

Moving Toward Maturity

Fall 2017 – First Baptist Church of Avon Park



Colossians 1:9-14

⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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So Great a Salvation – Lesson 1

Welcome, friend, into the family of Jesus Christ!! Your decision to trust Christ as your Savior and Lord has brought you into a wonderful new life and relationship with God. Many things happened when you trusted Jesus Christ and you began to live for Him. We will first examine what happened to you at the moment of conversion, then we will see what the Bible has to say about assurance of salvation and growing in your faith.

I. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU TRUSTED JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

1. **Justified.** This is a legal term meaning, "declare righteous". (**Romans 3:24; 5:1**) On the account books of heaven, where all your sins were recorded, God "imputed" (an accounting term meaning "to put") to your account the righteousness of Christ. (**Romans 4:20-25**)
2. **Given peace with God (Romans 5:1).** The result of justification is peace with God. Your conscience is cleared and the guilt is lifted because you know you have been reconciled to God (that is, you were once separated from God but the differences are settled -- **2 Corinthians 5:18-21**).
3. **Redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19).** This is the act of God whereby He paid the price of our sins: He purchased sinners through the death of Christ.
4. **Given an inheritance**
 - You are now complete in Christ; nothing more needs to be added to give you eternal life. (**Colossians 2:9-10**)
 - You possess every spiritual blessing. (**Ephesians 1:3**) Every gift the Holy Spirit gives, you have been given.
 - You have assurance of eternal life. (**1 Peter 1:4**)
5. **Given a new position.** You are now a member of a holy and royal priesthood (**1 Peter 2:5,9**); a citizen of heaven (**Philippians 3:20**); a member in the family of God by birth (**John 3:5**) and by adoption. (**Galatians 4:5**)

Since you are now in the family of God, many wonderful things are possible for you.

- You can begin to understand God's Word. (**1 Corinthians 2:12-14**)
- You can obtain strength to apply the Word to change selfish wrong habits. (**1 Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13**)
- You can experience joy in trials. (**James 1:2-4; Romans 8:28-29**)
- You can have fellowship with other believers in the church of Christ. (**1 John 1:7-9**)

II. YOUR ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL SALVATION – 1 John 5:11-13

1. But how do you know that you really have eternal life? Let us see what the Scriptures say.

Read **1 John 5:11-12**. God says, "And this is the testimony, that God has given us _____, and this life is in _____."

- Note: The witness is **not** your **feelings!** Not a human's statement! God's Word is the witness!

2. How long is this life? _____.

3. Read **1 Peter 1:3-5**.

- What are three descriptions of your inheritance which is reserved in Heaven?

- Who protects this inheritance? (v5) _____

4. Based on **2 Timothy 1:12**, how confident should we be in His keeping power?

5. According to **Philippians 1:6**, why can we have this confidence?

Our assurance of eternal life is beneficial in many ways, but its main purpose is to enable us to live and grow in the likeness of Christ. (**Romans 8:28-29a**)

6. What characterizes those who possess eternal life? (**John 10:27-28 & John 6:35-41**)

7. Note four great truths from **John 5:24**.

8. What are some evidences of eternal life?

- **1 John 5:13-14** _____

- **1 John 3:14** _____

- **1 John 2:5** _____

GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN- Lesson 2

A group of tourists visiting a picturesque village walked by an old man sitting beside a fence. In a rather patronizing way, one tourist asked, "Were any great men born in this village?" The old man replied, "Nope, only babies."

A frothy question brought a profound answer. There are no instant heroes, whether in this world or in the kingdom of God. No great Christians have ever been born. Maturity takes time, effort, and the power of God in our lives. The question we must address is "**How do Believers grow in righteousness?**"

In *Godliness through Discipline*, Jay Adams states: "There are only two kinds of life: the feeling motivated life of sin oriented toward self, and the commandment motivated life of holiness oriented toward godliness."

There are several basic things that you need to understand in order to grow toward godliness.

I. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND YOUR NEW POSITION IN CHRIST.

1. According to **Ephesians 2:1-3**, what are five descriptions of your **life before** you became a Christian?

2. According to **Ephesians 2:4-6**, what are three descriptions of your **life now** as a Believer?

3. How should we view ourselves as Christians?

2 Corinthians 5:17 _____

Romans 6:11 _____

Romans chapter 6 teaches that we are no longer under the power of sin, nevertheless sinless perfection cannot be obtained in this life. The reason for this being that **we still live in the "flesh" or "body" that houses the principle of sin. (Romans 6:12 - 7:25)**

While our inward nature has been changed, and is dead to sin, our body is still alive to sin until it is changed at the resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Since the Believer still battles with sin, it is important that we understand the nature of temptation.

II. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION.

1. Read the following passages and note the three sources of temptation.

James 1:13-14 _____

1 John 2:15-16 _____

1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:13-14 _____

2. How did Jesus overcome temptation? (**Matthew 4:2-11**)

Do we have this same resource for overcoming temptation?

3. Note four ways in which God's Word is useful for overcoming sinful habits.
(**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

4. What is God's promise in **1 Corinthians 10:13**?

**III. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND GOD'S PURPOSES
FOR THE BELIEVER IN THIS LIFE.**

1. What is God's purpose for the Believer in **Romans 8:28-29**? _____

2. What is God's purpose for the Believer in **2 Corinthians 5:9**? _____

3. What is God's purpose for the Believer in **1 Corinthians 10:31**? _____

It is important that we understand what God's purposes are for us, otherwise our priorities in life will be wrong; we will misinterpret what God is attempting to accomplish in our lives. When we understand these things, what will our goal be according to **Matthew 6:33**?

IV. YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT GOD DESIRES AND EXPECTS OBEDIENCE.

1. What does God desire of us in **Romans 12:1-2**? _____

2. According to **Romans 6:12-13**, what must we do if we are to be obedient to God?

3. In order to grow in Christ, what three things does **Ephesians 4:22-24** tell us to do?

The "put-off, put-on" dynamic is found consistently throughout the Bible. Growth will not take place by simply putting off something. For example, if you decide to stop a bad habit but do nothing to replace that habit --growth will not take place and you will soon return to your former way of living. You must replace sinful ways of living with godly ways of living.

4. List side-by-side several sinful habits and what those habits should be replaced with in **Ephesians 4:25-32**.

Put Off

Put On

5. How can we obtain the *power and the desire* to obey God's Word?
Galatians 5:16 _____

John 15:7-8 _____

Hebrews 11:6 _____

Philippians 4:13 _____

What will be the result of living such a life? (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

Conclusion: God does not expect us to be perfect -- He expects us to be **growing**.

This lesson gives some of the biblical principles that you must understand if you are to grow in godliness; **however**, growth will also require discipline. There will be no growth in your Christian life unless you discipline yourself to study the Scriptures, spend time in prayer, make time for quality fellowship, learn to worship God, and learn how to become dependent upon the Holy Spirit. In future lessons, we will study these basic disciplines.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S WORD – Lesson 3

When a person becomes a child of God he now has the Holy Spirit living within him. The Holy Spirit will enable that person to have the power to live the Christian life. Nevertheless, God's Spirit does not act independent of God's Word. In order to overcome sinful habits, grow in godliness, and obtain guidance for everyday living, we must read and act upon God's Word in faith. Whenever God requires anything of His children, He always provides instruction and power to meet those requirements through His Holy Word.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD

1. We must understand what the Bible is and what it can do in our lives.
 - Approximately 39 men of God wrote the Scriptures under special inspiration over a period of 1500 years. Who specifically inspired these men? (**2 Timothy 3:16**)

-
- The word "inspired" means "God-breathed". Although God used men as His instruments, who is the author of the Scriptures? (**2 Pet 1:19 - 21**) _____

- Read **2 Timothy 3:15-17**.

What is the most important thing the Scriptures teach us (v15)?

Because the Scriptures are God-breathed they are profitable for

for _____ for _____ and for _____
_____ (v16)

What does God's Word enable us to do?

(v17) _____

- From the following verses, note the *attitudes* we should have toward the Word of God.

Psalm 119:35 _____

Psalm 119:42 _____

Psalm 119:62 _____

Psalm 119:117 _____

Psalm 119:164 _____

Psalm 119:167 _____

2. We must understand the importance of obeying God's Word.

- What will demonstrate our love for Christ? (**John 14:15, 21, 23**)

- Read **John 15:4-10**. What is necessary for bringing forth fruit.

- According to **Galatians 5:22-23** what is the "fruit" of the Spirit?

- What is commanded in **James 1:22**? _____

II. HOW TO USE GOD'S WORD

There are several ways in which we can develop a deeper understanding of God's Word and through the application of Scripture develop lives that glorify and please God:

1. Listen to the Word of God as it is being taught.

- Read **Ephesians 4:11-16**. What obligation does God give to pastor-teachers and evangelists today? _____

- Timothy was a pastor in the early church. What instructions does Paul give to him?
(2 Timothy 4:1,2) _____

2. Read and study God's Word.

- By reading God's Word we can obtain an overall knowledge of the Bible. A few minutes each day reading and underlining can greatly aid in our knowledge of the Scriptures. You may want to make it your goal to read through the Bible in a year. In order to do so you would have to read three chapters a day and five on Sunday.
- After we have an understanding of the overview of the Bible we need to begin a more detailed study of God's Word. Note the content of the following verses:

Hebrews 5:12-14 _____

1 Peter 2:2-3 _____

2 Timothy 2:15 _____

- We must study in order to "handle accurately" the Word of God. As a study, we should apply some basic principles of interpretation:
 - a) We must interpret the Bible as we would any other literature. This is known as "normal" interpretation. We do not try to read into, allegorize, spiritualize, or explain away what we read. Rather we **take the words of Scripture at face value** trusting that God is communicating what He wants to communicate.
 - b) **Keep Scripture in its context.** The words surrounding a passage will almost always throw much light upon its meaning.
 - c) **Scripture interprets Scripture.** The Bible does not contradict itself; therefore, an interpretation of a passage must agree with the teachings of the rest of the Word of God. When a passage is difficult to understand, a basic rule is that obscure passages must give way to clear passages.
 - d) **The Bible has only one meaning in one passage.** A passage does not mean one thing to one person and another thing to someone else. The question is not, "What does this passage mean to me?", but "What did God intend for it to mean?" It is the purpose of Bible study to discern this meaning.

3. Meditate on and apply God's Word.

We can meditate on the Scriptures by memorizing (**Psalm 119:9, 11**), by praying over what we have read, or carefully and quietly considering its impact. Whatever method we use, the ultimate purpose is to apply God's truth to our lives.

- What does God promise if we delight in His commandments? (**Psalm 1:1-3**)

- What four actions are mentioned in **Psalm 119:15, 16**?

- What is the commandment in **Colossians 3:16**? _____

- What are some principles in **James 1:22-25**? _____

- Questions to consider as we apply the Word to our life:

- Is there a promise to claim?
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a sin to confess?

Meditation: Transforming God's Word from head knowledge to concrete applications by enumerating and initiating steps for putting off old habits and putting on Biblical patterns toward conformity to Jesus Christ.

As we study God's Word we should do so in order to discover and apply truth to our lives for God's glory. We should not go looking for an emotional lift, or some great experience that will immediately change our lives. The Word of God **is not** a magic wand that when read will erase all of our problems, **rather it is** God's instructions given to us to teach us how to live life. If we go to God's Word for a "quick fix" or "zap" we will grow weary of reading the Scriptures when these things don't happen consistently. But when **we go to the Word to learn how to live life God's way, we are coming to a well that never runs dry.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER - Lesson 4

When it comes to prayer many of us can identify with Thomas Edison's statement when he said, "We don't know the millionth part of one percent about anything. We don't know what water is. We don't know what light is. We don't know what heat is. We have a lot of hypotheses about these things, but that is all. But we do not let our ignorance about these things deprive us of their use."

There is much about prayer that we do not understand and will not understand in this life however, we must not allow this to rob us of the blessing and privilege of prayer. It is true that to some extent prayer will remain a mystery to us; yet at the same time, Scripture gives us much information on this subject.

I. PARTS OF PRAYER

God speaks to us through His Word; we speak to Him in prayer. While prayer is simply conversation with God; nevertheless, even the disciples felt so inadequate in this area that they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. **(Luke 11:1, Matthew 6:1)**

There are several parts to prayer:

1. Praise & Adoration

- Jesus taught His disciples to begin prayers with "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name". **(Matthew 6:9)** As we come to God in prayer we need to recognize and praise Him for His divine attributes.
- The best way to learn how to praise God is by reading the Psalms. The church has long recognized that the Psalms were given to us not so much for instruction on how to live but in order to teach us how to pray.
- The following Psalms are especially helpful in this way: 8, 19, 24, 29, 33, 47, 65, 77, 93, 95, 96, 97,99, 104, 111, 113, 114, 115, 139, 147, 150, and 158. As you begin your prayer time you may want to pray one of these Psalms to God.

Another helpful thing to do is read books on the attributes of God. For example: *The Attributes of God* by A.W. Pink.

2. Thanksgiving

- Read **1 Thessalonians 5:18**. What should we be thankful for? _____
-

- According to **Ephesians 5:20**, how often should we give thanks to God? _____

3. Confession

- What are we to confess? _____

Confession means to agree with God that our actions or attitudes are sin and to ask His forgiveness for them. (**1 John 1:9**)

- Describe David's attitude in **Psalms 139:23-24** _____
-

4. Requests

- What does **Ephesians 6:18** emphasize? _____

- What does **Philippians 4:6-7** tell us to do? _____
-

II. HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

1. Sin

- When will the Lord not hear us? (**Psalm 66:18**) _____
-

- What can hinder our prayers according to **1 Peter 3:7**? _____
-

2. Wrong motives

- What is one wrong motive as described in **James 4:3**? _____

- We need to look to Christ for an example. Read **Matthew 26:39, 42** and describe the attitude we should have as we pray.
-

- What does God promise to supply in **Philippians 4:19**? _____

3. Lack of faith

- What is Christ's promise to us in **Matthew 7:7, 8**? _____
- According to **James 1:6, 7** what is necessary as we pray? _____

4. Wrong priorities

- What should be our attitude toward prayer? (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) _____
 - How does **Matthew 6:33** help us here? _____
-

5. **Sleepiness:** Walk or sit in such a way that sleep is not easy.

6. **Interruptions:** Have a special time and place for prayer every day. Try to choose a place where you will encounter as few people as possible, when phone calls will be at a minimum, and where the noise level will be low. Ask your family to help you in your desire to meet with God.

7. **Wandering thoughts:** Pray out loud -- this will aid in your concentration. Keep paper and pen handy to jot down things that come to your mind that may cause you to lose your train of thought (e.g. phone call that you will need to make or things you must do today).

III. PUBLIC PRAYER

1. Do not pray to impress others. (**Matthew 6:5-8**)
2. Public prayers in the Bible are usually short and of general concern to the group. Be considerate of others.
3. Men are to be leaders in public prayers. (**1 Timothy 2:8**)

DEALING WITH SIN - Lesson 5

God expects the Believer to grow in the likeness of Christ. Growth, not perfection, is His expectation. As long as we are in these bodies we will have to deal with sinful thought patterns, actions and habits. Therefore, it is essential to our growth in Christ that we learn the way God has provided for us: to clear our conscience, to stay in proper fellowship with God and to continue to grow.

Our old way of handling sin must change. As unsaved people we handled sin the way Adam and Eve did: we hide, we run, we shift blame, we cover over sin so that God and others cannot see it. We must put off this old pattern and put on God's way of dealing with sin.

I. THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

1. List the results of sin as found in the following passages:

Psalm 32:3-4 _____

Psalm 38:2-10 _____

1 John 2:11 _____

James 4:1-3 (note what we become when sin controls us) _____

2. What did David expect to happen after his sin was dealt with properly? (**Psalm 51:12-13**)

II. DEALING WITH SIN GOD'S WAY

When we sin, we can handle it the way Adam and Eve handled theirs or we can handle it as the Scriptures teach. There are several elements involved in dealing with sin God's way:

1. Confession:

- According to **1 John 1:9**, what is the Believer to do when the light of God's Word shows him that he has sinned?

- The word "confess" means "to say the same thing" or "to agree with God about my sin." What did David call it in **Psalm 51:1-4**? _____

2. Repentance:

- Not all sorrow over sin accomplishes God's purposes. What does **2 Corinthians 7:10** have to say about this? _____

- Why would a person be sorry about their sins but not be genuinely repentant?

- The word "repent" simply means "to change direction" or to "turn around and go the opposite way." So, repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of action concerning sin, self and God.

3. Change:

- What relationship does repentance have to our actions in the following passages?

Matthew 3:8 _____ **Acts 26:20** _____

- According to **Ephesians 4:22-24** what has to happen for this change to take place?

III. DEALING WITH SIN AGAINST PEOPLE

How are we to handle it when we have not only sinned against God, but also against another person? Scripture teaches that not only are we to confess and repent of our sin to God but we must also do the following with the one we sinned against:

1. Repent

- If we are to receive forgiveness from another, what must we do? (**Luke 17:3**)

- When should we do this? (**Matthew 5:22-25**) _____

2. Restitution

- This should be a natural reaction on the part of any truly repentant Believer. Note Zaccheus' attitude in **Luke 19:8**.

- What does **Philemon 18-19** say? _____

BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH – Lesson 6

I. BAPTISM

Our Lord commanded His church to make disciples and baptize them. It is quite clear that the early church understood His teaching and obeyed it. Since baptism is our Savior's imperative, and was faithfully practiced by the New Testament church, it behooves every Believer to carefully study and heed Christ's teaching on baptism.

1. Who should be baptized?

- According to **Matthew 28:19-20**, who is to be baptized?

- Who did the Apostles baptize? (**Acts 8:35-38**) _____

(**Acts 16:30-34**) _____

- Were infants ever baptized in the New Testament? _____

If so, jot down the Scripture reference _____

2. Why should a Believer be baptized?

- Obedience to God's Word. Christ commanded baptism (**Matthew 28:18-19**) and it was practiced in the New Testament church.
- Identification with Jesus Christ.

In the clothing industry of that day a piece of cloth would be immersed, or dipped, or "baptized" into a vat of dye, thus "identifying with" the color of that dye. When we are baptized, we are identifying with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. It is a testimony to the world and before God that we have died to sin and have risen with Christ to newness of life. (Read **Romans 6:13-16**).

3. How should a Believer be baptized?

- The Greek word for "baptize" means to "dip or immerse."
- Which mode of baptism fits the thought of the following passages: sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? **John 3:23; Acts 8:36-39; Colossians 2:12** _____
- The mode of baptism is to be immersion as proven by the meaning of the word, the symbolism behind the act, and the practice of the early church.

II. THE CHURCH

God's care for you does not stop after you are saved. Part of His plan for your growth and conformity to Christ's image is accomplished through the functions of the local church. A scriptural, local New Testament church is God's plan for every believer, and we are admonished to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together for reasons of indifference. **(Hebrews 10:25)**

Nowhere in the New Testament is there a believer who does not become involved in a local assembly. According to the pastoral epistles of Timothy and Titus, these assemblies were to be organized well. We need to understand the importance of what God says regarding New Testament churches.

The term "church" is derived from the Greek word "ecclesia", which means "called-out ones". **(Acts 15:14)**

1. The universal church

- The church in this sense consists of the entire body of believers from the day of Pentecost **(Acts 2)** until the Lord returns **(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)**. Every person who is saved is a part of this body.
 - As believers, each of us are members of what? **(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)**
-

2. The local church

- The primary usage of the term "church" in the New Testament refers to local churches. Ninety out of 111 times the word is used in this way. It is a true church if it is established according to the Word of God.
- The local church is a body of baptized Believers convening together to carry out the commission given by its head, Jesus Christ...to make disciples.

3. Scriptural characteristics of the local church

- Jesus Christ is its Foundation. **(1 Corinthians 3:11)**
 - Jesus Christ is its head. What do we learn about Christ's headship over the church in **Ephesians 5:23**?
-

- The purpose of the local church. The Scriptures teach several purposes:
 - to glorify God. In what ways can we glorify God? **(1 Peter 2:9-12)**

 - to evangelize **(Matthew 28:19-20)**
 - to edify and equip **(Ephesians 4:11-16)**

What are the purposes of the church as found in **Ephesians 4:11-12**?

What will this prevent? (v 14) _____

What is our goal? (vv 15-16) _____

What is needed to accomplish this goal? **(2 Timothy 3:15-17)** _____

What should we be trying to do when we come together? **(Hebrews 10:24-25)**

4. Additional characteristics of the church

- It has roles. **(Acts 2:41, 47)**
- It transacts business:
 - Matthias chosen. **(Acts 1)**
 - Deacons chosen. **(Acts 6)**
 - Missionaries sent. **(Acts 11:22; 13:1-4)**
 - Gifts given to missionaries. **(1 Corinthians 16:2, 3)**
 - Practices discipline with the goal of restoring Believers. **(2 Corinthians 5)**
In this process members can be excluded or restored. **(2 Corinthians 2:6-8)**
 - It is given commissions, ordinances and pastoral epistles for order.

THE CHURCH'S MAKEUP – Lesson 7

I. ORGANIZATION

1. Head

- The **Head** of the church (local and universal) is Jesus Christ. **(Ephesians 5:22-24)**
- In **John 16:12-14** we learn that our Lord, as Head of the church, is currently directing the church's activities through the leadership of the _____
- Read **Ephesians 6:17**. The Holy Spirit uses the sword of the Spirit, which is the _____, to guide His church.

2. Officers

- **Pastor/Elder.** Throughout the New Testament we find several terms used for the same office. These include: shepherd, overseer, bishop, and pastor. These are not separate offices but different terms or titles that help describe the same office.
 - Elder means: His character. Age, wisdom, and maturity.
 - Overseer/Bishop means: His function: Watch over and manage.
 - Shepherd/Pastor means: His work. Care, Protect, and Guide.
 - Teacher means: His responsibility. Teach, lead, and instruct.

a) What are the qualifications for a pastor/elder? **(1 Timothy 3:1-7)**

b) What are the responsibilities of a pastor/elder?

Acts 20:28, 31 _____

1 Peter 5:1-3 _____

Hebrews 13:17 _____

Ephesians 4:11-16 _____

1 Timothy 5:17 (note that not all elders teach) _____

- **Deacons**

"Deacon" means "servant". In **Acts 6:1-7** we have the appointing of what many believe to be the first deacons of the church. What was their responsibility?

- **Other officers**

The local church is free under guidance of the Word of God to choose other officers as needed but there were no other offices found in the NT with the possible exception of deaconness. But most Bible students do not believe that this was an official office in the NT.

II. MEMBERSHIP

1. What occurred **after** people were saved? (**Acts 2:41**) _____

3. Note the events that preceded membership in the local church:

- Conviction
- Repentance and Faith
- Baptism
- Membership

3. In **Acts 2:41** we find that immediately after their salvation and baptism, Believers were "added to" or became members of the local church in Jerusalem. In the New Testament, we never find a Believer that was not a member of a church, committed to a local body and under the authority of the elders of that church. It is God's will that every Christian be under the preaching, teaching, care and warmth of a local church body in order to grow spiritually.

4. *The difference between attending and joining* a local church include the following:

- **Commitment**

When you join a church, you are making a statement of commitment. You are declaring that you will be loyal to a local body, that you are dedicated to the needs and ministries of that congregation. This could be comparable to the commitment of marriage versus just dating.

- **Authority**

When you join a church, you come under the authority of the leadership of that church. You are, in essence, allowing the shepherds of the church to watch over you for your spiritual good. **(Hebrews 13:17)** Until you have joined a church you have given no elders the authority to shepherd you.

- **Ministry**

1 Corinthians 12 speaks not to the universal church, but to the local church at Corinth. A body cannot function if it is uncertain who its members are. The concept of the "body" implies the need for membership.

- **Discipline**

Matthew 18:15-20 says that an unrepentant sinner who is a Believer must be disciplined by the church. Which church? Obviously, the one of which the person is a member. Some may not join a church just for this reason (after all, who wants to be disciplined?). However, we must remember that this is one of God's tools to keep His children living for Him. Also, without this tool many problems between Believers cannot be resolved.

- **Care**

In **1 Timothy 5:3-10** Paul instructs Timothy on the care of widows in the local church at Ephesus. Here we find the widows who met certain qualifications were to be added to a list (v9) for apparent financial aid. The widows on the list obviously were members of the church at Ephesus, not of neighboring churches. The local church has a special obligation to care for its members, but it must know who its members are.

THE HOLY SPIRIT – Lesson 8

I. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. The Holy Spirit is a Person as proven by the fact that He possesses the attributes of personality.

- **Intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10,11)**
- **Emotion (Ephesians 4:30)**
- **Will (1 Corinthians 12:11)**

2. The Holy Spirit is God as proven by:

- **His titles.** What is He called in the following passages?

Matthew 1:20 _____

Matthew 3:16 _____

Luke 1:35 _____

- **His attributes.** What does He possess that proves He is God?

1 Corinthians 2:11-12 _____

Psalms 139:7 _____

Job 33:4 _____

1 John 5:7 _____

Luke 11:13 _____

- **His actions.** What does He do that only God can do?

Genesis 1:2 _____

2 Peter 1:21 _____

John 3:6 _____

Romans 8:26 _____

II. THE CHANGING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The ministry of the Holy Spirit today is **not** as it was in the Old Testament, nor during the transition period between the Old and New Testaments.

1. In the Old Testament, **all** Believers were **not** indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit. He (the Holy Spirit) moved upon certain ones for special tasks. Read the following passages and note how God gave them power in order to accomplish His will.

Judges 14:5, 6, 19 _____

1 Samuel 16:12-14 _____

2 Chronicles 24:18-20 _____

2. The transition period encompassed the time between the Old Testament and the New Testament. (This period of time is recorded mostly in the book of Acts.)

• What did Jesus promise in **Acts 1:4, 5**? _____

• What was Jesus saying in **John 14:16, 17**? _____

• God delayed sending the Holy Spirit until the Day of Pentecost. According to **Acts 2:4-9**, what happened at this time among the Jews?

• In **Acts 8:14-17** the Samaritans receive the gospel but not the Holy Spirit until the Apostles come.

• In **Acts 10:44-45** the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit.

• In **Acts 19:1-6** a group of Old Testament saints receive the Holy Spirit.

3. Today **all Believers** receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion.

What does **Romans 8:9** say? _____

III. THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. What is the Holy Spirit's **relationship to the Scriptures?** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

2. What is the Holy Spirit's **relationship to man** according to **John 14:16-17?**

3. What ministries does the Holy Spirit perform in **relationship to our salvation?**

Titus 3:5 _____

1 Corinthians 6:19 _____

1 Corinthians 12:13 _____

Ephesians 1:13-14 _____

4. **Other ministries** of the Holy Spirit.

• **Ephesians 5:18** _____ To be "filled by" means to be "controlled by".

• **John 16:12-15** _____

What does the Holy Spirit use to illumine and guide us? (**1 Corinthians 2:9-14**)

• Romans 8:26 _____

• Galatians 5:22-24 _____

• Acts 1:8 _____

IV. SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1. The Holy Spirit gives the Believers gifts. These are defined as a "God-given ability for service."

2. When does a Believer receive His gifts? (**1 Corinthians 12:7, 18**) _____

3. Who decides what gifts a Believer receives? (**1 Corinthians 12:11, 18**) _____

4. Why has God given different gifts? (**1 Corinthians 12:24-25**) _____

5. Lists of the various spiritual gifts are found in:

- **1 Corinthians 12**
- **Romans 12:6-8**
- **Ephesians 4:11**
- **1 Peter 4:10-11**

6. How to find your spiritual gifts

- Know the Biblical gifts.
- Serve where you can. In this way you will begin to discover where you are useful.
- Get counsel of wise, mature Christians.
- Develop your gifts.

GETTING ALONG WITH GOD'S PEOPLE - Lesson 9

Christ told His disciples: "By this (your love for one another) shall all men know that you are my disciples". (**John 13:34-35**) In **Ephesians 4:16** Paul describes a healthy church as one in which every member is meeting needs and, as a result, the body is not only healthy, but also increasing. **Hebrews 10:24** commands Believers to stimulate one another to love and good works.

There are numerous passages in the New Testament exhorting Believers to love and care for "one another".

This love and care for one another is not to cease when a Believer does wrong. In **Galatians 6:1** Paul tells the Believer living for God to "restore" a Believer who is "overtaken in a fault". Scripture has much to say about this process.

I. PERSONAL PREPARATION

1. As we examine ourselves, we may recognize that we have offended someone. We are talking here about a **genuine offense or sin**. It is possible that someone is angry at us or even hates us, yet we have not wronged them. Such a case is not being discussed in **Matthew 5:23, 24**. If before we worship God everyone has to be pleased with us, then neither Jesus nor the Apostles would have ever worshipped.

2. But when we have wronged another, what are we commanded to do in **Matt 5:23-24**?

3. How long should you wait before you deal with the one you offended? _____

What if you "know" that they will reject you? What if you don't think that this is the right time?

II. HOW TO DEAL WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS SINNED AGAINST US

Note the steps taken in **Matthew 18:15-17**.

1. First **determine if this is sin** (read **Galatians 6:1**).

The passages are **not** talking about personal preferences, differences of opinion or conviction, but of definite sin.

2. "**Go**". We do not wait for them to come to us, rather we are to go to them. It is much easier sometimes just to ignore the person or "write them off", but love says "go" (notice the context in **Matthew 18:12-14**).

3. "**Convince**". To tell or show him his fault is a strong word meaning to "convict or convince". Why is it so important that we convince people of their sin rather than simply letting them go their way? _____

If **Genesis 3:8-13** is any indication of possible response, *what reactions must we be prepared to deal with* when we confront people with their sins?

According to **Matthew 18:15** should this person be approached in front of others?

If not, then how is he to be approached?

What is the **goal** of the following verses?

Matthew 18:15 _____

Galatians 6:1 _____

James 5:20 _____

4. **Small group confrontation. (Matthew 18:16)**

If the previous step fails, then we do not simply walk away. We must approach the person this time with a small group of two or three. Why is this step necessary?

5. **Confrontation from the church. (Matthew 18:17a)**

6. **Church discipline. (Matthew 18:17b)**

What is the **goal** of church discipline? (**1 Corinthians 5:5**) _____

This final step is a last resort and no timetable is given to us as to when it must take place. If progress is being made or if the person is not going into deeper sin or influencing others in a negative way, then there is no need to rush to step 6, but it should not be ignored either.

In **Matthew 18:18, 19** we are being told that when this final step has been taken by the church, it has already been taken in heaven. In other words, **we are to be in agreement with God**. God has recognized their unrepentant sin and so should we.

Such a person is to be treated as a "pagan". **The goal is still to restore**. We are to continue to be friendly and kind. However, he is not to be recognized as a brother in Christ. If, for instance, he is a family member, you may eat with him as a family member, but not as a fellow believer.

See **1 Corinthians 5:11**. The goal is restoration, which demands that we take God's side and do things God's way. God calls Believers who are in sin to repent – so should we.

IV. THE SUBJECT OF FORGIVENESS

1. Forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a promise.

When we forgive, we have promised to no longer hold a wrong against someone. We are in essence promising never to bring up the offense to the offender, to others, or to ourselves again.

2. According to **Luke 17:3-4**, who are we to forgive? _____

Why is it not possible to forgive an unrepentant person? _____

3. How do we know if the person is *sincere* in his repentance? _____

4. What does Jesus say about the person who *refuses to forgive* in **Matthew 18:21-35**?

5. How are we to treat a person who *will not repent* of wrongs done to us?

(see **Rom 12:14, 17-21**) _____

CONCLUSION

1. Who taught this method of dealing with offenses against one another? _____

Do you agree with Him? _____

Do you practice what He taught? _____

2. When a person comes to *share a problem with you about someone else*, how should you tell them to handle it according to **Matthew 18:15**?

3. Be sure to inform him that you will check with him soon to inquire if he has handled the problem Biblically. If he went to the offender and did not get the problem resolved, encourage him to *take at least two godly people* with him and go back to the offender.

BIBLICAL LOVE – Lesson 10

The frustrated wife tells the counselor that she is divorcing her husband because she does not love him anymore. The young couple fight constantly and have nothing in common, but they are going to get married because they are in love. There is much fuzziness about love in our culture today. Since it plays such an important role in our world, as well as our Christian lives and churches, it is vital that we know what Scripture has to say on the subject.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

1. What *commandment* did Christ give to His disciples the night before He went to the cross? (John 13:34-35)

Obedience to this command would produce what results?

2. How is the love that demonstrates Christ-likeness produced in our lives? (Galatians 5:22)

3. In relation to all other virtues and actions, how highly does God rate love?

See 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 _____

II. WHAT IS BIBLICAL LOVE?

1. Note the characteristics of love as found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.

Do these characteristics put more emphasis on actions or feelings? _____

2. If one word could be used to describe love, what would it be according to John 3:16?

Is the emphasis here on actions or feelings? _____

3. Where is the emphasis in 1 John 3:17-18? _____

4. Can love be taught? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:9 and Titus 2:4) _____

Biblically, what should we tell the wife in the opening illustration? _____

5. To love is a command from God. **(Matthew 22:36-40)**

Can we command our emotions? _____

Is the emphasis here on actions or emotions?

6. Who is the supreme example of love? (See **Ephesians 5:25**) _____

7. The Greek word "Agape", which is translated "love" in these passages, speaks of a self-sacrificing love. It does not have reference to emotions or feelings.

Love is a command to be obeyed

- not an option
- not an accident
- not a feeling to be generated first.

III. WHO ARE WE TO LOVE?

• **Matthew 22:36, 37** _____

• **Luke 10:29-37** _____

• **John 13:34-35** _____

• **Titus 2:4** _____

• **Ephesians 5:25** _____

• **Matthew 5:44** _____

(see **Romans 12:14, 17-21**)

IV. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "WALK IN LOVE"?

1. Love God and His Word. **(John 14:21; 15:10; 1 John 5:3)**

2. Put others ahead of yourself. **(Philippians 2:3-4; Romans 12:20-21).**

3. Perform loving deeds and actions as well as speak kind words. **(1 John 3:18)**

4. Be a giver. **(Acts 20:35; John 3:16)**

5. Be a forgiver and one who asks forgiveness. (**Ephesians 4:32**)
6. Appreciate the love given to you by Christ. (**Romans 8:35-39**)
7. Overcome selfishness and its emptiness. (**Galatians 5:19-23**)
8. Etc.

V. WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES IF WE DO NOT WALK IN LOVE?

1. **Problems** with others.

Note that the deeds of the flesh in **Galatians 5:19-21** could be summed up as selfishness.

2. **Problems** with God.

What does **1 John 4:7-11** teach? _____

3. **Problems** with self.

- Fear (**1 John 4:18**)
- Wrong values (**1 John 2:15-17**)

VI. WHAT ARE SOME HINDRANCES TO WALKING IN LOVE?

1. **Separation from God.**

Since God is the source of love, one must be united to Him through salvation. (**1 John 4:7-10**)

2. **Adherence to false views of love.**

Fads concerning love will come and go. Only God's definition and description of love is correct.

3. **Selfishness.**

True love will demand much of us and may give little in return. True love means we must risk being taken advantage of and hurt. True love means living for others. All of these things run contrary to our fleshly desire to live for self.

4. **Dependency upon self.**

What does **John 15:5** tell us? _____

If love is a fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**), how does one get it? _____
