

# **Drawing Near to God**

## **Understanding and Consistently Living By Wisdom From Above**

### **Living and Thinking Like One Who Is a New Creation**

**Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

James 4:7-8 (NASB)

**This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.**

James 3:15-17 (NASB)

**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)

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## **Introduction**

The title of this study may seem a little odd. However, it brings together three areas that are vital to walking close to the Lord. This study gets to the heart of what it is to be a godly person.

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 will freely admit that I feel inadequate to put this study together. I have often been frustrated with my own shallow walk and have committed myself to do better. When I worked on putting this study together, I was teaching through the book of James, and it stirred my soul. And again, I am committing myself to drawing near to God and to walking more closely to Him.

This study is written in simple and easy 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 prayer that this study may be helpful to some who want to draw near to God.

## **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. We are now retired members of UIM International.

## **Thanks to My Wife**

God has given me an exceptional wife. Linda has been a huge blessing in my life. She has been my co-worker and partner throughout life and in the writing of study guides. She has spent many hundreds of hours editing, checking for mistakes, making suggestions, printing, and binding them. Without her, these study guides would not exist.

## **Bible Translations Used in These Studies**

There are five different translations used throughout these studies. 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).

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The purpose of these studies is to help ordinary people understand fundamental Biblical truth. 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. No particular translation has been favored in these study guides. After each verse that is quoted, the translation is identified by giving the initials of the translation.

## **How to Get the Most from This Study Guide**

This study guide is designed to help you to learn, to understand, and to live what God teaches us in His Word, the Bible. God gave us the Bible to teach us how to know and to walk close to Him.

While the subject matter in this study deals with fundamental Biblical truths relating to fellowship, 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.

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#### **Note:**

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## Chapter One

# Drawing Near to God

Carefully read and think about the following two verses:

**Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** James 4:7-8 (NASB)

In these two short verses there are five commands.

1. Submit to God
2. Resist the devil
3. Draw near to God
4. Cleanse your hands
5. Purify your hearts

These five commands all go together. To be obedient to any one of them, it is necessary to put each of them into practice. Submission to God is the heart of drawing near to Him. We resist Satan by submitting to God and by drawing near to God. To draw near to God we live clean and pure lives.

The first three phrases (submit to God, resist the devil, and draw near to Him) are generally taught or referred to independently of each other. However, within their context, they are all essential ingredients of the same goal. That goal is to consistently live a godly life, which is the overall goal and purpose behind the whole book of James.

We often hear the phrase, “*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*”; yet it is not applied within the context of submitting to God, and drawing near to Him. The only way to resist Satan is to submit to God and to draw near to Him. Any attempt to resist Satan apart from these, using our own wisdom and strength, is bound to fail. A careful study Ephesians 6:10-18 where we are instructed to take our stand against Satan by “*putting on the full armor of God*” certainly verifies this.

There are rich rewards for those who seek to obey these commands. First, when we submit to God and draw near to Him, the devil has to flee. Satan cannot control a life that is drawing near to God. A second huge blessing is that when we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. What a promise!!!

In the first four verses of James 4 we find that some who identified themselves as believers were fighting, quarreling, and even going so far as to be a “*friend of the world*”. They were letting their old sinful nature control them. James deals with these professing believers in the last two of the five commands in these two verses (James 4:7-8).

**Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.** James 4:8b (NASB)

We must not allow ourselves to be “double-minded”. We cannot claim to want to follow the Lord and at the same time be continually giving in to temptations from Satan. As followers of the Lord Jesus

Christ, we must recognize that we have an ongoing attraction to sin. When there is known unconfessed sin in the life of a believer, he/she must confess and turn from that sin as the first step of submission to God. One cannot resist Satan or draw near to God without dealing with sin. This is where the last two commands, “*Cleanse your hands you sinners*”, and, “*purify your hearts you double-minded*”, come into play. Cleansing our hands has to do with our actions and purifying our thoughts has to do with our attitudes and how we think.

If we are to draw near to God, our attitudes and our actions must be in line with our desire to draw near to Him.

Similar commands are given in the following verses. 2 Corinthians 7:1 is a powerful verse that is totally in line with our verses in James. Carefully read and think about the following verses:

**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.**

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)

**And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.** 1 John 3:3 (NKJV)

The first step in dealing with sin is to genuinely confess the 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)

Most of the time when we, as Christians, confess sin, we do it in an almost casual manner. However, when we are confessing sin, especially an ongoing lack of submission or rebellion against God, it should involve genuine repentance and heart felt sorrow for our sin. In the verse following our key verses (James 4:7-8) it describes a repentance that involves deep feeling and sorrow for the sin.

**Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom.** James 4:9 (NASB)

In Psalm 51 when David confessed his sin, he expressed this kind of sorrow.

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.** Psalm 51:17 (NASB)

To draw near to God, we submit to Him, we resist Satan, and we live a godly life. When we stumble, we quickly confess that sin, repent, and get back on track with the Lord. We make our relationship with the Lord the number one priority of our lives.

## Chapter Two

# Understanding and Living by Wisdom From Above

In James 3 it very clearly teaches that there are two kinds of wisdom -- godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. There is a vast difference between these and there is a vast difference in the results they produce when applied to life. If we have any desire to seek God and to walk near to Him, we must actively seek to understand the difference between wisdom that comes from God and human wisdom that is “demonic” and not of God. We must understand the difference and seek to live by *“the wisdom from above”*.

In this section of this study, we will study these two kinds of wisdom – wisdom from above and worldly wisdom -- and then we will seek to understand God-given instruction in putting *“wisdom from above”* into practice. To walk with God, to submit to Him, to resist Satan, and draw near to God is to put this wisdom from above into practice.

To consistently walk near the Lord, we must understand that we live and make decisions in life based on the attitudes, values, and information that we have acquired in the past. We need to sincerely ask ourselves, “What are the origins of my own attitudes, values and information? Do they come from God or do they come from the world?”

Wisdom from above is from God. In contrast, natural human wisdom is identified as “demonic”.

**This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.** James 3:15-17 (NASB)

A major problem with many who identify themselves as Christians is that they want some of the things that God offers, but in some areas, they still want to think and act like the world. This does not work. If we desire to walk close to Him, we must seek to understand and act as He teaches us in His Word in all areas of our life. Many who identify themselves as believers know essentially nothing of God’s wisdom. The result is frustration and unhappiness, with little genuine spiritual fruit.

Our goal should not be just to gain greater understanding but also to put that understanding into practice. Gaining understanding does little good if that understanding does not enhance and deepen our walk with the Lord.

**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;** Proverbs 2:1-6 (ESV)

In this study we will seek to more fully understand God’s wisdom, all the while recognizing that we, as humans, can hardly even begin to understand the depth of His knowledge, His understanding, or His wisdom. When we begin to understand a precious fundamental Biblical truth, we find that is a gateway to even greater truth that may leave us in awe and amazement at the depth and riches of God’s wisdom.

**His understanding is unsearchable.** Isaiah 40:28b (NKJV)

The story is told of a young boy who climbed the “mountain” behind his house. When he got to the top, he was surprised to see an even higher snow-covered mountain peak off in the distance. When he was older his parents allowed him to take a several days hike to climb to the top of the second peak. When he was close to the top, he saw off in the distance a series of still higher mountain peaks. That is something like our understanding of the wisdom of God. The higher we climb, the greater and the richer are the truths that we begin to see. However, the more we learn, the more we begin to realize that there are even higher and deeper truths that we are yet to understand.

In spite of our human limitations, we are instructed in His Word to diligently seek Him and to seek His wisdom and understanding. Those who take these instructions seriously will be richly rewarded.

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.** Ephesians 1:17-19a (NIV)

In Scripture it is clear that the proper understanding of God and that having the right attitudes about God are the foundations of having genuine wisdom.

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.** Proverbs 9:10 (KJV)

**And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.'** Job 28:28 (NASB)

To grow in our walk with God or to draw near to Him, we must clearly understand the difference between God’s wisdom and natural human wisdom. There are few teachings of Scripture that are more important than correctly understanding these differences. The difference between these two kinds of wisdom influences our thoughts and actions in essentially every part of our life.

## **Definitions**

Following are Biblical definitions of the word’s knowledge, understanding, insight, and wisdom. These are key words and each of them is related to the others. To understand the Bible’s teaching on wisdom, it is helpful to understand the Bible’s usage of each of these key words.

### *1. Knowledge*

In the Bible there are several layers of meaning for the word “knowledge”.

Basically, knowledge is information gained through the senses, through study, or through practice. While God is all knowing, we, as humans, continually need to learn by gaining more knowledge in many different areas of life.



Knowing is also used in the sense that we are aware of something or that we are acquainted with a certain person.

When used in reference to knowing God or knowing Biblical teaching or principles, knowledge takes on a much deeper meaning. Knowing God is to accept Him and to be deeply committed to following the teachings given in His Word – the Bible. As we mature in the faith, we grow in our knowledge and understanding of God. This is much more than just a head knowledge -- every part of our being is governed by our knowledge of God and His Word.

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.** Ephesians 1:17-19a (NIV)

## *2. Understand or Understanding*

Understanding goes beyond knowing facts. To understand is to have discernment or to be perceptive. It is being able to comprehend an issue and to have rational insight. One who has understanding knows the concepts involved in an issue and has the ability to put them all together and come to the correct conclusions or solutions.

Only the Spirit of God gives genuine spiritual understanding. It does not come through human logic or rationale alone. Genuine understanding is gained through absorbing the Word of God and letting the Spirit of God illuminate its teaching. It can be a dangerous thing to build our understanding on human logic alone.

**I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.** Psalm 119:104 (NIV)

## *3. Insight*

To have insight is to be able to comprehend and to think through a concept or issue. It is to be prudent. It is a practical wisdom that leads to successful action. It is the ability to understand an issue and therefore be able to act wisely. It is understanding how spiritual truth can be put into practice in life.

**And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ...** Philippians 1:9a (NIV)

## *4. Wisdom*

Wisdom is the apex of these four related Biblical qualities. One with wisdom has each of the three previous qualities and is able to correctly put them into practice by living a godly life. Having wisdom is to know God and correctly understand God-given truth and having the good judgment and discernment to put that truth into practice. Wisdom is understanding what is just, right, and true in the eyes of God and then conforming to the character and purpose of God.

Biblical wisdom is having the ability to consistently live so as to please God. Biblical wisdom leads to

a productive, fruitful walk with God here on earth and to eternal rewards with our Lord forever.

**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)

## **The Two Kinds of Wisdom: Wisdom From Above and Man's Natural Wisdom**

The Bible very clearly teaches that there are two kinds of wisdom -- godly wisdom and worldly wisdom. There is a vast difference between these and there is a vast difference in the results they produce. If we have any desire to seek God and to walk near to Him, we must actively seek to understand the difference between wisdom that comes from God and human wisdom that is “demonic” and is not of God.

Carefully read the following description of natural earthly wisdom:

**Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil.**

James 3:15 (NIV)

In the following verses from Ephesians 2, the words “wisdom” or “understanding” are not used, but these verses give a vivid description of those who do not know God and are following the world’s wisdom or ways of thinking and acting. This is exactly what we mean when we talk about living by worldly wisdom. Notice that these people are following “*the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience*”.

**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)

In contrast, there is a “*wisdom from above*” that is of God.

**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)

**This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.** 1 Corinthians 2:13 (NIV)

God’s wisdom is founded on truth and is eternal and unchanging, but earthly wisdom is described as “foolishness”.

**Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.** 1 Corinthians 1:20-21 (NASB)

**The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.**

Psalms 33:10-11 (NKJV)

**Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

1 Corinthians 1:25 (KJV)

Following is a series of questions that can be answered in at least two fundamentally different ways. We can answer these questions from a Biblical point of view, thus reflecting the wisdom from above, or we can answer them from the world's point of view, thus reflecting the world's wisdom.

What we believe in each of the following areas will play a role in how we understand and live life. As you go through these questions, carefully think about how you would answer them. Are you reflecting God's wisdom or natural human wisdom?

This is certainly not an exhaustive list. The number of questions like the following that could be asked is endless.

1. Why do we exist? Do we have a purpose for existing and, if so, what is that purpose?
2. Are we created by God or are we the result of purely natural forces?
3. What is the fundamental nature of man? Is it good, evil or neutral?
4. Why do people do bad things?
5. Are right and wrong determined by God or are they determined in the minds of people?
6. Is there such a thing as sin? What is sin?
7. Will we be judged for our thoughts and actions?
8. Who are we accountable to -- God, man, or to no one?
9. Are families a design of God or are they based on human concepts?
10. Should marriage last for life or is it okay to switch partners whenever we choose to do so?
11. Should wives submit to their husband's leadership?
12. Is pre-marital sex okay?
13. Is it okay to live together without being married?
14. What is love?
15. What is the role of children?
16. Should we discipline children and, if so, how?
17. Is abortion okay?
18. What is our responsibility to our parents -- especially when they get old?
19. What should we do for recreation and entertainment?
20. What kind of music should we listen to or sing?
21. Who do we admire or look up to?
22. Is the Bible a revelation from God to man, or is it simply the work of men?
23. Are all religions essentially the same?
24. Where do we go for answers to life's hard questions -- to human "experts" or to God?
25. Is man eternal or will he simply cease to exist when he dies?
26. How can one please God?
27. What is the role of church?
28. Is there a God? If so, what is He like?
29. What is the source of truth -- God, man, science, or...?

Today there are many "experts" who rely on human wisdom for explanations and answers to just about every imaginable topic. It seems that everybody is an expert on something. On television there is an endless supply of experts who are ready and eager to expound on every conceivable topic. Yet, in spite of all the experts, the world is in a mess. There is ongoing disorder, even chaos, killings, disasters, social and political turmoil, etc., etc., etc.

Today people somehow expect psychology or a psychiatrist to have the answers to just about all human problems. In reality, psychology that does not have a right view or perspective of God is just as wrong and false in its thinking as everything else. Its human wisdom is foolishness with God, and it can do a tremendous amount of harm to those it attempts to help.

Obviously, it is God's will that those who are in His family be controlled and live by His wisdom. Christians are not to think like the world. Being transformed is fundamental to putting God's wisdom into practice.

**Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.**

1 Corinthians 3:18-19a (NKJV)

### **James 3:13-18**

**Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.** James 3:13-18 (NASB)

This is a key Biblical passage in the study of Biblical wisdom. In this section we will go through this passage verse by verse.

**Verse 13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.**

James begins this section by asking “*who is wise and understanding*”? Who is a godly man or who is filled with the Spirit of God? Remember, having wisdom from above is to know God, to be filled with His Spirit, seeking to correctly understand God-given truth, and having the good judgment and discernment to put that truth into practice.

Wisdom and understanding are demonstrated in the life of a godly man by his “*good behavior*”. This simply means that wisdom is demonstrated by how one lives. If one's actions are not in tune with the Lord, he is not exercising wisdom. The next phrase develops this by saying wisdom and understanding are demonstrated by deeds done in “*the gentleness of wisdom*”. Again, wisdom is demonstrated by our action or by our “deeds”.

Not only is wisdom demonstrated by good behavior and good deeds, those deeds are done with a right attitude. The Greek word translated here as “gentleness” includes being a humble, godly person. A wise person is not a proud self-serving person seeking to promote his own self interests. His deeds are done to honor and please the Lord, not himself. Genuine wisdom is given to those whose motives are in line with God's will and purpose.

**Verses 14-16 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above,**

**but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.**

These verses clearly teach that there are two kinds of wisdom. Human wisdom and wisdom that is genuinely from God. Human wisdom is “earthly, natural, and demonic” or in terms used elsewhere in the Bible, human wisdom is from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Those who are not walking with the Lord should not be hypocritical and claim to have godly wisdom. Those who are characterized by jealousy or a selfish zeal and self-ambition are instructed not to be arrogant and hypocritical. One must not be a liar, claiming to love God’s truth and to have God’s wisdom but, in reality, loving their own self more than God.

Human wisdom is “earthly”. It is not of God but is a product of men who do not revere God. Man tries to explain everything from a purely natural viewpoint. They may claim to believe in God but their wisdom reflects a naturalistic godless way of thinking rather than a supernatural wisdom that is from God. According to this passage, it is Satan and all his forces that are behind natural human wisdom. To reject God’s wisdom is follow the leading of Satan.

Human wisdom fueled by selfish zeal does not result in any spiritual good. There is no genuine spiritual fruit. It is characterized by evil fruit, not God-given fruit. No good can come from a system that originates with man rather than from God. Rather than bearing good fruit, human wisdom results in “*disorder and every evil thing*”. Today, as we listen to the news and see what is going on in the world, that is exactly what we see. Crime, killing, war, rebellion, chaos, disasters, and such things, continually dominate the news. That is what this verse says will happen when people reject God’s wisdom.

Evolution is another prime example of man’s wisdom. Rather than recognizing God as the creator, evolutionists attempt to explain the existence of the universe and all life apart from the designer creator God. As a result, they promote man’s concepts of morality which are based in human wisdom.

**Verse 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.**

In contrast to the previous verses, verse 17 describes genuine wisdom that is “from above”. God-given wisdom is not “earthly, natural, or demonic”. Instead, it has each of the characteristics described in this verse.

It would be well to note that these are characteristics of wisdom itself. It is not saying that every person who is committed to exercising godly wisdom will have all of these characteristics fully developed in his life. While we do not have them fully developed in our life, we must be committed to growing and becoming more mature in each of these areas.

The characteristics of wisdom from above are as follows:

*1. Pure:* First and foremost, godly wisdom has no uncleanness or defilement. A person with God-given wisdom will seek to live a godly life with pure thoughts, pure actions, and pure motives. He is not characterized by jealousy and selfish ambition. Instead, he seeks to be holy -- set apart from evil.

2. *Peaceable or peace-loving*: In the Word of God, our Lord often promises peace. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit. When one is committed to living in tune with God's wisdom, he will have peace, even in a world full of turmoil. Neither will one seeking godly wisdom be given to deliberately creating strife or unrest; instead, he will love peace.
3. *Gentle*: God is gentle with those who seek Him. When we seek to live by His wisdom, our relationships with other people will be characterized by gentleness. Even those in a position of authority will seek to be considerate, courteous, unassertive, and humble. They do not allow resentment or anger to control them. They are peaceable.
4. *Reasonable or submissive (NIV)*: This is speaking of willing reasonable submissiveness to those who have authority over us. As believers, we willingly submit to the lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we put the wisdom from above into practice, we eagerly submit to the teaching and instructions given in the Word of God. We are not double minded. We must keep our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to be stubborn and rebellious.
5. *Full of mercy*: God is "full of mercy". He is a God of great compassion and He is good to those in trouble. We are the recipients of God's love, His grace and His mercy. As followers of God putting His wisdom into practice, we too are to be compassionate to those in trouble. This principle has many applications in life. When someone is in trouble in any way and we have the ability to help, as a disciple of Jesus we show compassion and give him the help he needs.
6. *Full of good fruits*: Fruit trees bear fruit that is a staple to our physical health and well-being. In the Bible this is a picture or illustration of those who are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our fruit is the product of the Spirit of God working in our lives. We bear fruit that pleases God or, in rebellion, we resist and hinder the Spirit and produce fruit that dishonors Him. Those who seek the wisdom of God will produce good fruit. When this occurs, we glorify God and we are a blessing to other people.
7. *Unwavering or impartial (NIV)*: In James 2 we are instructed to be fair and equal in our treatment of people. God's wisdom does not show favoritism. As followers of the Lord, we too must be impartial and show love to all, not just to those whom we "like". One who is controlled by the wisdom of God will not be continually vacillating in his commitment. He will be consistent, continually keeping his focus on the Lord Jesus Christ.
8. *Without hypocrisy*: A hypocrite is someone who deliberately appears to be something he is not. One who is not a hypocrite is genuine and sincere. When one puts God's wisdom into practice, it is an honest sincere commitment. He is not faking it or pretending to be something he is not.

Verse 18 **And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.**

Righteousness is doing what is right and just in the eyes of God. When we choose to believe in Him, God credits His own righteousness to our account. Now we are to act or live in a righteous way. This is the opposite of living a sinful life. Righteousness is the heart of living a godly life.

In this verse there is a seed whose fruit is righteousness. Within the context of these verses that seed is the wisdom that comes from above. When we live by God's wisdom whose fruit is righteousness, we please, we honor, and we glorify Him. That is the most fundamental reason we exist. When we put His wisdom into practice, we accomplish all that God purposed for us. That is profound. God's wisdom, which produces righteousness, must be the foundation and the whole focus of all of our life.

In this verse, this seed is “*sown in peace by those who make peace*”. Those who sow the seed of God’s wisdom bring peace to those who hear. The one who sows has made peace with the Lord. From his position of peace with God, he teaches others to submit to the wisdom of God and they too can experience peace.

Peace is rare in the world today. However, even when nations and societies are in turmoil and unrest, individual believers can have peace. They have peace when they choose to put their faith in God -- even when they are going through some difficult times. They have peace with God and they experience the peace that only God can give.

## **Learning from Solomon**

**In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, “Ask what I shall give thee”. 1 Kings 3:5 (KJV)**

We all remember the story. When God offered to give Solomon whatever he asked for, Solomon asked for the understanding and discernment to be a good king and ruler of Israel.

**Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?” 1 Kings 3:9 (ESV)**

God was pleased with Solomon’s request and granted it fully. He gave Solomon great wisdom, insight, and a wise and discerning heart.

**God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. 1 Kings 4:29-30 (NIV)**

**The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. 1 Kings 3:10-12 (NIV)**

**King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. 1 Kings 10:23-24 (NIV)**

Solomon wrote three books of the Bible---Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The topic of the Song of Solomon is romantic love, and it is God’s stamp of approval on romantic love within marriage. I do not believe, as some say, that Song of Solomon is a picture of Christ and the church. Rather, it is just what it appears to be – God’s stamp of approval on romantic love within a marriage.

The second book that Solomon wrote is Proverbs. Proverbs was written when Solomon was committed to serving the Lord and living by the wisdom from above that God had given him.

Proverbs was written specifically to teach wisdom, instruction and discernment.

**The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, To discern the sayings of understanding, To receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity;** Proverbs 1:1-3 (NASB)

There is much rich teaching in the book of Proverbs. Words such as knowledge, understanding, insight, and wisdom are used over 150 times.

The primary theme of the book is the understanding and the application of God's wisdom. Following are just a few of the many verses from Proverbs that teach about wisdom:

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.** Proverbs 1:7 (KJV)

**Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them. Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.** Proverbs 4:5-7 (NIV)

**When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.** Proverbs 11:2 (ESV)

**There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.** Proverbs 21:30 (NIV)

**The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.** Proverbs 29:15 (NKJV)

As king, Solomon began by seeking and receiving godly wisdom. However, as Solomon's life progressed, his many wives began to turn him away from the Lord and the wisdom that God had given him. Solomon turned to worldly wisdom. This is one of the most disheartening parts of the Bible. It seems unbelievable that a man so blessed could turn his back on all that God had given him and done for him. However, that is what happened. Solomon began loving ungodly women more than he loved God. His wives turned his heart away from the Lord to "other gods".

**Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods;** 1 Kings 11:1-4 (NASB)

Notice the last verse in this passage. *"For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods;"*

After Solomon turned away from the Lord to serve other gods, he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes could be described as the emptiness and futility of man's wisdom. Ecclesiastes reflects the futility of following man's wisdom rather than the blessing that comes from putting godly wisdom into practice. Ecclesiastes is written by a disillusioned old man who has turned his back on the very God who had blessed him with so much godly wisdom and many other blessings.



Following are a few verses from Ecclesiastics. Notice the total difference in tone of these verses from those in the book of Proverbs. There is a huge contrast between the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes in their content and in their overall tone and outlook on life.

**Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."** Ecclesiastes 1:2 (NIV)

**Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain.** Ecclesiastes 1:18 (NASB)

Notice the pure hopelessness and total lack of joy or purpose in the following verses:

**And I thought the dead who are already dead more fortunate than the living who are still alive. But better than both is he who has not yet been and has not seen the evil deeds that are done under the sun.** Ecclesiastes 4:2-3 (ESV)

What an outlook on life. In these verses Solomon is saying that those already dead are more fortunate than those who are still alive. He is not saying that heaven is better than earth. He is just saying that life on earth is so rotten, that one is better off dead. He goes on to say that it is better yet to never have been born. What an outlook for someone whom God had so richly blessed. These verses are typical of what is written in the book of Ecclesiastes.

Now take time to read Ecclesiastes 1:12 -- 2:17. This is too long of a passage to reproduce here but you need to read it to get an appreciation for this part of our study.

Ecclesiastes 1:12--2:17 is a remarkable passage of Scripture. After Solomon turned to serve other gods, he tried many things to find happiness; but in the end he concluded it was all "*futility and striving after wind*".

Following is a list of things that Solomon tried in order to find satisfaction after he turned away from the Lord:

In verses 1:13 and 2:12, Solomon sought to gain even greater knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. He sought to be educated by gaining more worldly wisdom rather than seeking wisdom from above. Today he might have had a dozen PhD's after his name.

In verse 1:18 Solomon concludes, "*in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain*", and in verse 2:15 Solomon concludes that "*This too is meaningless.*" Remember, this is Solomon's conclusion about wisdom after he had turned from the Lord and began following the wisdom of man.

In verses 2:1-2, Solomon tries pleasure and laughter, and concludes that they too are meaningless.

In verse 2:3, he tries getting merry with wine (drunk?).

In verse 2:4, he builds many houses for himself.

In verses 2:4-6, he tries building an agricultural empire -- planting many vineyards, gardens, parks, and fruit trees, even a whole forest of trees. He also built reservoirs to irrigate them all.

In verse 2:7, it states that Solomon had many slaves or servants who worked for him. Solomon had great power and authority.

In verse 2:7, Solomon becomes a big-time rancher with many, many flocks and herds.

In verse 2:8, it states that Solomon was very wealthy.

In verse 2:8, he turns to music. He even had his own choir, and he probably had his own band and orchestra as well.

In verse 2:8, he tries women. He had an overabundance of women – 1000 wives and concubines.

In verse 2:9, it states that Solomon was famous. He was greater than anyone before him.

In verse 2:10, it states that Solomon lacked nothing that a person could possibly want. He was self-indulgent and had pleasure to the extreme. Yet, in spite of all this, look at Solomon's conclusions in the following verses.

**Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.**

Ecclesiastes 2:11 (NIV)

**So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun, for I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Ecclesiastes 2:17-19 (NASB)**

*“So I hated life” and “I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun”.* These are amazing statements made by a man who had had everything one could possibly want, and by a man who had once walked closely with the Lord.

The conclusions that can be drawn from all this seem obvious. We must seek God-given understanding, insight, and wisdom. Yet we must be very careful to keep the right perspective. And we must determine to be faithful. Wisdom that does not lead to righteous godly living is not wisdom from above, but rather it is human wisdom that is *“earthly, natural, and demonic”*. That is the kind of wisdom that Solomon wound up seeking and he paid dearly for his turning away from the Lord.

**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 2:6-7 (ESV)**

**And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding. Job 28:28 (NASB)**

The book of Ecclesiastes can be confusing at times because, at times, mixed in with all the statements of despair and hopelessness, Solomon seems to remember his past walk and make statements that reflect genuine God-given wisdom.

By the end of Ecclesiastics, in chapter twelve, Solomon sums it all up by giving some sound advice.

**Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;** Ecclesiastes 12:1 (ESV)

In the last two verses of the book, Solomon comes to a solid conclusion.

**The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.** Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 (NASB)

We can only hope that before Solomon died, he put his own advice into practice and turned back to the God who had so richly blessed him.

## **More Biblical Teaching Relating to Wisdom**

### *A. God is the source of all genuine wisdom.*

The following verses (Isaiah 11:2-3) are an Old Testament prophecy about Jesus. In this passage, “Him” is referring to Jesus. These verses state that the Spirit of God would rest on Jesus. Carefully look at the characteristics or qualities of the Spirit of God that are given in these verses. In these verses the Holy Spirit is identified as the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of the Lord. When we combine these verses with the New Testament teaching about the Spirit, it is clear that it is the Spirit of God who gives us wisdom, understanding and knowledge, as well as all the other characteristics of the Spirit given in these verses.

**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.  
And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,** Isaiah 11:2-3 (NASB)

**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 2:6-7 (ESV)

Now carefully read the following verses. Remember that the “*fear of the Lord*” is speaking of having a correct perspective of God. In our spirit we worship Him with “*reverence and awe*”, and we commit ourselves to faithfully digesting and applying His Word -- the Bible.

A believer who is filled with the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18) will be characterized by a fear of the Lord which is a key part of several of the following verses:

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.** Proverbs 9:10 (KJV)

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.** Proverbs 1:7 (NIV)

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!** Psalm 111:10 (ESV)

**And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.** Job 28:28 (NASB)

Individuals who do not fear God, those who do not reverence God, or those who do not have a correct perspective of God, do not have genuine godly wisdom or understanding. All those in the world who are without God are functioning on a false system of belief. They have not even begun to correctly understand what life is all about.

**O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!** Romans 11:33 (KJV)

**...both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.** Colossians 2:2b-3 (NKJV)

**Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.** Psalm 147:5 (NKJV)

**There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.** Proverbs 21:30 (NIV)

**He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;** Daniel 2:21 (ESV)

**In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.** Ephesians 1:7-8 (ESV)

When Job questioned the wisdom of God, God responded to Job with the following challenge:

**"Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge?"** Job 38:2 (NIV)

After issuing this challenge to Job, in the next four chapters God asks Job a series of questions that no man can adequately answer, either then or now. When Job began to understand the wisdom and power of God, he responded in humility and repentance.

**My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.** Job 42:5-6 (NIV)

Perhaps we, too, need to repent of our pride in our own understanding and seek to have a healthy fear of the Lord.

*B. Creation is a demonstration and an example of God's wisdom.*

Creation itself -- the earth, the universe, and all life -- is a demonstration of the great knowledge, understanding and wisdom of God.

**The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.** Proverbs 3:19-20 (ESV)

**But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding. When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; he makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from his storehouses.** Jeremiah 10:12-13 (NIV)

**O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. There is the sea, great and broad, in which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great.** Psalm 104:24-25 (NASB)

**To Him who by wisdom made the heavens, ...** Psalm 136a:5 (NKJV)

**He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.** Jeremiah 51:15 (KJV)

All of us have, at times, looked with wonder and amazement at some part of creation. There is an amazing display of beauty, complexity, and design in nature. Only God in all his wisdom and understanding could have created our universe. Creation is an on-going display of the wisdom and the power of our God.

God simply spoke the universe and all life into existence. We look at creation and the power of nature and are awed by what we see. However, in Job these are all identified as simply a whisper and the fringes of God's creative work.

**And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"** Job 26:14 (NIV)

If God made the universe with a whisper, and the universe is just the outer fringe of His work, one has to wonder what is the result of God's thundering.

**The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.** Psalm 19:1 (NIV)

### *C. It is the Word of God that teaches us God's wisdom.*

The Bible is God's revelation of truth to man. As we grow in our understanding and application of the Word of God, we grow in our understanding of the wisdom of God. Without question, the primary source of our understanding of the wisdom of God is the Word of God itself. Without the Word we would be very ignorant, without understanding or wisdom.

**The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.** Psalm 19:7 (NIV)

**See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."** Deuteronomy 4:5-6 (NIV)

**I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.** Psalm 119:99-100 (NIV)

**I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.**  
Psalm 119:104 (NIV)

**Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."** Matthew 7:24-27 (NIV)

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**  
Colossians 3:16 (KJV)

*"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly".* This is without question the key to gaining genuine wisdom and to living a life near to God that is fruitful and productive.

*D. Knowing and putting God's wisdom into practice is the heart of godly living.*

**Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise,** Ephesians 5:15 (NIV)

**Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.** James 3:13 (ESV)

This is a simple truth. Putting God's wisdom into practice leads to living a life that pleases and glorifies God. Each of the following verses, in one way or another, teaches this truth.

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.** Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

Notice that Paul prays that God would give them a spirit of wisdom and revelation. Wisdom and revelation go together. Wisdom comes from knowing and applying God's revelation to us. That revelation is the Word of God. Paul is praying that they will have wisdom that comes from the Word of God, which is God's revelation of truth to us. The result of having this spirit of wisdom and revelation is that we will *"know Him better"*.

**Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.** Ephesians 5:15-18 (NIV)

**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)

**The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.**

Proverbs 13:14 (NIV)

**The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.** Proverbs 11:30 (KJV)

**When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom.** Proverbs 11:2 (NASB)

**He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his peace.**

Proverbs 11:12 (NKJV)

**Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.**

Proverbs 26:12 (ESV)

**Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.** Romans 12:16 (NASB)

**One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.**

Proverbs 14:16 (ESV)

**Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.** Colossians 2:23 (NIV)

**Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.** James 3:13 (NASB)

The ultimate result of having wisdom and understanding is good behavior and actions, all of which glorify God. And this is all done with the right attitude.

*E. We are to actively seek to grow in our understanding of the wisdom of God.*

Christians are not to passively sit and wait for wisdom to somehow come. We actively search for it. We actively seek to increase our understanding of the Word of God and we actively seek to put it into practice.

We begin our search by asking God for wisdom.

**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)

**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;** Colossians 1:9-10 (NASB)

Once we pray, we actively seek for greater wisdom. There are many Scriptures that, in one way or another, instruct us to seek for wisdom and understanding. As we have already seen, our search for

wisdom is to actively seek to understand His Word and to put that understanding into practice. There should be no holding back in our search for greater wisdom.

**Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.**  
Proverbs 4:7 (NIV)

**How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.** Proverbs 16:16 (NKJV)

**No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal; the price of wisdom is above pearls.**  
Job 28:18 (ESV)

**A wise man will hear and increase in learning, And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,** Proverbs 1:5 (NASB)

**For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge;** 2 Peter 1:5 (NIV)

Another dimension to finding wisdom is to associate with wise individuals and seek wise counsel.

**He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.**  
Proverbs 13:20 (NASB)

**Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser;** Proverbs 9:9a (NKJV)

In the following passage of Scripture, notice the active verbs which should describe our search for wisdom:

**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.  
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 2:1-7 (NASB)

### *F. Rejecting or ignoring God's wisdom leads to spiritual disaster.*

Following is a longer passage of Scripture from Proverbs. (Proverbs 1:20-33 (ESV) In these verses, wisdom is personified as a woman. She (wisdom) cries out to be heard and is pleading for us to hear



and accept the wisdom from above. The last part of the passage is a warning against rejecting God's wisdom.

**Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you.**

**Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."** Proverbs 1:20-33 (ESV)

These are sobering verses. Read the last verses in the passage above again. Notice the serious results of not seeking greater wisdom and understanding. When we need wisdom, we will not have it. They will "*eat the fruit of their ways*" and their complacency will destroy them.

*G. There are rich rewards waiting for those who practice the wisdom of God.*

Those who put wisdom from above into practice will be blessed while here on earth and will enjoy the results for eternity.

**How blessed is the man who finds wisdom  
And the man who gains understanding.  
For her profit is better than the profit of silver  
And her gain better than fine gold.  
She is more precious than jewels;  
And nothing you desire compares with her.  
Long life is in her right hand;  
In her left hand are riches and honor.  
Her ways are pleasant ways  
And all her paths are peace.  
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,  
And happy are all who hold her fast.** Proverbs 3:13-18 (NASB)

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.** Ephesians 1:17-19a (NIV)

**Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.**

Daniel 12:2-3 (NIV)

*H. Disciplining children leads to wisdom.*

**The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.**

Proverbs 29:15 (NASB)

*I. It is of utmost importance that our teaching and our preaching must be based in God's wisdom, not our own.*

The following verses need to be taken very seriously by those who are in a position to teach or to preach. These verses are very clear. If those we teach are to be firmly grounded and to grow and to be productive followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, they must be taught God's wisdom, not our own.

**I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.**

1 Corinthians 2:3-5 (NKJV)

**For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.**

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 (NIV)

**Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.** 1 Corinthians 1:20-21 (NIV)

**This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.** 1 Corinthians 2:13 (NIV)

**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**

Colossians 3:16 (KJV)

## **Colossians 1:9-14**

This is a powerful passage of Scripture in which the Apostle Paul explains why he prays that the Colossians will have genuine spiritual wisdom and understanding. Carefully and thoughtfully read this passage several times. This passage is one of the clearest in the Bible detailing the results of

knowing and practicing God-given wisdom.

**For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 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 1:9-14 (NIV)

The heart of Paul's on-going prayer for the Colossians was for *"God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding"*.

Notice that knowing the will of God is tied to having spiritual wisdom and understanding. Without wisdom from above, we would have no knowledge of the will of God.

The vast majority of the will of God is revealed to us in the Word of God. The Word tells us how we are to act and what we are to do in essentially all areas of our life. Knowing the will of God comes as we are filled and controlled by the desire to understand His Word and put it into practice. Anyone who does not make understanding the Word of God a high priority will never be able to fully know or understand the will of God.

To have knowledge and understanding of the will of God and the wisdom to put it into practice, we must regularly absorb the Word of God and be led by His Spirit. We must know and apply His Word. To ask for knowledge of the will of God is to commit ourselves to learning and absorbing the Word.

When we focus on putting the revealed will of God into practice, the things that are not known will fall into place. God will lead us in making important decisions such as "Who should I marry?", or "Where should I work?", or "Where should I live?" when we daily walk with Him in submission to the known will of God, which is already revealed to us in His Word.

Praying for understanding of God's will is a prayer of complete submission. We cannot resist the Spirit of God and at the same time genuinely pray for knowledge of the will of God.

Look carefully at the results of putting godly wisdom into practice. Paul prayed this prayer for wisdom and understanding so that they would...

**...live a life worthy of the Lord  
...please Him in every way  
...bear fruit in every good work  
...grow in their knowledge of God  
...be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might  
...have great endurance and patience  
...joyfully give thanks to the Father**

This is an amazing list. Take time to digest what is being said here. All of these are the result of having wisdom from above and putting it into practice.

In Colossians chapter two, Paul warns of the dangers of following human wisdom rather than wisdom from above.

**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)

**Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.** Colossians 2:23 (NIV)

In Colossians 1:9-14, we have an amazing list of good things that are the result of having spiritual wisdom and understanding which in turn enables us to know and do the will of God. In chapter two we find that human wisdom has the “*appearance of wisdom*” but it cannot do anything to restrain our sinful nature.

The choice is ours to make. Do we seek wisdom from above or do we rely on human wisdom. Wisdom from above is understood through the study and application of the Word of God and results in many spiritual blessings, while this world’s wisdom does nothing to assist us in resisting Satan and drawing near to God.

## Daily Putting Godly Wisdom Into Practice

### *Consistently Living a Transformed Life*

In this section of this study, we will look at various keys to putting the wisdom from above into practice. How do we live a transformed life? The purpose of this section is to give some practical Biblical instruction in submitting to God, resisting Satan, drawing near to God and consistently living a transformed life.

**Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.** Romans 12:2 (NIV)

*"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"*. This is a foundation of the consistent Christian life. As we grow and mature in our walk with God, our way of thinking is being completely and totally transformed. Without this transformation, our walk with the Lord is in serious trouble.

**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 4:22-24 (NIV)

**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.** Colossians 3:2 (NKJV)

There is no question that submitting to God, resisting the devil, and drawing near to Him, involves a total transformation of the way we think. Carefully examine and think about the verses above. They all deal with a transformed mind.

A major problem with many who identify themselves as Christians is that they want some of the things that God offers, but they still want to think and be like the world. This does not work. If we desire to walk close to Him, we must learn to think as God teaches us to think.

This section of this study is not an in-depth treatment of any one Scripture or any part of a godly walk with the Lord. Instead, we will remind ourselves of many of the foundations of walking with the Lord. Following are twenty-four fundamentals of walking close to the Lord.

#### *1. Remember the basics.*

The following three commitments are foundations of knowing and walking with God.

- A. Absorbing the Word of God.
- B. Developing Biblical patterns of prayer.
- C. Being actively involved in a solid Bible-teaching church.

These three foundations are as important to our spiritual life as food and water are to our physical life. None of us have achieved perfection; however, if we are putting effort into developing these three

foundational areas, we will be growing and maturing in our walk with the Lord.

## *2. Deliberately choose to grow in your walk with God.*

Make the choice to grow in your walk with God, and then stay with it. Put effort and discipline into your commitment to growth. When you stumble or fall short, confess it, repent, and get back on track and continue on in your commitment. Make spiritual growth the top priority of your life.

Be realistic in your expectations. Don't expect instant or overnight maturity. Genuine growth takes time.

**But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith...** Jude 1:20a (NIV)

**But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.** 2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

Athletes work hard in training. We, too, must work hard at training ourselves to be godly.

**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)

**But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.** 1 Timothy 6:11 (NKJV)

We are to pursue godly living. There are more than seventy verses in the Word of God that, in one way or another, refer to seeking God. We, as saved individuals, are to seek to know and to serve Him in a deeper more mature walk with Him.

**You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.** Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)

**But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.** Deuteronomy 4:29 (ESV)

## *3. Be filled with the Spirit and walk by faith.*

In the Word of God there are two commands that are keys to every part of our walk with God. One is the command to be filled with or controlled by the Spirit of God and the second is to live or walk by faith. These two commands closely tie together. You cannot obey one without the other. As we go through life controlled and empowered by the Spirit of God, we will live a life of faith. That faith will permeate every aspect of our life.

We are commanded to be filled with the Spirit. This is an on-going action. If we are not continually letting the Spirit fill us, lead us, and strengthen us, then we cannot be what God asks us to be or do what He asks us to do.

**...but be filled with the Spirit;** Ephesians 5:18b (KJV)

**If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.** Galatians 5:25 (ESV)

**But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**  
Galatians 5:16 (NASB)

We are also instructed to walk by faith. This, too, is an on-going action. This is fundamental to walking with God.

**...for we walk by faith, not by sight...** 2 Corinthians 5:7 (NASB)

**And without faith it is impossible to please God, ...** Hebrews 11:6a (NIV)

**For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith".** Romans 1:17 (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.**  
Colossians 2:6-7 (ESV)

To walk with God is to walk in the Spirit and to walk by faith. Notice that we are instructed to walk in the Spirit and to walk by faith. The Word of God does not instruct us to “run in the Spirit” or to take “leaps of faith”. We are simply instructed to walk in the Spirit and to walk by faith. We walk one step at a time. When we learn to walk step-by-step in submission to the Lord, we will have mastered one of the most fundamental of all Christian life principles – daily living by faith under the control of the Spirit of God. We can walk with God all our life if we do it one step at a time.

There are times, especially when we go through the down times, that we can get discouraged or even fearful as we look into the future. We wonder how things will work out. Learn to walk in obedience to God one step at a time. Trust and obey Him for the next step or the next few hours. Then discipline yourself to put the future in God’s hands and stop worrying.

#### *4. Advice from a sister -- quickly obey the Spirit.*

My wife has a sister, who is one of the most godly people I have ever known. She is in her 90's and is living in a retirement home. She has an exceptional faith in the Lord and is a woman of prayer. She continually talks to others about the Lord. As I was preparing to write this section, I called her and asked her advice. One thing she said was that she had learned to quickly obey the Spirit of God. As soon as she sensed the Spirit of God leading her to do something, she obeyed quickly. If she put it off, something would come up that interfered or for some reason the action was not as effective later.

It seems to me that this is excellent advice. When you sense the Spirit leading you, obey quickly. Tomorrow may be too late.

*5. Be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. Focus on Him, not on people, things, or circumstances.*

**For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He (Jesus) might be the firstborn among many brethren.** Romans 8:29 (NKJV)

**For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:** 1 Peter 2:21 (NKJV)

Long before the universe existed, God planned that His followers were to be like Him. This is a fundamental reason we exist. The more we are like Him, the more we glorify Him, the deeper our fellowship with Him, the more we love Him, the closer our walk with Him, the more productive we are, the greater our worship of Him, and the nearer we draw to Him.

If we are to become more like Him, we need to grow in our understanding of what He is like and what He taught. All of us need to read and absorb the four gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- as well as the rest of Scripture. Again, this will not happen quickly. Being like Jesus is a lifelong growing process.

As Christians, we are to keep our focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. If we consistently focus our attention on people, circumstances, or anything else other than our Lord, we will become discouraged and lose heart. If we focus on people, sooner or later they will disappoint us or even disillusion us. When we make the Lord Jesus Christ the center of our focus and remember what He endured for us, we will not become weary and lose heart.

**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)

*6. Always remember how deeply God loves you.*

**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)

**And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge --- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** Ephesians 3:17b-19 (NIV)

All of us experience difficult times. It is a huge encouragement to remember that God deeply loves us and that He is always with us.

**How great is the love that the Father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God.** 1 John 3:1 (NIV)



**For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;** Psalm 103:11 (ESV)

**How precious is your steadfast love, O God!** Psalm 36:7 (ESV)

*7. Develop a consciousness of the continual presence of our loving Father.*

God is always with us. He is in us; He is beside us; He is in front of us; He is behind us; He is above us and He is below us. He totally surrounds us. God never leaves us.

**You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.** Psalm 139:5 (NASB)

**Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.** Psalm 139:7-10 (ESV)

**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)

All genuine Christians have the Spirit of God permanently indwelling or living in them.

**And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.** John 14:16-17 (ESV)

When we realize that God and His love totally surround us every moment of every day and every step we take, it can transform the way we live and the way we think. This understanding can encourage, strengthen, and motivate us to be faithful and consistent in our walk with Him.

*8. Recognize God as the creator of all that exists -- the earth, the universe, space, and all forms of life.*

Recognizing God as the creator of the all that exists, including each individual, is fundamental to having a right view of God and having a right relationship with Him. This earth and we, as humans, are not the product of random chance or of “natural selection”. We are direct creations of God.

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

**For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.** Colossians 1:16 (NIV)

**Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.** Psalm 33:8-9 (ESV)

**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

John 1:3 (NKJV)

*9. Realize that you as an individual were created by God. He has a purpose for you, and He equips you to accomplish that purpose. Put your gifts into practice, and look for ways to use your abilities to encourage and build up fellow believers.*

God not only created the universe; He also individually created each one of us in His own image. We are not just an accident of birth. Understanding this is fundamental to understanding who we are and what our purpose is in life.

**Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; ... God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. From Genesis 1:26-27 (NASB)**

The truths taught in the following verses from Psalm 139 are amazing. Even our conception and development in our mother's womb are creative acts of God.

**For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. Psalm 139:13-14 (NIV)**

The following verse was spoken to Jeremiah the prophet; yet it is true of all of us.

**Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; ... Jeremiah 1:5 (NKJV)**

God had a purpose for creating every part of His creation and He has a purpose for creating every individual person. If we were nothing but the product of random chance or natural selection we would have no purpose in life, there would be no right or wrong, and there would be no eternity to look forward to. You are not an accident of birth, nor are you a second-class citizen in the family of God. He has a ministry for each of us and each of us is needed in the family of God. Recognizing God as our creator and fulfilling His purpose for us gives deep meaning and purpose in life.

**...your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Psalm 139:16-17 (NIV)**

**In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, Ephesians 1:11 (NKJV)**

Our life from our conception to our death is in the hand of God. God not only has a purpose for creating each one of us, He also equips and empowers us to accomplish the purpose for which He created us. God has graciously equipped each of us with a specific ability or capacity to serve Him by serving and building up fellow members of His body (the church). He places us in the body where He wants us to be, and He equips us to serve as He wants us to serve. The term "spiritual gift" is often used to identify that special ability that God has given each of us to serve Him.

A spiritual gift is a Spirit-given and Spirit-powered ability given to an individual believer through which the Spirit of God ministers to other members of His body—the church.

When a believer exercises his spiritual gift(s), other believers will benefit. They will be encouraged, strengthened, taught, admonished or helped in some way. When we exercise our spiritual gifts, other Christians will mature in their faith and 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.

**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)

The Christian life is not always easy. We need to encourage and build each other up. Knowing that our fellow believers care and support us is a tremendous encouragement. It is great to have God on our side, but we also need our brothers and sisters in the Lord. God created us that way.

**Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**  
1 Thessalonians 5:11 (ESV)

**But encourage one another day after day ,...** Hebrews 3:13a (NASB)

**We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak,**  
Romans 15:1a (ESV)

**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)

*10. Recognize that God is in total control at all times. He is sovereign. Stop worrying, trust God, and enjoy life.*

God is not only the creator of the universe; He is in total control of all that has ever happened and all that ever will happen in every part of the universe. He is in total control of all that exists. The universe, including the earth itself, is in His hands. He is not panicking about global warming, running out of trees, losing too many polar bears, or anything else. In fact, He is in total control of all that happens here on earth.

**The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.**  
Psalm 103:19 (NASB)

**The LORD shall reign for ever and ever."** Exodus 15:18 (KJV)

God is in control of all nations on earth. He sets up and removes rulers and all who are in authority. Although we do not always understand His plan or thoughts, the nations are under His control and through them He is accomplishing His own will and purpose.

**God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne.** Psalm 47:8 (NASB)

**He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them.** Daniel 2:21b (NIV)

**The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.** Proverbs 21:1 (NASB)

**...all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"** Daniel 4:35 (ESV)

Life and death are in the hands of God.

**See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me; It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand.** Deuteronomy 32:39 (NASB)

As Christians, we can get uptight about many things. However, God is not up in heaven wringing His hands wondering what to do. We, as His children, can relax, knowing that God is in total control. In fact, He is working out everything for the good of all of us who are His sons and daughters. This is a remarkable truth.

**And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.** Romans 8:28 (KJV)

All of us who are His followers have a choice to make. We can choose to go through life uneasy, fearful, unhappy, and discouraged, or we can choose to trust in God, obey Him, and enjoy life. The choice is ours.

**You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.** Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV)

**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.** John 14:27 (KJV)

Wow! Why would anyone not choose to trust in the Lord?

*11. Develop your understanding and appreciation of the holiness of God. Praise and worship God because He is holy.*

The basic meaning of "holy" in the Word of God is to be "separate" or "set apart". When used in reference to God, it means that God is completely and totally separated from all that is sinful or evil. In the character of God there is not the slightest tint of sin or of any evil of any kind.

**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)

**...holy and reverend is his name.** Psalm 111:9 (KJV)

**The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread.** Isaiah 8:13 (NIV)

**There is none holy like the Lord;** 1 Samuel 2:2a (ESV)

When we recognize God as an absolutely pure holy God, it helps us to understand how sinful we are. The more we recognize the holiness of God, the more we realize how deeply He loves us. God is holy and we are sinful to the core; yet He still deeply loves us. He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die for us so that we can be forgiven of our sin, receive His righteousness, walk with Him, and enjoy fellowship with Him. Not only can we walk with Him here on earth, we will live with Him in heaven and enjoy the abundance of His love and grace forever.

Our response to this should be to worship Him by living a godly life.

**Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

**As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 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 1:14-16 (ESV)

**Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:**

Hebrews 12:14 (KJV)

**Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.** Leviticus 20:7-8 (NIV)

**...ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. Tremble before him, all the earth!**

1 Chronicles 16:29-30a (NIV)

There are at least four very important things that the holiness of God should teach us.

1. We should have a deep reverence, respect, and awe of God.
2. There is a very wide moral gap between God and man.
3. We cannot come to God on the basis of our own goodness or morality.
4. God expects us to live holy lives.

## *12. Be guided by love.*

God deeply loves us and we, too, are to be loving people. The Word of God teaches us that love is the highest Christian virtue.

**So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

1 Corinthians 13:13 (ESV)

**God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.**

1 John 4:16b (NASB)

In the Word of God we are instructed to love God. We love God by being obedient to His commands.

**And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.** Mark 12:30 (ESV)

**This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,**  
1 John 5:3 (NIV)

**And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.** 2 John 1:6 (NIV)

We are also instructed to love each other. When referring to loving our brothers and sisters in the Lord, Biblical love can be defined as having an affection for, helping, serving, encouraging, and building them up in their walk with the Lord.

**This I command you, that you love one another.** John 15:17 (NASB)

**Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,** 1 Peter 1:22 (ESV)

**Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.** Romans 12:10 (NIV)

We will never go wrong when we choose to show Biblical love to one who is in need.

### *13. Determine that you will not love the things of this world.*

Worshiping a holy God means that we will not love sinful worldly things. We cannot love both God and the world at the same time.

**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)

In these verses, the love of this world is described in three ways. Obviously, we cannot love any of these things and still genuinely love and obey God.

#### *a. the lust of the flesh*

**Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.** Galatians 5:19-21 (ESV)

#### *b. the lust of the eyes*

**You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** Matthew 5:27-28 (ESV)

Many Christians would not think of committing adultery; yet they enjoy TV shows that are filled with sexual lust. They would never murder someone; yet they enjoy programs filled with murder and other violence. They enjoy what God hates. This is love for the world, not love for God.

**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,** Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)

*c. the boasting of what he has and does*

There are many Scriptures that warn against pride. We are instructed to be humble and submissive to God.

**The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.** Proverbs 8:13 (NASB)

**Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.** Proverbs 16:5 (NASB)

**Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.** James 4:10 (ESV)

**But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.** James 4:16 (NASB)

Again, we cannot love the things of this world and love God at the same time. We cannot love what God hates and then claim to love Him.

*14. Carefully and honestly examine yourself to see if there are things in your life that, in reality, you value more highly than your walk with the Lord.*

There is a seemingly endless list of things that Christians can consider of greater importance than our walk with Him. Most of us would not come right out and say that, but our priorities show it and God is certainly not fooled. From time to time, we need to honestly examine ourselves to determine what we are putting ahead of our commitment to serve Him.

In reality, when we put other things before our commitment to serve and honor the Lord, we are guilty of the sin of idolatry. Idolatry is to put anything or anyone ahead of our allegiance to the Lord. Here are some things that we might want to think about. This is certainly not an exhaustive list.

#### *A. Issues Relating to Yourself*

Things such as pride, stubbornness, self-pity, the desire to be popular, the desire for power or control, anger, laziness, or even things like getting in better shape can all hinder the Spirit of God from working in our life.

### *B. Money and the Desire for Things*

Essentially everybody, rich or poor, wants things. The kinds of things we want are endless -- a nicer house, a newer pickup, a new dress or coat, a wide-screen TV, a newer cell phone or iPad, more video games, a new hairdo, to travel to more places, etc., etc., etc. When we focus on these kinds of things, we easily lose our focus on the Lord. And are we going into debt to buy things that are not needed? Debt can drag us down and control us long after the thrill of the new purchase has worn off.

### *C. Job*

God expects us to earn a living. It is important. However, we must not let our work or our profession be a higher priority than our loyalty to the Lord. When this happens, we must take whatever steps are necessary to make serving the Lord our highest priority -- even if it means finding a different job.

### *D. Sports*

For many Christians sports are a craze. They put sports above their loyalty to God. When sports and serving the Lord conflict with each other, sports win out essentially all the time. This teaches our kids and grandkids that sports have a higher value than our walk with God.

### *E. Music*

God loves music and we can praise and worship our Lord through our music. However, music can also tear us down. The world's music often glorifies sin and can foster wrong kinds of thoughts, feelings, and attitudes. Many Christians regularly listen to music that is built on sinful themes that God hates. Much "Christian" music is shallow and does not hallow God's name. The following verse is an excellent guide as to what kind of music we should listen to:

**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 is worthy of praise, dwell on these things.** Philippians 4:8 (NASB)

Don't try to excuse your music by saying that you really don't think about it or let it influence you. That is nothing but excuse-making. Even if it were true, music that does not honor the Lord should not be part of our lives.

### *F. Television Programs or Movies*

There is very little on television or in secular movies that glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet many Christians continually watch and listen to and fill their minds with things that God hates. Again, Philippians 4:8 is an excellent guide as to what we should watch.

**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 is worthy of praise, dwell on these things.** Philippians 4:8 (NASB)



*G. Internet, social networks, texting, iPhones, etc, etc, etc,*

For many, even Christians, these kinds of things have become a god. They dominate their time and their thoughts. Many Christians give these a much higher priority than they give the Lord. Again, this is the sin of idolatry.

*H. Addictions*

There are many kinds of addictions -- alcohol, drugs, overeating, tobacco, video games, the internet, gambling, and sexual addictions including pornography. This is certainly not an exhaustive list. God has given us everything we need to live godly lives. When we let addictions control us, it is because we want to, not because we have to.

*I. People*

It has been an amazement to me how people can put other people on such a high pedestal. Musicians, actors, athletes, politicians, and many other celebrities are often the objects of an admiration and devotion that borders on worship. In reality, we think more highly of them than we do of God.

*J. Family*

There are few, if any, other things that mean more to us than our own families. That is how God made us. However, we must be careful that we do not put even our own families above our commitment to our Lord. My wife, Linda, and I have two “kids” who, along with their wives, are serving as missionaries. We do not see them nearly as often as we would like. There is a side of me that wants them to stay home. Yet even in their absence we have a close relationship with them. All four of our “kids” are walking with the Lord and are a huge blessing in our lives, and we communicate with them often. I doubt that this would be the case if we put each other above our commitment to serve the Lord.

**He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.** Matthew 10:37 (NKJV)

*15. Recognize and acknowledge that you are a new creation in Christ and that sin has lost its power over you. Quickly confess and repent of sin.*

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

We need to often remind ourselves that we are a new creation in Christ Jesus. We have the Spirit of God living in us. We are no longer controlled by our old sin nature.

**For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away**

**with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...** Romans 6:6-7 (NIV)

**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.** 2 Peter 1:3 (NIV)

God's divine power has given believers everything we need to live a godly life. The old way of life has lost its power over us. We are no longer slaves to sin. The bottom line is that genuine Christians do not have to live a carnal or fleshly lifestyle. If we do, it is because we choose to do so, not because we have to.

**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)

All of us are tempted to sin. When we give in, such as when we deliberately sin, or when we have wrong sinful thoughts or attitudes, or when we fail to do something that God instructs us to do, then we must quickly confess the sin and determine that we will turn away from that sin and pursue godliness.

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

When we confess our sin, our righteous and just God will purify us from *all* unrighteousness. Praise the Lord!!! I'm clean! I'm clean! It's a great feeling!

A good practice for a Christian is to regularly pray the following prayer from Psalm 139. After you do this, think back over the last few hours or days and see if any sinful action comes to mind. If it does, confess it and make a determination to turn away from that sin.

**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.** Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)

To maintain our fellowship with God and to allow the Spirit of God to continually fill us, we need to confess sin as soon as we realize that we have sinned. This may be several times a day. Confessing and forsaking sin brings peace and productivity. Not confessing or trying to hide sin brings defeat, unhappiness, and on-going feelings of guilt.

**He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.** Proverbs 28:13 (NASB)

*16. Develop a thankful attitude. Regularly thank and praise God.*

One fundamental characteristic of the Christian life is being thankful and praising Him -- not just occasionally, but regularly. There are many passages of Scripture that teach this.

**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)

**Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.** Psalm 100:4-5 (KJV)

**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!** Philippians 4:4 (NKJV)

**Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.** Psalm 103:1 (NIV)

As children of God, we are under the care of our loving sovereign God. He is in full control and He works everything out for our good. His Spirit is always there giving us the strength and direction we need. Knowing all of these truths helps us to be obedient to His command to be thankful in all circumstances. When we focus on our Lord rather than on our circumstances, we can be thankful.

It is hard to be thankful and to be grumpy, fearful, or angry at the same time. Thankful people are happier and more content. Learn to be thankful and you will honor the Lord and you will enjoy life a lot more. Being unthankful will hinder the Spirit's work in our lives and keep us from walking near to Him.

*17. Expect to go through difficult times and times of trials and testing in your life.*

**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)

**For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,** Philippians 1:29 (NASB)

**But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.** 1 Peter 2:20b-21 (NIV)

The Word of God clearly teaches that we will go through trials and difficult times. As children of God, we do not have to face these trials alone. God has compassion for those who suffer and He gives us some very precious promises.

**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)

**God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.** Psalm 46:1 (KJV)

**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)

**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 43:1-3a (ESV)

**A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;**  
Isaiah 42:3a (NASB)

**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.** Philippians 4:6-7 (NASB)

**And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, ...** Colossians 3:15a (KJV)

God tells us not to worry. Instead, we should pray, and then let His peace rule in our hearts. God is always with us and He strengthens us. At times He uses our fellow believers to help and encourage us. When we go through difficult times, we need to let fellow believers know so they can encourage, counsel, and pray for us.

### *18. Honor the Lord with your finances.*

Money is important. In a normal life span, a person who is the primary provider for his family will spend some forty to fifty years working and earning a living for himself and his family. We need money to buy food, clothing, transportation, shelter, and many other things for ourselves and for our families. Men and women work hard so that they and their families can be provided for.

God expects able-bodied men to provide for their families.

**But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.** 1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV)

*The Word of God teaches that everything, including “our” money and everything else we have, belongs to the Lord.*

God created the earth and everything in it is His. Accepting the truth that everything we have belongs to God is a fundamental truth in all areas of our Christian life and it is certainly true when it comes to having right attitudes about money.

**The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.** Haggai 2:8 (KJV)

**The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it.**  
Psalm 24:1 (NASB)

Many Christians believe that a tenth of their income belongs to the Lord and the rest of it is theirs to do with as they see fit. This is a bad attitude. Everything we have is the Lord's and that includes all our money. Feeling that one's possessions are “mine” will hinder spiritual growth.

All that we have is from the Lord. God gives us the ability to work and earn money so that we can buy what we need in life. Our homes, our cars, and all our possessions were given by God. He gives these things to enjoy and to use for His service.

As followers of the Lord, we need to be careful in our attitudes about our earthly possessions or the things we “own”. Don’t hold on to them too tightly, and don’t put great value on possessions. They are temporary. They are given to us for a time so that we can serve the Lord Jesus Christ in the manner He chooses for us. All that we possess should be used in accordance with His will and purpose for our lives.

*God will supply the needs of every genuine believer. We focus on eternity, not earthly possessions.*

One of the most fundamental Biblical truths is that God will supply our needs. We do not need to worry about it. There are many Scriptures that teach this. This is a tremendous truth that takes a lot of pressure off of us. We can concentrate on our service to the Lord knowing that He will supply our needs.

**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.** Matthew 6:33 (ESV)

**But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.** Philippians 4:19 (KJV)

As Christians, we focus on laying up treasure in heaven, not on earth. We are not to love money and the things money can buy.

**Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.** Matthew 6:19-21 (KJV)

As we have stated, money is necessary to live a normal life in our society. It is not wrong to earn and to have money. However, it is wrong to love money or to make getting more money the central focus of your life. If an individual becomes focused on money, he/she will lose his focus on God. This happens to many Christians. Instead of being committed to serving the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians become committed to getting more material things. When this happens, we lose our joy in the Lord; we lose our productive service for the Lord; and we lose eternal blessings.

As Christians, our focus is on eternity. That does not mean we neglect our responsibilities here on earth, but we focus on promoting God’s kingdom, not our own. With this perspective, we will not let making money and buying things become our primary goal in life.

*Christians are to return some of their income to the Lord.*

God promises to bless those who give.

**But this I say, He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully.** 2 Corinthians 9:6 (KJV)

**Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.** Malachi 3:10 (NIV)

How we handle finances is a fundamental test of our love for God. If Christians are reluctant or afraid to give or they resent giving, then their walk with God has probably not developed very far. A person who regularly sacrificially gives is more likely to be growing in his walk with God.

*What about the Prosperity Doctrine?*

The Bible clearly teaches that God will care for His people and that He will prosper those who live godly lives and obey His instructions. The word “prosper”, at times, does refer to finances; however, more often it carries with it the idea of fulfillment or accomplishing the purpose that God gives us. But does God promise that He will make every Christian wealthy if they just have enough faith, give enough money, or speak the right words? No. In the teaching of many, repentance and living a godly obedient life are not a big issue. Faith and giving alone are all that is required for God to bless them with riches beyond anything they can imagine.

This “prosperity doctrine” teaches that God's favor is expressed mainly through physical health and material prosperity, and that these blessings are available for the claiming by anyone who has sufficient faith. If you have faith and are willing to send money to whoever is preaching and asking for it, God will bless you with wealth and happiness. Oral Roberts promised that if you would send him money, he would send you holy water from the ORU fountain to anoint your wallet to make you rich. This kind of greed-driven false teaching preys on the poor and has bilked millions of dollars from those who are already in desperate financial trouble. In reality, the only ones getting rich are those who are asking for and receiving all the money and making all kinds of false promises to those who give.

*19. Develop Christian friends. Regularly associate with Christians who will encourage you, pray for you, and build you up in your walk with God.*

We are influenced by our close friends. We enjoy being with them and sharing our lives and activities. 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, our best friends need to be ones who walk with the Lord.

**Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.** Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NASB)

**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)

## 20. *Listen to and sing good Christian music.*

God loves music and when God created us, He created us with a love for music as well. The Word of God describes our music as a “new song”. A “new song” does not mean a newly written song or the latest “hit” but rather a song that is a new and different kind of song. It is new in character and quality. As Christians, our music is an expression of thanksgiving, praise, and worship of our Lord. This is obviously radically different from the songs of the world.

**He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;** Psalm 40:3 (NASB)

**Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.** Psalm 149:1 (KJV)

Music is a part of our praise and worship to God. Music builds us up; it inspires us; and right Christian music teaches us. As Christians, we can sing just about anywhere or any time. We can sing when we’re alone and we can sing when we are with fellow believers. Those with musical ability can sing or play an instrument skillfully while the rest of us can just sing. And God is pleased with all of us.

Music is an expression of what is in our heart and souls. Music that is genuinely praise or worship comes from a heart that is filled by the Spirit of God.

**Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,...** Ephesians 5:18-19 (NIV)

**My heart is steadfast, O God! I will sing and make melody with all my being!** Psalm 108:1 (ESV)

When the Word of God lives in us richly, we sing.

**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)

The song of the Christian is a song of joy.

**Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones;** Psalm 33:1 (NASB)

**I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.** Psalm 9:2 (KJV)

**Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises! Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody! With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord!** Psalm 98:4-6 (ESV)

Today, much so-called Christian music is shallow and doctrinally incorrect. If music is not Biblically correct, it is not genuine worship. It may bring an emotional ooey gooey feeling, but it is not genuine worship. Genuine worship is based on truth and a right spirit.

**God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.** John 4:24 (NASB)

Again, God loves music. He has instructed us to praise Him and, for most of us, music is a primary way we express our praise to God. This glorifies and pleases our God.

### *21. Know and apply Biblical teaching relating to families.*

There are few things in life that affect us more than our immediate families. This is true whether we are married or single. When we put Biblical teaching relating to families into practice, our families can be a source of great joy. Neglecting these teachings can lead to deep hurt and pain.

### *22. Don't get in a hurry.*

God's timetable is not our timetable. Often it seems as if He is not in as big a hurry as we are.

**Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.** Psalm 27:14 (KJV)

**I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.** Psalm 40:1 (NIV)

**For in You, O LORD, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.** Psalm 38:15 (NKJV)

**Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.** Micah 7:7 (KJV)

One thing we soon learn in our Christian life is that God often does not answer prayer as quickly as we would like. This does not mean God is not listening. God knows what is best for us and He is working to accomplish His own will and purpose, and that often means that we need to patiently wait. We faithfully serve and trust in Him, even when it means waiting.

### *23. Take care of yourself physically.*

We only have one body and when it quits, our ministry on earth is over. Obviously, our soul and our spirits are important, but we live in a physical body. When our bodies are not well, our service to the Lord is hindered. It is not wise or good stewardship to neglect our health. When we do, we cut short or hinder our service to Him.

**Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.** 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV)

**Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.** 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (ESV)



**But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.** 1 Corinthians 9:27 (ESV)

**Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health...** 3 John 2a (NIV)

Most of us eat much more than we need and many of the foods we eat are not good for us. As a result, we do not have the energy and health that we could have. Our service to the Lord is hindered. Obviously good health involves more than just what we eat, but what we eat is an important part of our health.

Modern processed foods are drained of nutrition and loaded with chemicals that are known to hurt our bodies. However, God has abundantly provided healthy foods for us. In the Bible, God provided many varieties of fruits, vegetables, grains, meat, dairy products, spices and other condiments. God has provided nutritious foods in abundance.

One Christian doctor had the following three simple suggestions:

- A. Eat what God created to be eaten.
- B. Eat them in as natural a form as we can get them – before the processors get ahold of them.
- C. Eat everything in moderation.

#### *24. Look forward to heaven.*

The time is coming when we will go to be with our Lord and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is coming back to take us to be with Him. If we pass on before He returns, we will immediately go to be with Him in heaven -- forever. What a cause for joy! Our minds cannot begin to grasp all the blessings that are in store for us.

**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)

**He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."**  
Revelation 21:2 (ESV)

From our perspective here on earth, it seems as if we will be here for a long time. Yet from an eternal perspective, our time on earth is but a tiny dot on the landscape of time. As we have said many times, life here on earth is not always easy. For some it seems as if it is one heartache after another. But God's grace is sufficient and when this tiny dot of time is over, we will enjoy the presence of God forever. This gives us a secure hope and is a reason for an underlying joy and peace, even in the midst of the storms of life.

**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)

## Chapter Four

# Living and Thinking Like One Who is a New Creation

So far in this study we have concentrated on two keys to being a godly person -- living by wisdom from above and consistently living a transformed life. These are foundational to our growing closer to our Lord. In the Word of God there are many Scriptures that give instruction related to living a godly life. Obviously not every one of them is directly tied to the themes of wisdom and being transformed.

This kind of a study could go on and on for many chapters or even books. Hundreds of books have been written that deal with godly living. That is not the purpose of this study. In this final section of this study we will very briefly look at a three key passages of Scripture that gives instruction in godly living. These are Scriptures that each of us, new and old Christians alike, can use to examine our lives and determine where we need to grow in our walk with the Lord.

## 2 Corinthians 5:17

**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)

2 Corinthians 5:17 is a familiar verse to many Christians. Many of us recognize the general truths stated in this verse. Yet I suspect that most of us, including myself, have heard this verse many times but have not really digested the truths taught in this passage. Carefully read it several times and take some time to think about what it teaches.

The Christian's way of life is not the same as the world's way of living. Those who are "*in Christ*" or those who have been genuinely saved are a totally "*new creation*".

Being a new creation does not mean that we have some new ideas, attitudes, or actions injected into our old way of life; it means that everything is totally new. The old has "*passed away*". In everyday English we sometimes use the term "*passed away*" to refer to someone who has died. That is exactly the idea here. When we are genuinely saved, our old way of life dies. This truth is clearly taught in numerous passages of Scripture.

**Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin--because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.** Romans 6:3-7 (NIV)

**If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.** Colossians 3:1-3 (NKJV)

When we were saved, we died to our old way of life and we are freed from the control of sin. Our life

now must not reflect the old way of thinking and living; it must reflect our new way of life that is free from the control of sin.

Now back to 2 Corinthians 5:17. Notice again what is stated in the last phrase of this verse, “*behold, all things have become new*”. The word “*behold*” magnifies the significance of the truth that follows. All Biblical truth is important, but introducing a truth with “*behold*” is an indication that the following truth is very important.

The truth here that “*behold*” introduces is that when one becomes a believer “*all things become new*”. This doesn’t say that there are a few changes in life, or that we think a little differently now; it states that “*all*” things become new. All means all. All things is not just a few things, or some things, or even most things; it is “*all*” things. A believer is not the same person he was before being “*in Christ*”.

A major problem with many who identify themselves as Christians is that they want some of the things that God offers His children, but in some areas they still want to think and act like the world. This does not work. If we desire to walk close to Him, we must seek to understand and act as He teaches us in His Word. We seek to put God’s wisdom into practice in all areas of our life.

**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 4:22-24 (NIV)

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)** Ephesians 5:8-9 (NIV)

**You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.** James 4:4 (ESV)

When “*all things become new*”, the Spirit of God lives in us and enables us to live a godly life and to grow in our walk with Him. Before this transformation, we did not know God and were incapable of any spiritual growth. Now we seek to grow and put wisdom from above into practice.

This truth stated in 1 Corinthians 5:17 should not be taken to mean that the moment we are saved we are a mature believer. There are many many Scriptures that in one way or another teach us that we are to grow in our walk with the Lord. Every believer, those new believers and those not so new, need to make the choice to grow in their walk with God, and then stay with it. Put effort and discipline into your commitment to growth. When you stumble or fall short, confess it, repent, and get back on track. Continue on in your commitment. Make it the top priority of your life.

**But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.** 2 Peter 3:18 (KJV)

**But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith...** Jude 1:20a (NIV)

**But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.** 1 Timothy 6:11 (NKJV)

**Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting**

**what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.** Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV)

Many athletes work hard in training. We, too, must work hard at training ourselves to be godly.

**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)

In the verse above carefully look at the last sentence --- *"but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come"*. Godliness, or putting wisdom from above into practice, has *eternal* value.

*Ephesians 4:22-32, Colossians 3:12-17, Romans 12:9-19*

In the Bible there are several longer passages of Scripture that give somewhat detailed instruction in living a godly life. Following are three of them. I have not made an attempt to expound or comment on the truths taught in these passages. I would encourage you to carefully read and think (meditate) on what is taught in each of these verses. Ask God for a right understanding and the determination and discipline to put them into practice.

These passages deal with many different areas of our walk with Him. Each of them is important.

**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. Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**  
Ephesians 4:22-32 (NIV)

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 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. 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 3:12-17 (NIV)

**Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in**

**brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 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 12:9-19 (NIV)**

### *Philippians 4:8*

This is a monumental verse that we will use to finish up this study. In this verse we are given instruction in what we, as believers, are to think about or what we are to allow in our minds. This is critically important. All of us know that our thought life will determine the kind of person we will be.

**For as he thinks within himself, so he is. Proverbs 23:7 (NASB)**

All of us know that we live in a world where people have many kinds of unhealthy, even dirty or filthy ways of thinking. One has only to watch a small amount of TV to know this is true. Many who identify themselves as believers regularly watch and enjoy such programs. TV is certainly not the only source of ungodly thoughts. The world is saturated with such thinking. This kind of stuff should not have any part in the life of someone who desires to draw near to God. If you are serious about your walk with the Lord, you will have to become what many would consider to be an oddball, rise above the world, and put a Biblical standard of thinking into regular practice.

**Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. James 1:21-22 (NIV)**

There are some who would justify watching or listening to things that are not pleasing to God by saying that they just watch or listen, but they really don't think about them. They say they don't let what they watch or listen to affect the way they think. Some even try to justify playing video games in which they kill opponents by saying they know it is just a game, and they can even learn "Biblical truth" from playing these games. This is a twisted way of thinking. Choosing to watch activities that are sinful in God's eyes or listening to something that exalts sin will never please God and certainly cannot pass the tests given in Philippians 4:8.

If we desire to draw near to God, a top priority must be to learn to control our thinking. Philippians 4:8 gives us clear instruction in the kind of things that we are to think about.

**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)**

The last phrase, "*think about these things*", is a command. This verse is not a suggestion; it is a command. It is a command that is ongoing. In other words, we are to regularly, not occasionally,

think about these kinds of things. Some translations use “dwell” or “meditate” instead of the word “think”. This helps us to understand the ongoing nature of this command.

In addition to the words “*think*”, “*dwell*”, and “*meditate*”, the word “*think*” in Philippians 4:8 has been defined in various word studies and commentaries as “*to consider*”, “*to evaluate*”, and “*to impute*” or “*to credit*”. I personally was surprised to learn that this is the same word used of God crediting righteousness to our account. This adds another very significant level to what is being taught in this verse. After we have thought about, considered and evaluated a concept and determined it to be genuine Biblical truth, we are to make these thoughts a permanent part of us. *We “impute” these thoughts into our way of thinking and they become a permanent part of the spiritual foundation of our life.*

Following are the qualities or tests given in Philippians 4:8 by which we are to evaluate what goes into our minds. When more than one word is used in the heading, it reflects different words that are used in various translations.

### *Whatever is true:*

If something is true, it is accurate, it conforms to reality, and is not a lie. Jesus identified the Word of God as truth. For the believer, the Bible is our standard of truth by which we judge the truthfulness of our thoughts. We are to regularly think about and consider things that conform to the truths taught in the Word. Unbiblical thoughts or reasoning should never be a part of our spiritual mental make-up.

**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)

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

**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)

Many Christians in modern America are not so concerned as to what is true, but rather they are more concerned with how an idea or concept makes them feel, or will that idea work well for them. If we genuinely want to draw close to the Lord, we will judge our thoughts by a Biblical standard of truth rather than how it makes us feel, or if it is pragmatic.

### *Whatever is noble or honorable:*

According to the word studies, if something is noble or honorable, it is in tune with the worship of God. It inspires a reverence and awe of God. Worship is not just a Sunday morning activity. We, as followers of our Lord Jesus Christ, are to live an ongoing lifestyle of worship. This is a high standard. Is what we watch or listen to promoting genuine Biblical worship of God. We must not allow our minds to dwell on thoughts that are not in tune with exalting and worshiping God.

**...let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.** Hebrews 12:28b-29 (ESV)

**But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.** John 4:23-24 (ESV)

**One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.** Acts 16:14 (ESV)

**These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; ...** Matthew 15:8-9a (NIV)

*Whatever is right or just:*

Thoughts and actions that are right or just in the eyes of God are defined as being righteous. They conform to the standards and expectations of God. This is another standard to determine what we allow our minds to dwell on. Are our thoughts righteous in God's eyes or do they displease the Lord? We judge or evaluate our thoughts by God's standard of righteousness rather than our own standards of right and wrong.

**"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."** John 7:24 (NASB)

**In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.** Matthew 23:28 (NIV)

**"The righteous will live by faith."** Galatians 3:11b (NIV)

**But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God."** Acts 4:19 (NIV)

**...being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.** Philippians 1:11 (NKJV)

*Whatever is pure:*

That which is pure is holy, morally clean, undefiled, and blameless. Again, this is a high standard for what we allow our minds to dwell on. This is not just a human standard of purity; rather it is a standard of moral excellence which is a description of God's standard of holiness. What we dwell on must meet God's standard of moral excellence.

**And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**  
1 John 3:3 (NASB)

**But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure...** James 3:17a (NIV)

**Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence...**

2 Peter 1:5a (NASB)

*Whatever is lovely:*

Thoughts that are lovely are gracious, pleasing, acceptable, and loved by God. Our thoughts must always be thoughts that are pleasing to God.

**Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.** Romans 8:8 (NIV)

**Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God,** 1 Thessalonians 4:1a (ESV)

**For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God.** Hebrews 11:5 (NIV)

*Whatever is of good report or good repute or admirable:*

These words all speak of what is highly regarded or well thought of. There is a lot of trash in the world's way of thinking and acting. We should not let our testimony to the world be damaged by thinking like the world thinks.

We know that some Biblical teachings are disliked by the world, and they will not like our Biblical standards. However, overall, we need to be very careful that we are not offensive to unbelievers by the way we think and talk. Remember, we are the light of the world. The way we think should exalt the Lord and draw people to Him.

**You are the light of the world.** Matthew 5:14 (ESV)

**"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.** Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)** Ephesians 5:8-9 (NIV)

The last sentence in this verse, Philippians 4:8, "*if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things*", is a concluding statement that summarizes all the previous six qualities. The thoughts of a genuine Christian should be characterized by a standard of excellence. Sobering questions to ask ourselves are, "Does what I am thinking contribute to an attitude of praise to our Lord?" or "Does what I am watching or listening to bring praise to God?"

It is my prayer that this study will encourage you to seek to draw near to our Lord. As I put this study together, I could see many areas of my own life that needed attention in my own pursuit of a closer walk with the Lord. If you think of it, pray for me. I too need a fresh work of the Spirit of God in my life. Even though I don't specifically know who will read or teach this study, I will also pray that God will do a good work in your life and that He will use you to encourage others to draw near to the Lord.



**Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 4:7-8 (NASB)**

**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)**

**I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. Ephesians 1:17-19a (NIV)**

**Be very careful, then, how you live--not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15 (NIV)**

**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)**

**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24 (KJV)**