Word, the Bible.

...so that through them you may *participate in the divine nature* and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

This is amazing. Because of what God has done for us and because of what He has promised, we, as sinful humans, have been elevated to such a high position that we “participate in His divine nature”. What a truth!!! As we conform to His image and as we are filled with His Spirit, we become one with God in attitude, in purpose, and in actions.

Again, we must stand back in awe and wonder how it is that we, as humans, can have such oneness and fellowship with God that we become partakers of His divine nature. Those who are “in Christ”
and “He in them” have been credited with righteousness and have received glory from our Lord, and, as a result, we become partakers in the very nature of God.

This certainly leaves no room for us to think that we do not have what it takes to be what God wants us to be or to do what God wants us to do.

...so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

As a participant in His divine nature, we escape the corruption that permeates the world system.

We are not slaves to our sin nature. If a “Christian” is living in an ongoing lifestyle of sin, it is because he wants to sin and he chooses to sin. He sins because he wants to sin, not because he is a slave to sin. God enables us to be free from the control of sin and corruption.

We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. Romans 6:6 (ESV)

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, Jesus Christ, ... Titus 2:12-13 (NIV)

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:15-16 (NASB)

...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

How do we respond to what God has done? (2 Peter 1:5-7)

The teaching given in the two verses (2 Peter 1:3-4) which we have just gone over are exceptional. We have everything we need and all the power we need to be godly people. While we believe this because God teaches it, we, in reality, often feel like we are lacking something in our walk with the Lord. The next three verses (2 Peter 1:5-7) give very practical instruction in what we need to do to appropriate these truths and to be a productive fruit-bearing child of God.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 2 Peter 1:5-7 (NIV)

This is the heart of seeking God with all of our hearts and drawing near to Him. Any Christian who takes His walk with God seriously will give careful attention to these three verses and he will seek to follow these instructions.
For this very reason, make every effort...

“For this very reason” refers back to the teaching in the verses we have just covered. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Because we have been given everything we need for life and godliness and because we have precious promises that enable us to participate in His divine nature and escape corruption, we are to make every effort to develop and mature in our faith. God has done His part. Now it’s time for us, strengthened by His Spirit, to do our part.

For this very reason, make every effort...

To “make every effort” is to work hard. Developing goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love is not a casual part of our life. This is the heart of the Christian life. This is how we seek God. This is how we draw near to Him. This is how we grow in our walk with God. This is how we become productive and effective in our Christian life. If we want to please God and glorify Him, this is how we are to go about it.

While we are not saved by our works or our own efforts, we are to work hard at developing our faith. Any Christian who does not put effort into developing his faith will not grow much in his faith. He will be ineffective and unproductive in his walk with God.

...train yourself to be godly. 8 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. 1 Timothy 4:7b-8 (NIV)

For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. 1 Timothy 4:10 (NASB)

...make every effort to add to your faith goodness;

All Christians begin their walk with God by faith. We choose to put our faith in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ as full payment for the penalty of our sin. Now that we have a fundamental faith in Him, we are instructed to live and to walk by faith.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God Ephesians 2:8 (KJV)

We live by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NIV)

The following verses tell us how to grow, to be more mature, and to be productive in our faith. A big part of living by faith is working hard to develop the following characteristics in our life.

...make every effort to add to your faith goodness;

In this verse the Greek word translated “goodness” has a much deeper meaning than what we
normally associate with being good. This is the same Greek word that is translated "excellence" in 2 Peter 1:3.

...seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and "excellence". 2 Peter 1:3 (NASB)

As we have already seen, "goodness" or "excellence" is referring to moral excellence. We are instructed to add "moral excellence" to our faith. All who seek God and who wish to draw near to Him must have a high standard of moral excellence in their walk with Him. We do not indulge in activities that dishonor and displease our Lord. We must not be satisfied with simply avoiding "bad" sin. Instead, we strive to put a high standard of moral excellence into practice.

We must seek to imitate the moral excellence of God and glorify Him in all the activities of our life. There is no room for the shallow mediocrity that characterizes most of American Christianity.

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son,... Romans 8:29a (NIV)

...but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (ESV)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

This is a high standard for us to follow. In our attitudes and our actions we are to have a standard of moral excellence that reflects the character of God. The Apostle Paul knew that he fell short of this standard of excellence, but he was committed to "pressing on" to be what the Lord Jesus Christ instructed him to be.

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Philippians 3:12 (NKJV)

Our thought life must reflect the excellencies of God. Excellence in the following verse is exactly this same Greek word which refers to the moral excellence of God. We are to think about things that reflect the moral excellence of God.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8 (ESV)

We, as disciples of our Lord, are instructed to proclaim the excellencies (the goodness) of God.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

It seems as if there are not many Christians committed to modeling the moral excellence of Christ. If one is to seek God with all his heart and draw near to Him, he/she may feel alone in their search.
However, for those who make this their passion, there are rich rewards. God is glorified; we fulfill the purpose for which God created us; and there are rich eternal rewards awaiting us.

**...add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge:**

Correctly understanding and applying what the Word of God teaches is a key to being what God instructs us to be, to thinking as He instructs us to think, and to doing what He instructs us to do. Often our understanding of God and His Word is shallow and fragmentary. All of us need to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God. This is a lifelong pursuit. We must never stop growing in our knowledge and understanding of God and His Word.

In the Word of God, “knowledge” is not just a head knowledge, but a knowledge that controls all of our thinking, all of our attitudes and all of our actions. It controls all of our life. Nothing in life is outside of our commitment to Him.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to have this kind of knowledge and to grow in our understanding of spiritual truth. For this to happen we must continually let the Spirit of God fill and control us. Shallow half-hearted commitments do not lead to this kind of growth in our knowledge and understanding of God and His Word.

The Word of God clearly instructs us to grow in our knowledge of God.

...**but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.** 2 Peter 3:18 (NASB)

False or distorted teaching permeates American Christianity today. It is vitally important to determine if what we are being taught about the Bible is genuinely true. False and shallow teaching does not lead to greater understanding and knowledge of God.

**See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.**  Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

**Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.** Acts 20:30 (NIV)

*Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.* 1 Timothy 6:20-21 (NIV)

**To knowledge, add self-control.**

“Self-control” is not a deep theological concept. In fact, it simply means what it says – self-control. To have self-control is to control one’s desires, passions, and sensual appetites. It is to be disciplined in what we do and say and in the way we use our time. As we grow in our knowledge and gain understanding, we must determine to put those instructions into practice. This requires self-control.

Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. Those who are led by the Spirit will exercise self-control.
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5:22-23a (NKJV)

Serving the Lord takes effort. In our busy and diversified society there are many things that interfere with this commitment. Meaningful prayer is almost nonexistent in the lives of many who identify themselves as Christians. For many, perhaps most, it is more appealing to sleep in, to watch TV, to get lost on the internet, to text a few friends, or to spend time in recreation, than it is to spend time seeking to know God better. The list of things that keeps us from obedience is endless. Many of these things are not wrong in and of themselves, but we must learn where our priorities should be.

If we are to seek God with all our hearts and draw near to Him, we will have to exercise self-control. We will have to determine what is most important and focus on those things. An individual who walks with God will, with the strength given by the Spirit of God, exercise self-control.

To self-control, add perseverance.

“Perseverance”, like “self-control”, is not a heavy theological word. The theological dictionaries describe perseverance as endurance, standing firm, patience, faithfulness, and to bear up under. It simply means to be faithful or to “stick with it”, even when we don’t feel like it or in difficult times of trial.

There are many, many things that can cause us to become discouraged and not feel very enthusiastic about our walk with the Lord. When this happens, we need to discipline ourselves and continue to absorb the Word of God and let it revive our spirit.

Also, remember that God deeply loves us. He is always near (Psalm 139) us, and His Spirit lives within us. With this understanding, determine that you will be faithful to Him.

God is our example of faithfulness. He is always faithful and will keep His promises -- even when we feel down and discouraged.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. Hebrews 10:23 (NIV)

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1:9 (NIV)

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:11-12 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV)
Pastors and teachers are instructed to persevere in teaching the Word of God truthfully.

*Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*  
1 Timothy 4:16 (NASB)

Those who teach are to teach as if speaking the very words of God.

*Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. 11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.*  
1 Peter 4:10-11 (NIV)

The process of seeking God and drawing near to Him requires perseverance. Maturity does not come overnight. It is an ongoing process that will never stop until we go to be with Him. For those who are faithful, there are rich blessings here on earth and in eternity ahead.

**To perseverance, add godliness.**

Being godly is being devoted to God. A godly person will revere, genuinely worship, and have an awe of God. A godly person lives a life that honors, that glorifies, and that pleases our Lord Jesus Christ. Being godly is to live a life that is worthy of our calling. Being godly is to imitate God. God is a holy and compassionate God, and we too must seek to be holy and loving. We will never be as holy and perfect as God; however, we must put effort into being more like Him.

*Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*  
Ephesians 5:1-2 (NASB)

*For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, …*  
Titus 2:11-13 (ESV)

It is knowledge and understanding of the Word of God that leads to godliness.

*Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness –*  
Titus 1:1 (NIV)

We are instructed to train ourselves to be godly. It is something we continually pursue. This is certainly much more than an occasional token appearance at church on a Sunday morning.

*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.*  
1 Timothy 4:7-8 (NIV)
**To godliness, add** **brotherly kindness.** (phileo love)

“Phileo love” is defined as “having an affection for, serving, and building up our brothers and sisters in the Lord”. We share in our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have a love for each other.

**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.**
Romans 12:10 (NASB)

**Let brotherly love continue.** Hebrews 13:1 (KJV)

**Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.** 1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)

In the Word of God there are many “one anothers” that give us instruction in how to treat our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord. Putting these one anothers into practice is the heart of exercising brotherly kindness. Following are just a few of the Biblical “one anothers”:

**Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)

...pray for one another... James 5:16 (NASB)

**Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.** Ephesians 4:32 (NASB)

**So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.** Romans 14:19 (NASB)

**Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs,** Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

When a group of believers are committed to putting these things into practice, it is a beautiful relationship with our fellow Christians.

**To brotherly kindness, add** **love.** (agape love)

Agape love is the final and crowning quality that we are to make every effort to add to our faith.

**So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**
1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV)

Biblical “agape love” can be defined as follows: “In obedience to Biblical teaching, exercising
Agape love is to see or discern what someone’s need is and, without expecting anything in return, choose to meet that need”.

Agape love may or may not involve feelings of attachment to the person being shown love.

The ultimate example of this kind of giving is found in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. God gave His Son to die for us, who are unworthy, so that we can have eternal life.

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*  
John 3:16 (KJV)

*God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.*  
1 John 4:16b (NKJV)

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.*  
1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV)

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 gives very practical instructions in how to put Biblical love into practice.

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*  
1 Corinthians 13:4-8a (ESV)

One who seeks to draw near to God must learn to be a loving, giving person. We cannot be a godly person without being a loving person. In the exercise of agape love, it will likely, in one way or another, involve a sacrificial giving of yourself. This is not based on the worthiness of those to whom we are showing love.

**The Blessings that Result from Adding These Qualities to Our Faith**

2 Peter 1:8-11

In 2 Peter 1:5-7 we are instructed to work hard to add moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to our faith.

In these final four verses (2 Peter 1:8-11) of this Scripture passage, there are four results given that will be true in the life of those who work at adding these qualities to their faith. These four results are:

1. We will be effective and productive in our knowledge of God.
2. We will have assurance of salvation.
3. We will not stumble.
4. There will be rich rewards for us in heaven.
For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:8-11 (NIV)

A Christian who has committed himself/herself to seeking God, to drawing near to Him, and to growing in their walk with God, will be thrilled with these results.

For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, the phrase, “these qualities”, is referring to the qualities that we have just covered -- moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. This verse teaches us that if you are developing these qualities, you will be an effective productive Christian.

Notice that this verse does not say that each of these qualities must be fully developed to be effective and productive. It says that to be effective and productive these qualities must be increasing. This teaches us that it is those who are growing, not those who are perfect, who are effective and productive. All Christians, those who are young and those who are “mature”, should always be continually growing. God will bless those who are growing in their walk with Him. He does not wait until we have reached perfection to bless us with spiritual fruit. What a blessing that is!!!

But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

Those who do not actively seek to develop moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, are described as nearsighted and blind and have forgotten their spiritual birth. This is a sharp reprimand to those who are not taking spiritual growth seriously. These individuals will be ineffective and unproductive in their knowledge of God.

This passage of Scripture is a picture of a Christian who has lost his spiritual zeal. If he is genuinely saved, he will not lose his salvation but he will be an ineffective and unproductive Christian. This is one who, although he is saved, does not have assurance of his salvation, will be continually stumbling around in his spiritual walk, and he will have few eternal rewards.

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.

This is not teaching that we are saved by developing these qualities; but rather it is teaching that we can have the assurance of our salvation by being committed to developing these qualities (moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love) in our life. It is a huge satisfaction to have the assurance of salvation, knowing with certainty where we will spend eternity.

For if you do these things, you will never fall. (NIV) ...you will never stumble; (NASB)
There are some individuals who claim to be Christians that never seem to “get it all together”. Some seem to be continually stumbling around, living defeated Christian lives, and continually bringing pain and hurt into their own lives and into the lives of those around them. This does not have to be. Those who commit to adding moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to their faith will not stumble around in their walk with God. They will enjoy life; they will have peace; they will have purpose; and they will be effective in their knowledge of God.

**and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** (NIV)

The greatest blessing of all for those who commit to adding moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to their faith is that they will have a rich welcome into heaven. The Word of God teaches that there will be rich rewards in heaven for those who faithfully serve the Lord Jesus Christ while they are on earth. These rewards are eternal.
Chapter Thirteen

God promises and teaches us that He will care for us, provide for us, protect us, and lead us in every area of our life.

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)

In the Word of God there are many “great and precious promises”. This final chapter of this study is simply a listing of a few of the many promises and key teachings in the Bible that relate to how God cares for those who believe in Him.

In the Word of God there is a wide range of promises relating to many different areas of our life. They are many promises of eternal life for those who choose to believe in Him. God promises protection, peace, provision, power, direction, and much more for those who do choose to believe.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV)

There is nothing we genuinely need that He has not promised to provide. There is no spiritual blessing that He has not blessed us with. Because of these promises we can “participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (2 Peter 1:4)

I Have not tried to expound much on these verses. They speak for themselves.

It is my prayer that there will be some of you who will read and think about these verses and be blessed and encouraged and that you will grow in your walk with the Lord.

Following is a list of the topics covered in this chapter on blessings and promises that come from our God.

1. God deeply loves and cares for us.

2. Because God loves us, He shows abundant grace and mercy to those who choose to follow Him.

3. God offers us forgiveness for our sin and rebellion.
4. When we choose to believe in Him, we are given eternal life with Him.

5. We do not have to fear death.

6. God is faithful. He will keep His promises.

7. God gives peace to those who follow Him.

8. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can have joy.

9. God promises that He will always be with us and protect us.

10. God will provide for all of our needs.

11. God enables us to have victory over Satan and temptation.

12. God will give us wisdom, direction and guidance.

13. God promises to reward us for our obedience and service to Him.

14. Jesus is coming again to take us to be with Him forever.

1. God deeply loves and cares for us.

Some of the greatest promises and truths in all of Scripture relate to the love of God. Even though we are sinners, we are deeply loved by our holy God.

**How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!**
1 John 3:1 (NIV)

**But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**
Romans 5:8 (NIV)

**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.**
John 3:16 (NASB)

**As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; ...**
Psalms 103:13 (NIV)

Notice that in the following verse it states that God’s love has been “poured out in our hearts”. God is not stingy with His love.

**Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**
Romans 5:5 (NKJV)

**The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.**
Psalms 103:8 (NIV)
But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Psalms 86:15 (NIV)

Often life is not easy for us. However, God still loves and cares for us. All of us, including those who are weary and burdened, are instructed to “cast our cares on the Lord”.

Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. Psalms 55:22 (NIV)

The LORD is near to the brokenhearted And saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalms 34:18 (NASB)

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

In the following verses we learn that absolutely nothing can separate a genuine believer from God’s love.

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39 (KJV)

2. Because God loves us, He shows abundant grace and mercy to those who choose to follow Him.

A simple definition of God’s grace is to be “favored by God, even though we do not deserve it”. God’s grace is a source of joy, pleasure, and gratification in the life of a believer.

A simple way of defining God’s mercy is to say that “God is kind, good, and compassionate to those who are troubled or in need”.

It is a huge source of joy and satisfaction to know that we are recipients of God’s grace and His mercy.

The LORD is gracious and merciful; Slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. Psalms 145:8 (NASB)

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18 (NIV)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:4-5 (NIV)
For 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. Romans 3:23-24 (NIV)

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)

For the Lord your God is a merciful God. Deuteronomy 4:31a (ESV)

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. Psalms 103:8 (NKJV)

From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. John 1:16 (NIV)

But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Psalms 86:15 (NIV)

Nevertheless, in Your great compassion You did not make an end of them or forsake them, For You are a gracious and compassionate God. Nehemiah 9:31 (NASB)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 1 Peter 1:3 (NASB)

The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; Daniel 9:9 (NIV)

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. Titus 3:5 (NIV)

Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. Isaiah 55:7 (NIV)

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (KJV)

3. God offers us forgiveness for our sin and rebellion.

A cause for great rejoicing is that when we make the choice to believe on Him, God promises forgiveness of our sin.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (NIV)

But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Nehemiah 9:17 (NIV)
In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7 (NKJV)

For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more. Hebrews 8:12 (NIV)

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalms 103:12 (NASB)

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. Micah 7:18 (NIV)

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You. Psalms 86:5 (NASB)

God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, Colossians 2:13-14 (NIV)

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18 (KJV)

4. When we choose to believe in Him, we are given eternal life with Him.

Because God greatly loved us, He gave His only son to die in our place so that we can be freed from the penalty of our sinfulness which is eternal separation from God. Once we choose to accept this free gift, we are given eternal life to be spent with Him forever.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23 (NASB)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. John 6:47 (NKJV)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18 (NKJV)

...and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. John 10:28-29 (NASB)

And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Acts 16:31 (ESV)

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)
But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,  
John 1:12 (NASB)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.  
1 John 5:13 (NASB)

5. *We do not have to fear death.*

Because God has given us eternal life with Him, we do not have to fear death.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

John 11:25-26 (NASB)

We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.  
2 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;  
Psalms 23:4 (NASB)

For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?”

“O death, where is your sting?”

1 Corinthians 15:53-55 (ESV)

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ...I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;  
Philippians 1:21 and 23 (NIV)

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.  
Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

In the following verse, death is referring to spiritual death or eternal separation from God. This will never happen to a genuine believer.

"Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death."  
John 8:51 (NKJV)

For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end.  
Psalms 48:14 (NIV)
6. **God is faithful. He will keep His promises.**

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; Hebrews 10:23 (NASB)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:22-23 (ESV)

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:24 (NIV)

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1:9 (NIV)

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

The LORD will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. Psalms 121:7 (NASB)

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. John 10:27-29 (NKJV)

7. **God gives peace to those who follow Him.**

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. John 14:27 (NASB)

"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." John 16:33 (NASB)

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7 (NIV)

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock. Isaiah 26:3-4 (ESV)

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

Those who love Your law have great peace, And nothing causes them to stumble. Psalms 119:165 (NASB)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; ... Psalms 23:4 (NASB)

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. John 14:1 (NIV)
"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Deuteronomy 31:6 (NIV)

So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" Hebrews 13:6 (NIV)

Cast your burden upon the LORD and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken. Psalms 55:22 (NASB)

In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Psalms 4:8 (ESV)

And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!" Luke 12:22-28 (NASB)

8. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ can have joy.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:11 (NKJV)

...and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9 (NASB)

I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. Psalms 16:8-9 (ESV)

For You, O LORD, have made me glad by what You have done, I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands. Psalms 92:4 (NASB)

For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Psalms 30:5 (NIV)
You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence
Acts 2:28 (NIV)

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV)

9. God promises that He will always be with us and protect us.

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless.
He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. 2 Samuel 22:31 (NIV)

Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10 (NASB)

The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, And delivers them. Psalms 34:7 (NKJV)

For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Isaiah 41:13 (KJV)

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Psalms 46:1 (KJV)

The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalms 18:2 (NIV)

I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. Psalms 4:8 (NIV)

Psalm 91 is a excellent psalm dealing with God’s care and protection. It is too long to copy all of it here but it would be very worthwhile to read and to take time to think about what it teaches.

I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust." Psalms 91:2 (NKJV)

He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart. Psalms 91:4 (NIV)

For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.
They will bear you up in their hands, That you do not strike your foot against a stone. Psalms 91:11-12 (NASB)
Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him;  
I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.  
He will call upon me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble,  
I will deliver him and honor him.  
With long life will I satisfy him  
and show him my salvation."  Psalms 91:14-16 (NIV)

All those who follow the Lord will experience some difficult times in life, but God is always near and in control.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.  
Psalms 34:19 (NASB)

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you.  Isaiah 43:1-3 (NASB)

The LORD is good, a refuge in times of trouble.  He cares for those who trust in him,  
Nahum 1:7 (NIV)

We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;  
persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;  
2 Corinthians 4:8-9 (ESV)

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way.  
Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For the LORD upholds him with His hand.  
Psalms 37:23-24 (NKJV)

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"  
Hebrews 13:5-6 (NIV)

Our standing as the recipients of God’s love and protection is secure.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 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.  
Romans 8:38-39 (NIV)

God has a purpose for the things that take place in our life, even the difficult times that we go through.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.  
Romans 8:28 (NIV)
10. God will provide for all of our needs.

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:19 (NASB)

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. Psalms 23:1 (NIV)

I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food.
Psalms 132:15 (NIV)

O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! O fear the LORD, you His saints; For to those who fear Him there is no want. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; But they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing. Psalms 34:8-10 (NASB)

He has given food to those who fear Him; He will remember His covenant forever.
Psalms 111:5 (NASB)

Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalms 37:4 (NASB)

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? "And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? "And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' "For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:25-33 (NASB)

II. God enables us to have victory over Satan and temptation.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. 1 Corinthians 10:13 (KJV)

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Hebrews 2:18 (ESV)

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God
and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.  
James 4:7-8 (NIV)

But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.  
2 Thessalonians 3:3 (NASB)

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.  
Hebrews 4:15-16 (NIV)

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.  
Ephesians 6:11 (NASB)

12. **God will give us wisdom, direction and guidance.**

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;  
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.  
To him belongs eternal praise.  
Psalms 111:10 (NIV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.  
James 1:5 (NIV)

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.  
James 3:17 (NKJV)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.  
Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.  
Psalms 32:8 (NIV)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.  
Psalms 119:105 (KJV)

He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
Psalms 23:3 (NIV)

If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.  
Psalms 139:9-10 (NIV)

For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.  
Psalms 48:14 (KJV)

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.  
Proverbs 22:6 (KJV)
13. **God promises to reward us for our obedience and service to Him.**

And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.  
Revelation 22:12 (NKJV)

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.  
Matthew 16:27 (NIV)

And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward."  
Matthew 10:42 (NIV)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.  
Galatians 6:9 (NIV)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.  
Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  
Matthew 6:3-5 (NIV)

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  
Matthew 6:6 (NIV)

Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.  
Luke 6:22-23 (ESV)

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.  
Romans 8:18 (NASB)

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  
Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV)

14. **Jesus is coming again to take us to be with Him forever.**

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.  
John 14:1-3 (NASB)

For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the
Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 (NIV)

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:10-11 (NIV)

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. Matthew 24:30-31 (NIV)

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 1 Corinthians 2:9 (KJV)
Appendix One

Biblical Prayer Requests and Commitments

These are Biblical prayer requests that you can pray for yourself, for your family, your church family, and for others.

A. Relating to Our Walk with God -- Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. Psalm 86:11 (NIV)

1. You will hallow (or reverence) God’s name. The Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6
2. The Word of God will dwell in you richly. Colossians 3:16
3. You will earnestly seek God with all your heart. Psalm 63:1, Jeremiah 29:13
4. You will draw near to God. James 4:8
5. God will reign in your life. The Lord’s Prayer (Thy kingdom come), Matthew 6
6. You will love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength. Deuteronomy 6:5, Mark 12:28-31
7. You will be continually filled with the Spirit of God. Ephesians 5:18
8. You will be strengthened with power through the Spirit of God in your inner being. Ephesians 3:16
9. You will be filled with the fruit of the Spirit. (love, joy, peace, self-control, etc.) Galatians 5:22-23
10. You will live and walk by faith. Hebrews 11:5, Jude 1:20
11. You will know and do the will of God. The Lord's Prayer, Colossians 1:9
13. You will be faithful in prayer and will not give up. Luke 18:1, Ephesians 6:18
14. Your motives for praying will be right. James 4:3
15. You will know God’s love that surpasses knowledge. Ephesians 3:19, 1 John 3:1
16. You will put Biblical love into practice. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 13
17. You will be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 8:29
18. The Spirit of God will enable you to correctly understand Biblical truth. 1 Corinthians 2:6-13
19. You will not believe or accept wrong or distorted Biblical teaching. Acts 20:30, Psalm 1:1
20. You will have wisdom. Ephesians 1:17, James 1:5
21. You will continually grow in your walk with God. 2 Peter 3:18
22. You will let the peace of God rule in your heart. Colossians 3:15, Philippians 4:7
23. You will be delivered from Satan and all his deceitfulness. Matthew 6:13, John 17:15, Ephesians 6:10-18
24. You will look forward to all that God has ahead for us. Hebrews 6:17-20, Revelation 21:1-4
25. Your whole being -- spirit, soul and body -- will be blameless at His coming. 1 Thessalonians 5:23
26. You will remain faithful until death. 2 Timothy 4:6-8

B. Praise and Thanksgiving -- In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18 (NASB)

1. Thank and praise God for His death on the cross and for your salvation. 2 Corinthians 9:15
2. Thank and praise Him for His love, His grace, and His mercy. 2 John 1:3, 1 Timothy 1:2
3. Thank and praise Him for your many spiritual blessings. Ephesians 1:1-14
4. Thank and praise Him for your family.
5. Thank and praise Him for daily physical blessings and for your health.
6. Thank and praise Him for the difficult times in life that strengthen your faith. James 1:2
7. Thank Him for ____ (You fill in the blank.).
C. Relating to Our Way of Life

"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." 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NIV)

1. You will actively seek to live a holy life. 1 Peter 1:15-16
2. You will consider yourself dead to sin and selfish desires. Romans 6
3. God will search your heart and reveal any sinful way in you. Psalm 139:23-24
4. You will avoid every form of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22
5. You will present yourself to God as an instrument of righteousness. Romans 6
6. You will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Philippians 1:11
7. You will not become weary in doing good or lose heart. Galatians 6:9, Hebrews 12:3
8. You will not be angry but forgiving as God has forgiven you. The Lord’s Prayer, Colossians 3:13
9. You will be a good steward of all that God has given you. Matthew 25:14-30, 1 Corinthians 4:2
10. You will not love money and will be content with what you have. Philippians 4:11-12, 1 Timothy 6:6-10
11. All your attitudes and your actions will please and glorify God. 1 Corinthians 10:31, Psalm 19:14

D. Relating to Fellow Believers and Our Families

"Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:11 (NIV)

1. Your love will increase and overflow for fellow believers. 1 Thessalonians 3:12, 1 Corinthians 13
2. You will faithfully pray for fellow believers. Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16
3. You will encourage, build up, and serve fellow believers. Hebrews 10:23-25
4. You will control how you talk about others. Ephesians 4:29
5. God will protect believers worldwide who suffer persecution because of their faith. 1 Corinthians 12:26
6. Your marriage will be strong and that you will love and respect your wife/husband. Ephesians 5:22-23
7. You will actively teach your children (grandchildren) to walk with God. Deuteronomy 11:19-20
8. Your children (grandchildren) will be obedient and respectful. Ephesians 6:1-3

E. Relating to Evangelism

"Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV)

1. You will be an active witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20
2. God will open the door for you to present the gospel. Colossians 4:3
3. You will declare the gospel clearly and fearlessly. Ephesians 6:20, Colossians 4:4
4. Pray for individual family members, friends, and others who are lost. Romans 10:1
5. God will send workers with the gospel to the lost all around the world. Luke 10:2, Acts 1:8
6. The gospel message will spread rapidly and be honored. 2 Thessalonians 3:1
7. God will protect His messengers by the power of His name. 2 Thessalonians 3:2, John 17:11
8. Pray for individual missionaries that you know (or know about). Ephesians 6:19-20

F. Relating to Our Daily Needs

"Give us today our daily bread." Matthew 6:11 (NIV)

1. God will supply your daily needs. The Lord’s Prayer, Matthew 6
2. You will have good health. 3 John 2a

G. Relating to Those Who Are in Positions of Authority

"Pray ... for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." 1 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)
Appendix Two

A Two-Year Bible Reading Program

The following Bible reading program is based on the idea of repetitive reading. Instead of reading a lot of Scripture, you read the same section of the Bible for several days. The reason for this is simple. Most of us do not understand everything we read the first time through. This is especially true of the Bible. It is rich in depth. The more we read a section of the Bible, the more we understand it and can put it into practice.

1. (Week 1) John 3:16-21 (chapter 3, verses 16-21). Read these verses every day for one week. As you read, think about what you read. Ask God for a right understanding of these verses. If you have questions, ask someone that will give solid Biblical answers. Do not accept everybody’s answer as absolute truth. It is a good idea to be skeptical if an answer just doesn’t seem right.

2. (Week 2) Read 1 John 1:5-10 and 1 John 2:1-6 every day for one week. As followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, we need to regularly confess our sin. We do this to keep our walk with God fruitful and productive. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation, but there is a loss of our joy and productivity. As soon as you sin, confess it and get back on track with God.

3. (Week 3) Psalm 1. Read this chapter at least two times every day for a week. There are many blessings that come from our reading the Word of God and putting it into practice.

4. (Week 4) Read Psalm 32 every day for a week. Each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn. After you have read this psalm for two or three days, begin asking and answering questions like these:

   From verses 1 and 2, who is blessed (happy)?
   From verses 3 and 4, what is the result of not confessing sin (keeping silent)?
   From verse 5, what happens when we confess our sin?
   From verse 6, what should godly people do?
   From verse 7, what two things does God promise?
   From verse 8, what does God promise?
   From verse 9, what should we not be like?
   From verse 10, what difference is there between the wicked and those who trust in God?
   From verse 11, what should believers do?

   Every day thank God for saving you and for the things He is doing in your life. Talk to God about yourself, your family, your friends, and others you know.

5. (Week 5) Read Psalm 33 every day for a week. Again, each day after you have read it, quietly sit back and think about what you have read. Thank God for the truths that you learn. Again, after you have read this psalm for two or three days, begin asking and answering questions like these:

   From verses 1-3. Most of us don’t have harps and lyres, but what can we do to show our joy and give God praise?
   From verse 4, what does it say about the Word of God?
   From verse 5, what does God love?
   From verses 6 through 9, what is God’s relationship to the earth?
From verse 8, what should our attitude be toward God?
From verse 9, who controls the people and nations on earth?
From verse 10, how long will God’s plan stand?
From verses 12 through 15, who does the Lord watch?
From verses 16 through 19, what will not save a nation? Who delivers us in times of trouble?
From verses 20 through 22, what does it mean to “wait” on God?
Who is our hope in?
What should we do while we wait?

6. (Week 6) Read Psalm 34 every day for a week. Follow the same pattern that you followed in weeks one and two. Take time to think about what you read. This time, as you read it verse by verse, you make up the questions in your own mind and then think about the answers. From this psalm ask yourself questions that have to do with what God does for His people and what our response should be. Don’t forget to take time to talk to the Lord and thank God for all the things you learn.

7. (Week 7) Now read Psalm 139 every day for a week. Again, take time to think and meditate about what you have read. This is a very personal psalm. It covers how deeply the God of the universe knows and cares about you personally. He protects and leads you. He not only knows you, but He designed you personally and has a purpose for you. The last two verses are a beautiful prayer of submission to the God who knows you so well. Again, after you have read it for two or three days, begin asking yourself questions about what is said and thanking God for the truths you discover.

8. (This will take about two weeks.) Genesis, chapters 1-3. Read one chapter a day. Obviously this will take three days by reading one chapter a day. After you read all three chapters, start with chapter one again and read all three chapters again. Repeat this process until you have read all three chapters at least four times. These are very important chapters. They are the foundation on which all of the rest of the Bible is built. These chapters should be understood exactly as they are written. We don’t need to try to change or modify them to accommodate modern “scientific” evolutionary theories. We accept God as a higher authority than man.

9. (This will take about two months.) Now we are going to a longer passage of Scripture in the New Testament. The book of Mark has 16 chapters. The length of the chapters vary. Read about one chapter a day. After you have read all 16 chapters, start over again and read it all the way through again. Then read it all the way through a third time. The purpose of this reading is to get to know the Lord Jesus Christ better. Jesus is not only our Savior, He is also our example of living that we are to follow. If we are to be like Him, we need to know Him as well as possible. Reading the book of Mark through three times will help us to know Him better and to begin to live more like Him. Again, as you read, think and meditate on what you read.

10. (About four or five months) Now read the Book of John. John has 21 chapters. It is a little “deeper” book and you may need to go a little slower. There are some very long chapters. You may wish to take two or even three days to read and think about some of the chapters. You will not understand everything, but keep on reading anyway. As you move along in your reading, you will understand more and more all the time. Read the whole book at least two or three times. The book of John emphasizes the truth that Jesus is God. After you finish this reading, you should have an even greater appreciation of Jesus who is God Himself, and have a deeper commitment to serve Him.
11. (About one month) Now to a shorter book. The book of 1 John has only five short chapters. Read a chapter a day. Carefully think about what you read. Repeat this process until you have read the book through at least four times. 1 John is a sobering book. It makes us examine our own way of life and ask ourselves if we really know God and if we are living a life pleasing to Him. 1 John tells us that if we are continually living a sinful pattern of life, then we really don’t know Him. Instead of continuing in that unbroken lifestyle of sin, we confess the sin and turn from it. All Christians, even mature ones will sin, but we should always be growing in our walk with Him. There are many tests given for us to use to evaluate our lives. This book (1 John) should cause us to deepen our commitment to walking with Him. Don’t move through this book quickly. Spend a lot of time thinking and meditating on what you read.

12. (About two months) Now back to the Old Testament and the first book of the Bible again, the book of Genesis. Genesis is an entirely different kind of a book. It is historical in nature. It tells of man’s beginnings and where we came from. Genesis is fifty chapters long. Read a chapter a day. Genesis is an important book, but for now you only need to read it through once. You may wish to come back to it later. A basic understanding of Genesis will help you to understand what God is like, and it will also help you to understand much of the New Testament. It should be noted that we accept the historical and scientific accuracy of all of Genesis, including the first eleven chapters. Jesus Himself quoted from each of the first eleven chapters of Genesis which indicates that He Himself accepted their authenticity.

13. (About one month) Now back to the New Testament and the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a short book with only six short chapters that are loaded with good teaching and practical instructions for life. Read a chapter a day and be ready to spend a lot of time meditating. Read through the entire book at least four times.

14. (About three months) Now for the book of Romans. Romans is sixteen chapters long. It covers essentially all the foundational truths of our faith. It is a “heavier” book than most others. Don’t hurry through it. Sometimes you may wish to spend two or three days in one chapter. You should read it through at least two times. Romans gives us the foundation of truths upon which our faith is built. Essentially all the major doctrines of our faith are covered in this book. You may wish to buy a commentary to help you understand some of the passages. John MacArthur’s commentary on Romans is a good one to keep handy as you read this book.

15. (About two months) The book of Proverbs is an entirely different kind of a book. Through the use of proverbs or wise sayings, Solomon, under the inspiration of God, gives advice on how to live. While some of the verses or proverbs tie in to the verse before or after it, most of the verses are individual proverbs. Proverbs covers almost every conceivable topic. You will never digest all of this book. There is simply too much there. If you have school age children, this is an excellent book to read to them. In a very natural way it allows you to discuss with them right conduct in almost every part of life. It should be noted that a proverb is a general truth about life. It is not saying that every proverb will be true one hundred percent of the time in every person’s life. In Proverbs there are thirty-one chapters. Read it at least once. You may wish to read it through again.

16. (About two months) Now let’s go to the books of 1 and 2 Peter. These books together have eight chapters. These are very practical books giving instruction on various aspects of our walk with God. These are not long chapters, but read just a single chapter a day and spend plenty of time thinking and meditating on the contents of each chapter. These are books that will have to be read at
least three or four times through to begin to digest the contents. You will greatly benefit from the reading of these books.

17. (About two months) 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Like 1 and 2 Peter, these two books combined have eight chapters. Follow the same pattern given for 1 and 2 Peter. Read one chapter a day. Spend lots of time thinking and meditating, and stay in these two books until you have read the entire books through at least three or four times. These books will give you a lot of hope and peace about what God has in store for us in the future.

18. (About two months) Revelation. Revelation, chapters 4-22, deal with the future. It is not easy reading and you will most likely be a little confused after reading it. Don’t expect to understand it all. Read the book through once or twice. It will give you some idea of the judgment that unbelieving people will face.

Now, on your own, you can continue studying the Bible. God gave us every part of the Scripture and each part has a purpose. Studying Scripture is a lifetime pursuit and it is part of our lifetime growing process. Continue studying and applying the Word, and you will have a productive and satisfying lifetime walk with God.
Appendix Three

Suggestions for
An Effective Daily “Quiet Time” of Bible Reading and Prayer

Many Christians set aside a time each day to have a “quiet time” or “devotions”. The idea is to have a time each day to read the Bible, to think and meditate on what you read, and to have a time of prayer. It is a time to be alone with God. This is extremely important. If you regularly spend time with God, you will grow in your walk with God. If you do not, your growth will be slow and sporadic and you will often feel spiritually dry and discouraged.

Many Christians feel frustrated in their attempts at being consistent and productive in their daily “quiet time” with God. Following are some suggestions. If you don’t know where to begin your Bible reading, then use the two-year reading program in appendix two in this study.

If you have already developed a healthy pattern of time with the Lord and you are growing in your walk with Him, then there is no reason to change. However, if you are struggling with this, then putting into practice the following suggestions may well be one of the most important things you can do to help you grow in your walk with the Lord.

1. Start your daily quiet time by finding a time and place where, as much as is possible, you can clear your schedule and be alone and uninterrupted. Once you figure out the time and place, keep this time as if you had a daily appointment to meet with God.

2. Now, as much as possible, clear your mind of everything else that would distract you or interfere with your time with God.

3. Think back over the last few hours or days. Confess any known sin that you have not already confessed.


   Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

5. Now carefully and thoughtfully read and re-read the passage of Scripture in your reading schedule.

6. Spend some time meditating on what you have read and learned. Pray through the passage with thanksgiving and commitment. Worship and praise God in relation to the truths you learn from this passage. This time of meditation can be a precious time of allowing God to speak to you, deepening your love for Him, and giving you understanding and insights that will sustain and strengthen you.

What Is Scriptural Meditation?

Scriptural meditation is to quietly and unhurriedly think about or to ponder Biblical truths, asking God for understanding and submitting to His direction in your life.
7. If you would like to be a little more thorough in your reading, you may wish to ask yourself some questions about the passage. Following are some suggested questions:

   a. What are the major truths in this Scripture passage?
   b. What are the instructions or principles for living?
   c. Are there any direct or implied promises or warnings?
   d. What can I learn about God?

8. Now, seeking the Spirit's direction, determine what actions or attitudes in your life need to be changed and brought into line with what you have learned from his Word. Then determine that with His strengthening, you will make those changes.

9. Now spend time praying about current needs and those items on your prayer list.

Note: You may wish to jot down any blessings or insights you received. It is amazing how quickly we forget things. By writing them down, it also helps us to have them available to share with others who can be encouraged and benefit from what has blessed us.
Appendix Four

Searching for Biblical Understanding, Verse by Verse

My son, if you will receive my words, And treasure my commandments within you, Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD And discover the knowledge of God.
Proverbs 2:1-5 (NASB)

Scripture passage being studied ____________________ Date ________________

Following is a form with questions that can be filled out in order to help us to understand Biblical passages that we are seeking to understand and to digest. Writing out the answers makes us think about what is being taught in a passage and it helps us to remember what that passage is teaching.

The Scripture passage that you are working on can be a single verse, a paragraph, or even a chapter. However, most of the time, especially in the New Testament, chapters will be too long and contain too much teaching. Normally it works best to use paragraphs. Over time you can work your way through a chapter or even an entire book by studying it one paragraph or even one verse at a time.

Slowly and carefully read through the passage at least five or six times. Think (meditate) about what you are reading. Many have found that reading a passage out loud seems to help in digesting the passage. As you read and think, keep asking God for a correct understanding of the passage.

There may not necessarily be answers to every one of these questions in every passage. For example, not every passage will contain a command, a promise, or a warning.

What are the major truths taught in this passage? ____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________

What can we learn about God from this passage? ____________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________________
What are some instructions or principles to live by given in this passage?

What are the promises or warnings, or implied promises or warnings, in this passage?

Are there any commands in this passage?
Write out and memorize a key verse in this passage.

___________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

What truths are there in this passage that should cause us to thank and praise God?

______________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

Now take some time to pray through this passage with commitment, praise, and thanksgiving.

After you have answered these questions, it may be helpful to read about this passage in a trustworthy Bible commentary or to look up key words in a Bible dictionary or an expository dictionary of Biblical words.

**APPLICATION** - What attitudes or behavior patterns do you need to work on to be more in tune with the Biblical truths taught in this passage?

______________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

Now as you pray for the leading of the Spirit of God, determine what someone that you are teaching needs to hear and understand from this passage.

______________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________