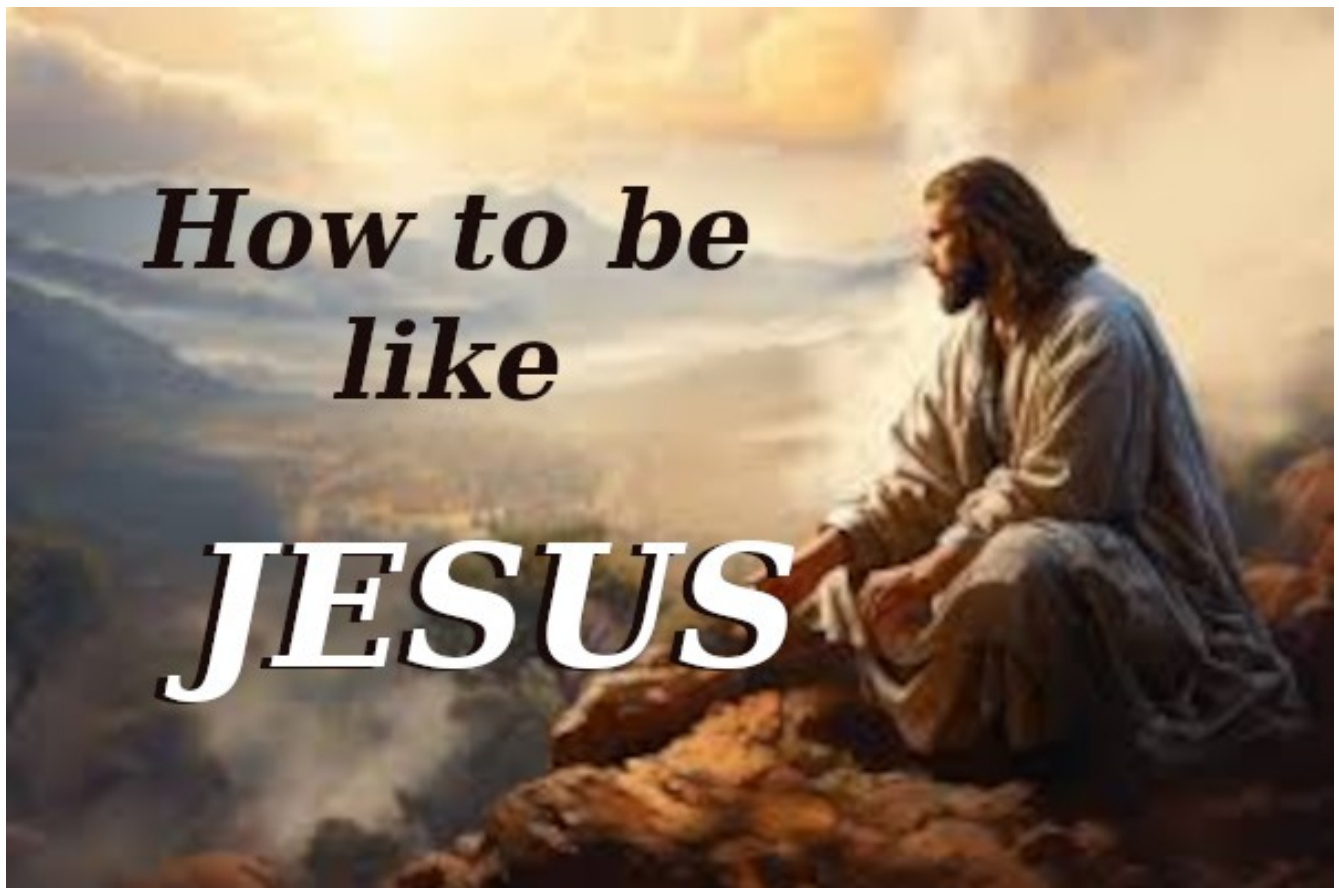




**Jack County Cowboy
Church**

Pastor J. D. Ezzell

2025

What does it mean To Be Like Jesus and How Do We Do It

Bible Study

Lesson 1: Introduction

Scriptures for this Lesson: 1 John 4:17, Luke 13:14-15, James 1:22, James 4:17

To start us off, I remember several years ago I heard a short joke. It went like this.

A young teenager was wanting his dad to buy him a car. The young man was a little unruly in his behavior. But the dad told him if he would get a good hair cut and get rid of the long hair, he would look and see if he could find him a car. The teenager was all excited, but his hair was on his shoulders, and had taken a long time to grow.

The next day was Sunday and he knew he would have to wait on the hair cut. But after church, the young man made up his mind in what he was going to do.

Along about Tuesday evening after his dad got home, he went and ask, Have you found me a car yet? The father thought for a moment and said, you haven't gotten a hair cut yet.

The young man stood there smiling, because he thought he had the answer to his problem. With his chest puffed up he said, I don't think I have to get a hair cut, Jesus had long hair!

The dad, with a grin on his face, look straight at his son and said, Yep! And he walked everywhere he went too!

You know, the bible tells us to be like Jesus in all we do more than once. I don't think the above story is what it means, on how to be like Jesus. But what does it really mean to be like Jesus?

1 John 4:17 says, This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: **In this world we are like Jesus.**

There are many things Jesus commanded us to do. He even set the example on many of them, as when he washed the disciples feet. In **Luke 13:14-15** He said, Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Most of the things Jesus did were part of His Character. We are to be like Him so that means our Character should mimic that of Jesus.

What I would like to do is to List some of the Characteristics and things Jesus left for us to do in this introduction and briefly touch on each one. Then in each lesson I want to take one or more and elaborate on them. So hopefully this Bible Study will help with our maturity. A maturity to be more like Jesus in all we do.

James 1:22 says, Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Also in **James 4:17** it says, If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them.

Why would that be in our Bible if it were not important! James, the brother of Jesus seem to think it was very important for us to know.

I know I probably want list all the characteristics or teachings, but hopefully I can list enough of them to give us an idea how we can be like Jesus.

So with that said, let's begin with our list.

First let's talk Prayer:

A few of the subjects we will study on prayer will be, He Teaches us to Pray with Power, He Tells us our Prayers will be Answered, Prayers will Enlist the Help of Angels, We have Spiritual Growth through Prayer and Prayer is our Weapon Against Satan. These are just a few subjects and there will be others within the study.

Even though it may be hard to define prayer to everyone's satisfaction, it obviously is something that all of us do. In fact, Prayer seems to be a universal thing with human beings. It has been said that at least one time in a person's life he will pray. Since prayer is so universal, it is important that we know accurately what the Bible says so that we can be sure that our prayers have value and can prevail with God.

People may pray, but pray blindly, with uncertainty, or erratically, but we pray. Prayer was a part of the religious life of the Jews and it is certain that the early disciples that Jesus chose would know something about prayer. Yet, when they observed Jesus praying, they were impressed and wanted to know how to pray like He prayed!

It may be natural for people to pray and petition God, but to do it correctly and effectively may be another matter. Even a child can be taught to pray and does pray, when trained.

Next we have Obedience:

This may not seem like a good subject here, but Obedience was part of the life of Jesus. He Himself said, I must be obedient to the Father. So we need to Obey God the Father just as Jesus did. Other subjects are, Jesus Perfect Obedience can be Ours, Our Obedience will be Rewarded, Obedience Results in Happiness, Peace and Joy, and a few others.

Obeying God is an expression of your love and gratitude for your salvation and His many blessings, which He has freely bestowed on you.

The humble person will not argue with the commands of the Lord but will honor God through obedience and by doing so, he will grow in grace. However the proud will argue with the words of God and refuse to obey. The true believer that loves and obeys God is a light to the world, salt for seasoning, peace to the weary, rests for those that labor, and a comforter to those that are troubled.

Next we have the subject of Work:

We need to understand that in our work we are laboring together with God. A few of the subjects we will look at are, Working Faithfully, Using Time Wisely, Submit to God's Training Process, Work for Low Wages Rather Than Be Idle, and Work Faithfully Where You Are as to the Lord.

About one-half or 50 percent of human life is spent working. The average work week in the United States consists of 40 hours of work. Most people take a few holidays every year. But on an average, most people spend about 40 to 50 years working.

Our work becomes the field of ministry where God can cause us to be most productive.

Now let's talk Talents:

You have talent, and that talent makes you unique, extraordinary, and indispensable to the Body of Christ. However, that talent is not actually yours, and you can take absolutely no credit for it! We will learn how to invest your God-given talents, skills, and abilities in God's kingdom, for God's glory.

Some of our subjects will be, Buried Talents Should Be Used, Use Even One Talent Wisely, One Talent Used Faithfully will Gain Other Talents and a few others.

The talents, however few, are to be put to use. The question that most concerns us is not, How much have I received but, What am I doing with that which I have been given?

How about Spiritual Gifts:

We are all given unique spiritual gifts from God. This lesson teaches us how we can use these gifts to help support and grow the body of Christ. We will learn that He's placed us in the Body of Christ, just as He desired, with the giftedness needed to have a vibrant and healthy body.

A spiritual gift is a specific capacity for service that the Holy Spirit bestows upon every true Christian without exception at the moment of salvation. This gift enables the Christian to perform that particular function in the body of Christ. These are not the talents we have been given to do things but the gifts for helping the church.

Every Spiritual Gift Is Important and Every Person Has a Gift and Is Accountable. This is why we must study about spiritual gifts. We will be held accountable.

How about the subject of Wisdom:

In our day and time we have a tremendous amount of information at our disposal. We have schools and colleges on every corner. We have people with fine intellects, lots of knowledge, power, influence and wealth. But the great void we have in the midst of all this, and even with the people whose cup is full with all this information, knowledge, power and influence is that the cup is empty of wisdom.

Now there is a lot of scripture about the importance of gaining wisdom and living wisely, but not much scripture on gaining information, material goods, power, money, influence or most of the other stuff people strive their whole lives to possess. But the one thing scripture places at the forefront of our seeking is the one thing most people ignore, that's wisdom. Perhaps we have been deceived by the world as to what is important.

We will learn there is No True Wisdom Apart From God. We must seek God for wisdom, and scripture even says, “ask and it will be given.” **James 1:5**, If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Let’s talk Growth and/or Maturity:

What does it take to grow up and become spiritually mature? Why do some Christians not grow as they should? God’s word presents steps we can take toward growth and spiritual maturity by Bible study, patience, and diligent practice of good works.

Many problems result when believers fail to grow. Some go back to the world, others cause strife because of ignorance or become stumbling blocks because of worldliness, or indifference.

We will learn To Grow, with the Study of the Word, Learn the Truth, Then Live It, Treasures of Truth Are for Those Who Dig, Bible Study Strengthens the Intellect, and Search the Word Objectively and Personally.

Next let’s move into Bible Study:

This one goes really close with Growth and Maturity. But what we will learn here will be, Hear Christ’s Voice Through the Word, Do Not Merely Read the Scriptures but Search, Preparing for Trying Times, Earnest Study Produces True Conversion. But the main one will be, how to study the word and get something out of it.

The average Christian is growing increasingly illiterate when it comes to the Bible. Being able to walk chronologically through the Bible’s storyline, or name the major figures, or categorize the biblical books into genre or even testament, is quickly becoming a rare quality. Hopefully this lesson will change that in some.

The Bible comes from God, and it is the key to knowing God and his will for our lives. God has given us His Word to be the final authority for our lives. It provides the answers for all of our needs and requests. Study of the Scriptures will give us greater discernment of the truth as we are walking through our daily lives in the world.

Next the Holy Spirit:

A study of the Holy Spirit, His Nature and His Work, is a very interesting and challenging study. The Spirit is said to have been involved in the Creation of all things, that He is the source of miraculous powers exerted among men, and that He is the means of the new birth into the kingdom of God. More is attributed to Him that we will be looking at in this study.

Why study about the Holy Spirit? A general answer that might satisfy certain people would be that it is a Biblical subject and should be studied. But for those that might like further reasons, the following might be an incentive, The Holy Spirit Illuminates the Word, He Gives us the Power to Resist Temptation, and To be more like Jesus.

Next let’s talk Faith:

Faith is a gift God has given to a believer at Salvation. Our faith grows over time as we get closer to Jesus. We will discuss How to Move Forward in Faith and Unity, also how The Way Opens When We Advance by Faith and Angels Join Us as We Help Those in Need through Faith. Plus more will be touched on during this study.

Faith is partially about belief. In the case of Christian faith, we have faith that God is real, even though we have never personally seen God.

As we study this lesson we are going to study the stories of men who knew God very personally. Some of them even spoke with God, one on one. What is more, some of them even saw God and lived to tell about it. Learning about their stories will help grow our faith today. When we hear the stories of these people we will see that faith is about what they believed but in each story we see that faith is more than just having the right beliefs.

How about the subject of Worship:

You are a worshiper. It is not a question of whether or not you will worship, but a question of who or what you will worship. There are many who choose to worship idols. Others pay homage to leaders of false religions or worship creation. And some, like you, will choose to worship the true God, the purpose for which mankind was created.

This study lesson is based on the Holy Bible, the written Word of the one true God, which reveals that all of creation has been called to worship.

Worship is best learned by worshiping, and that is the purpose of this study. The goal is to enable you to understand biblical worship and inspire you to worship God in spirit and in truth.

A few of the things we will learn are, Daily Family Worship Yields Precious Results, Worship Faithfully Every Morning and Evening, Time for Worship to Be Set Apart as Sacred, Angels in Heaven Worship With Us and God Alone Is to Be Worshiped.

Last, be not least, what is True Christianity:

The world has various ideas about who and what a “Christian” is or isn’t. Some think a Christian is anyone born into a Christian professing family and christened by a priest or minister. Others say a Christian is one who has “given his heart to the Lord” and is “born again”, or perhaps one who simply claims to be a Christian.

Is it possible, however, for someone to live and die assuming that he or she is a Christian, only to find out in the Judgment that God never recognized their brand of “Christianity”? Christ, in fact, warned of that very possibility. We will learn, What truly makes a person a Christian? How does GOD describe a Christian in His inspired word, Why we should Focus on Christ Not Self, When Sinners Repent Heaven Rejoices, Advance the Kingdom by Leading Sinners to Repentance, Repentance to Be Followed by Change of Character, and Having a Forgiving Spirit.

These are just a few of the things we will discuss in this lesson. Hopefully we will be able to answer the question, I’m I a True Christian?

I know there are many other things to study beside just these few. Maybe I will continue this study or add to it at a later date. But for now all I will say is: **We have NO Excuse.** The word is before us!

Lesson 2 Subject: Prayer

Scripture for this Lesson: Luke 18:1

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Let's start with the question, **Why Pray?**

Prayer has the potential to be something that is both hard and easy. It is easy in the sense that you don't have to be of high intelligence or possess any special abilities to engage in prayer. It is open to the "greatest" and the "least". It is the language of the dependent and the desperate. And that includes all of us, if we are looking at our lives honestly.

My prayer is that what has taken me decades to learn, you will be able to learn and put into practice in a much shorter time, and that God will equip more people to become people of prayer in this generation, for this generation.

The hardest thing about prayer is the small gap between thinking about praying and actually praying, that is, JUST TO BEGIN. The will to START praying requires supernatural help, or the deceitfulness of sin will delay the impulse to "later."

So how do we get this supernatural help?

Let's say you want to talk to the president. Do you just walk in? No.. I have to be summoned and checked out before hand. Access to people in high places is impossible without access being granted.

So how do sinners, even forgiven sinners, get access to a holy God who lives in high places? Our high priest brings the necessary sacrifice to gain access to God and, astonishingly, it is Himself. This offering fully satisfies God's justice and eliminates every barrier between us and Him. He holds out His scepter to invite us into the Holy of Holies.

Our access in prayer is not based on our own worth or sincerity, but on Christ, who represents us to God. This is what it means to pray in Jesus' name. We are granted access to places we could never get to without Him.

Ephesians 2:18 says, For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

We need to pray in order to pray. A little prayer leads to more prayer. A little neglect of prayer leads to much neglect of prayer. The negative habit of non-prayer is an extremely hard habit to kick but must always first be overcome before we can ever learn the positive habit of regular prayer.

The biggest mistake routinely made in prayer is that we become aware of a need in our lives or others and we pray about the need. At first glance, this pattern of prayer seems to have nothing wrong with it.

Look at it this way. Here in Texas, our area, we have a lot of trucks. Those truck sometimes have oil leaks and Diesel leaks. It soaks into the blacktop highways. Most people here drive with all-season tires year round. Let's say it comes a good rain. A lot of that oil and diesel comes to the top of the road.

Then begins a lot of sliding and not a lot of traction on the road. Luckily there is a few tires people can buy that have traction on those roads.

So how does one get real traction in prayer? We get traction when we remind God of His promises, and ask Him to do what He has promised He will do.

1 John 5:14 says, This is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. Also **John 15:7** says, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Let's put it this way. We are to pray in faith and faith has to do with God's promises.

Need + Request = Potential Answer

Need + Promise + Request = Probable Answer

The basic view of prayer that the world holds to is that God is the supernatural one who exists to grant Our requests, much like Aladdin's genie in the lamp. In this prayer scheme, we are the one in control and God exists to serve us. This twisted way of relating to prayer is easy to descend into when our prayers are guided more by our own desires than by Scripture.

A life of prayer often requires more than most people are willing to give. Not only must we give ourselves to God, but as well, endless study, meditation, and evaluation of our faith so that we can become strong in prayer. Do we really want to enroll in Jesus' School of Prayer? Are we willing to let His teachings compel us to pray? Will we let His promises prompt us to pray! Will we let His offer of mediatorship prostrate us before the throne of God?

How truly blessed we are to live with the knowledge that the great and true God of the Universe is our Father and seeks for us to come into His presence to make our petitions known to Him.

Jesus said: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." in **Luke 18:1**.

Some people do feel that the only value of prayer is to the person praying. Prayer is often looked upon as a glorified "Pep Talk" to spur us on to greater accomplishments. Some have even called prayer a "healthy lie of life." To others, it is merely a "coping mechanism." But in the face of all of this, Jesus teaches us to always pray and not to faint or lose heart!

God evidently did not give prayer as a "glorified pep rally." Nor did He design prayer just to make us a better person! And for sure, it was not designed by God to mock us or make God appear foolish! God not only insists that we pray, but He has also promised to answer our prayers! And there is something that is evident about prayer, God made us in such a way that we desire to pray.

All religions have some form of praying involved. It is not only a duty, but it is a natural inclination of the human heart. Men move or do things from motivation! What is our motivation for praying to God? What kind of logical reasons can be given for such an activity?

Prayer is our only means of talking to God. Prayer takes us beyond ourselves to a higher Being. It is our way of drawing nigh to God and He has promised to draw nigh to us in **James 4:8-10**. God speaks to us through His word. As we read, listen, or hear the Word of God, He is speaking to us. Prayer is our way to speak back to God. If we do not draw nigh to God, He has not promised to draw nigh to us!

Prayer helps us to keep a close relationship with God. It is generally understood that we not only are better people when we sincerely pray often, but our minds and hearts are centered more upon spiritual things. Prayer is definitely a way of keeping us close to God. Otherwise, there is a danger of spiritual decay in our lives and our religion will only become a shell.

Prayer is God's means of conferring benefits and blessings that we need. Some look upon prayer as something that is burdensome, dull and difficult, and, in reality benefits God more than man. To them, prayer is a kind of favor we can confer upon God. But, contrary to belief, man is the one who needs prayer, not God. We are benefited, not God! Prayer is a great privilege, a blessing, and an opportunity for the Christian! Prayer should **not** be looked upon as "begging God for something" in order to get our way. God will **not** become our slave. Someone has expressed the thought in this way, "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His highest willingness." He wants to bless us, but He also wants us to come nigh to Him as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:7**. God is definitely interested in His children's welfare and desires our good. He has the power and willingness to help. He is a wise, loving, and beneficent God. But He also challenges His people to draw nigh to him in prayer.

Our forgiveness, day by day, is dependent upon our praying to God and His answering our prayer. Under the Old Testament, daily sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people, indicating continual cleansing. Under the New Testament, it is by continual confessing and penitent prayer that we can have continual forgiveness and cleansing. **1 John 1:7** says, But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

It also helps us to express our Respect and thankfulness to God. **Philippians 4:6** says, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. All men have much to be thankful for before God, but the Christian in particular has even more reasons. We can never praise Him enough for all His benefits!

Since Prayer is perceived as being something "natural" for man to do, it is assumed that men will call upon God, especially in times of need. For the Christian, Prayer is a blessing from God that we will engage in at all times, with our petitions or with our praise and thanksgiving! But the Christian also needs to be aware of "conditions" that will make our prayers acceptable to God and, as well avoid those things that will hinder our prayers from being answered by God. I want to emphasize several things that the Scriptures indicate will hinder our prayers before the throne of God.

Prayer is for the Christian, not for the sinner. It is a promised blessing to those who turn to God in sincerity. Prayers are offered in the name of Jesus as our Mediator. We cannot approach God on our own merit, but through the merit of Jesus. And it is not the purpose of prayer to impose our will upon God, but to make our request according to the Will of God.

We need to be serious and watchful in our lives as a Christians, and especially in our prayers before the throne of God. The Christian life is very serious business and it must not be taken lightly or flippantly. The reason for our being watchful is emphasized in Peter's Letter. **1 Peter 5:8** says, Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. If we are careless about our obligations or blessings, we are the losers!

Another thing is not asking God! **James 4:2** says, You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. This hindrance may be from neglect or lack of faith that God will hear His children. We certainly cannot know if God will grant our petition unless we ask Him! Why would a Christian want to

approach the throne of God through Jesus often? Because of the privilege this is to communicate with our maker, and what a blessing to have him hear and answer our petition that we feel so strongly about.

James 4:3 says, When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. We should have the right motive for asking things of God. We should ask ourselves, "Do I want this petition to pamper my lust and carnal appetite? Do I want this so I can live in ease and pleasure?" Acceptable prayer is when our will is in harmony with God's Will and the answer will bring glory to the name of God. We need to study diligently so that we can know the Will of God and abide in it and by it and asked accordingly.

Psalms 66:18 says, If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

What does it mean to regard cherished sin or iniquity in my heart? It probably would have to do with my wanting to hold on to sin and not give it up. As long as I love sin, walk in sin, continue in the way of sin, why would I pray to God? The willingness to die to sin is a very basic concept of what it means to be a Christian.

The strongest condemnations that Jesus expressed during His public ministry were against hypocrisy! Much stress is laid upon God's people being sincere. An outward shell of prayer has little value and the many unanswered prayers should make this obvious. Prayer is more than words or formality in bowing before God or just telling God what we want or need. It must come from the heart, soul, or the inner person. Sincerity is appreciated by both God and men. Hypocrites, God will judge them and their prayers are an abomination to him. **James 5:16** says, Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

If I know my brother, another Christian, has something against me and I do not try to make it right, my prayers are hindered. In **Matthew 5:23-24** Jesus said, Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

The instructions are clear, go first and make things right with your brother; then, come and offer your worship to God! Prayer is one of the activities of our worship to God. So, the principle stated here would seem to apply to Prayer.

What about praying to be seen and heard and praised by men! **Matthew 6:5-8** says, And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Our prayers are to be addressed to God, they are not addressed to men! Prayer is not to be done so that men may praise us for the beautiful words, etc. Rather, our Prayer is to God and expressed in simple and sincere words that show we are not putting on a show for men.

It is important for the Christian to be sincere, grow out of selfishness and be concerned for others, deal with sin in his life properly, not to harbor a grudge against anyone, always being willing to forgive any

wrong done to him, and work at keeping his family relationships the very best that he can to the honor and glory of God. It is this kind of person that is granted audience with the King of the Universe through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The outward shell of prayer has little value as the many unanswered prayers should make obvious. And the failure to see this can destroy the power in prayer! Prayer is more than words, or formality in bowing before God one or more times a day, as well as just telling God what we want and expect to get it! Acceptable prayer to God is conditioned upon many things like the Right words, the Right kind of life, and the right kind of spirit or attitude.

If this was all that was said on Prayer we would have it made! OR, would we? You would think that Prayer would be simple, but even Faith must overcome many obstacles. Unless we can believe through it all, Prayer has little value to us. **Mark 11:24** says, Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Pride, self-exaltation, self-righteousness filled the hearts of the Pharisee. He extolled his virtues. He looked upon the Lord as his debtor because of his good life. But the average man made no pretense of righteousness. He realized his true condition. In humility and self-abasement, he cast himself upon the mercy of God. Acceptable prayer must be characterized by such a spirit. Not depending upon one's eloquence or accomplishments but, boldly approaching God because of His grace!

James 2:13 says, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. A forgiving spirit shows mercy. We show mercy, because God has shown it to us. If we refuse, God will refuse to show us mercy. We literally are asking God to deal with us, as we deal with others!

So what is our motive for praying? Especially in the material realm. Do we want to pamper our lusts or carnal appetites? Do we want to live in ease and pleasure? Acceptable prayer is when our will is in harmony with God's Will. Our petitions are His petitions. Ask that which will bring glory to His name. "Thy will be done." We need to study diligently to know the Will of God and abide by it. **James 4:3** says, When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

To avail with God, we must learn how to pray. This involves getting our attitudes right!

Why do so many Christians drop out of the Christian race? I am sure that several good reasons could be given, but one basic reason is obvious, a lack of a devout prayer life! The old adage that says, "If you don't grow, you go backwards!" may be another way of saying that "without prayer, the Christian will not progress spiritually!" It not only takes a lot of continuous Bible study along with fervent prayer, but as well, an obedient life in order to stay faithful to the end!

God's people should have these important watchwords to express their life before God, Powerful, Persistent, and ultimate Victory! Prayer has to play a big role to make these words sincerely a part of our thinking. There are no quitters among those who have made Prayer a major part of their life. The Apostles saw the need for prayer in **Acts 6:4**. The early church continued steadfastly in prayer it says in **Acts 2:42**, etc. Jesus saw the need for prayer in his public ministry continually. "If we think that we can survive this world and its challenges without continual prayer, it is quite obvious that we have too great an inflated opinion of ourselves!"

Without prayer, the Christian will be vulnerable to the devil's fiery darts and we will not be able to stand against his wiles! We will have to endure the misery and despair that this world brings to us without the powerful help and comfort of prayer. Our lives will be filled with worry and anxiety that will drag us down because we do not have prayer to cast all our cares upon Him who cares for us. No wonder that such people do not endure to the end.

So with the question we started with, Why pray? Such a question really seems out of place now that we have just briefly looked at prayer and what it can mean to our lives! We certainly should want to avoid those things that would hinder our prayers from going up before the throne of God. And without a doubt, all of us could very easily say as the Apostles did: "Lord, teach us to pray!"

While all men may attempt to pray to a Supreme Being, that is no indication that they will be heard or that God will give them what they request. I firmly believe prayer to be a spiritual blessing of the Christian and that it should be a major part of the life of a Christian towards God in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 3 Subject: Obedience

Scripture for this Lesson: Romans 1:5

Obedience Is The Evidence That the sanctification of the Holy Spirit is taking place. Synonyms for obedience are, Follow, serve, keep, comply, observe, submit, and yield.

Romans 1:5 says, Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith for his name's sake.

The Apostles became apostles because they chose to obey the gospel of Christ. And they received grace, unmerited favor with God because they believed in the gospel of the kingdom of God. If we wish to receive a calling to be busy about the Lords business we must be obedient to the word of God. When we believe God is whom the scriptures pronounce he is, we acknowledge that God knows best causing us to be ready to listen and obey by becoming go-getters of the commands given? This is how we receive grace and go from grace to grace.

James 4:6 says, But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.

1 Peter 5:5-6 says, In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

The humble person will not argue with the commands of the Lord but will honor God through obedience and by doing so, he will grow in grace, however the proud will argue with the words of God and refuse to obey.

Romans 5:19 says, For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Here we see how one person, Adam infected the whole world with the terminal disease called sin which always leads to death. When this man allowed rebellion to enter his heart against God through disobedience the whole world became infected by it. A child is not taught to disobey, steal, lie or be selfish it is natural because we are from Adams genetic pool.

Paul is telling us that as one man disobeyed many perished. **John 3:6** says, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. And **1 Corinthians 2:14**, The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

It is natural for a person to disobey God because that person cannot understand the holiness of God. A person not born of the spirit will naturally walk after the flesh, the flesh is born in corruption and all are affected by its sinful nature and will perish unless they obey the gospel.

I remember before I came to the Lord I thought many of the people that called themselves Christians were just as corrupt as those that were not. Though I knew God was real and holy I though most of his followers were hypocrites and I would not allow them to teach me the gospel or lead me to Christ. Why would I want to be a Christian if a Christian isn't any different than I am as a sinner?

What if these people had been doers of the word and not just believers? How many people have died and perished because of the poor witness of so called believers, as was Adam? Believers that are doers of the word give life but believers that obey not the word bring death. Adam believed God, talked to God, walked with God and disobeyed God. Through his disobedience he aborted the grace of God and became a cast away. When the Day of Judgment arrives I believe those that disobeyed God will stand in terror especially those that confessed they were his.

Here are some other examples of leaders with Disobedience.

The ten spies from **Numbers 13** caused a whole nation to lose favor with God for forty years. God had give them the promise land but they went in and came back saying we can't go in, they are to great and mighty for us. Disobedience to God cause them to never enter the promise land.

King Saul disobeyed God and lost favor with God in **1 Samuel 15**, the priest, Eli failed to control his sons and lost favor with God in **1 Samuel 4** and the rich young lawyer failed to obey God and lost his soul in **Matthew 19:21-22**.

But Obedience also brings life to others. **Romans 5:7-9** says, Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Philippians 2:8-9 says, And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

Christ is the perfect illustration of obedience, and we must seek to follow his example. The true believer that loves and obeys God is a light to the world, salt for seasoning, peace to the weary, rests for those that labor, and a comforter to those that are troubled. Jesus came into the world to save those that had the disease of sin, he was the cure, his blood would cleanse and inoculate all those that applied it to their lives as they obey.

We are a type of Christ in a since, when we are obedient to the word of God our lives are pure and holy, we shine like a light on a mountain in the night, people are drawn to us and they desire what we have. We are a witness of the life that Jesus gives to those that love and obey him and in turn we bring life to those that see and hear us. Because of our obedience, people live and receive grace as we continue to receive more grace. Grace is a kind of love, the more you give the more you receive.

Obedience is the evidence that Jesus is our Lord. **Romans 6:16** says, Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

The meaning of obey is, Submit to the direction of those in authority. If we obey Christ, we are His and if we fail to obey Christ then he is not our Lord. What ever we chose to obey then becomes our Lord. If we submit to the flesh then the flesh is our lord. If we comply with God's will, he is Lord of over us.

1 Timothy 6:11-12 says, But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Those that make Jesus Christ their Lord will covet nothing else but to please him through a lifestyle led by his will. This is our reasonable service unto the one that purchased and set us free from the infection of sin by his blood alone. As we surrender to him everything else will become ours for not only does he call us to serve but also he calls us his son's and daughter's.

As Joseph became second to the king of Egypt and all things were free to him, we become second to the King of kings and all things will become free to us.

Adam had dominion over all the earth until he sold out to Satan through disobedience to God, therefore when we obeyed the gospel of the kingdom of God we were given back that authority lost by Adam. If we should disobey the Lord we lose dominion and become subjects to Satan as Adam.

He commanded us to go forth and to preach the gospel everywhere as our obedience. We obey because we believed and were baptized in the name of Jesus, then he gives us power in his name that signs should follow us as we followed him.

A person hearing the doctrine of the gospel of the kingdom must believe and obey it. He will understand that God's message requires repentance, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and to receive the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost. That is "Obedience of faith," All the types and shadows pointed to this, but it was a mystery to the prophets, however God revealed it to us because we believed and obeyed.

If one from the 17th century were to walk into a 21st century home and was told to flip the switch that a light would come on, he might think you were crazy and not believe that a tiny switch could bring light. However it would be foolish for him to sit in a corner and complain about the darkness if he did not step out on faith and obey.

You and I both know that the light would come on and darkness would flee but a person from the 17th century could not know this. To find out he must obey and when in flipping the switch he would be astonished.

This is what happens when we obey Christ, once we flip the switch of obedience we are astonished. Those that have obeyed Christ know that the light comes on and darkness submits to it. But trying to tell someone that never experienced it, would cause one to question it's soundness.

Jesus tells us the wise man that built his house on the words of God stood the test but the foolish man built his house on the words of man and his house came down. The wise man and the foolish man were builders, both of these men were believers, both men listened to God but one obeyed the words of Christ and the other ignored his words. Matthew 7:24-26 says, 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.

Our Obedience is the evidence of truth. **2 Corinthians 10:4-6** says, The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We

demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete.

This refers to those that have submitted to Christ according to the gospel of the kingdom in the dispensation of the Gentiles and once they have received the truth they will have difficulty in understanding those that are not inline with the gospel given by the apostles. Above all else we must know the truth and teach the truth to those that are not within its borders. When a person exalts a religion or doctrine other than that given by the apostles, he is going against the knowledge of God.

1 Peter 1:2 says, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood:
Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

Sprinkling of the blood of Jesus refers to the Old Testament type where a dove was killed and held over a bowl of water and its blood was sprinkled into the water. Then a live dove was dipped into the water and set free. Jesus was the dove that gave his blood and we represent the dove that was baptized or dipped in his name and set free. Once we have heard the gospel, believed, repented, baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit, we become the elect of God because of our obedience.

Keep in mind that Peter said in **Acts 2:39**, The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. This is concerning the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When we worship God in truth we obey his word and will through the Spirit be renewed and purified. In submitting to the direction of the Holy Spirit we are empowered to yield to God's principles, which brings about spiritual sanctification.

Obedience Is the Evidence of Love. **John 14:15-17**, If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever, the spirit of truth.

Christ tells the believers if they will he will or in other words if you love me you will obey me and I will fill you with the Holy Spirit. How can someone get the Holy Spirit by just believing when believing can take place without love? Satan believes there is one God and he has no love for God.

John 15:10 says, If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

This clearly explains how that obeying the word of God we be the evidence that we abide in his love. Obedience pleases God and brings rewards.

Paul received commands from Christ concerning the gospel of the Kingdom, these were given to the church that they may please God and were to continue to be handed down to the next generation of believers. Through the 2,000 years since, some have preached the gospel differently than first preached by the Apostles but keep in mind the truth becomes evident through the study of the Bible.

When you decided to put Jesus on the throne of your life, you declared your trust in Him and that you would obey Him. We do not have to be afraid to obey Him because He has demonstrated such great

love for us. He knows what is best for you and wants you to have an abundant life. Genuine faith produces obedience.

We are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind. This includes our individual worship, prayer, Bible study, and obedience to His word, allowing Him to live in and through us by His Holy Spirit. Our love for God is also expressed as we show love to our fellow believers, encouraging one another in the love of Christ as we share in fellowship together. We are to love our neighbors as ourselves. This starts with our closest neighbors, our family members, relatives, friends, fellow-workers or schoolmates, people who live near us, acquaintances, people we come into contact with, and even our enemies.

One way to obey both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission is through a ministry of “Prayer, Care, Share.” Make a list of some of your “neighbors”, whom God lays on your heart. Go to them, explaining that you would like to pray for them, and ask them to give you their specific requests. As you pray, look for ways to care for them by doing things that demonstrate love. You might help them with a project, give them a gift of food or something else they need or would appreciate.

As you care for them, look for ways to share your life’s story, before you knew Christ, how you came to know Him, and how He has changed your life. Witnessing is one of the ways to show obedience. As they show interest, share the Gospel with them, explaining who Jesus is, the significance of His death for our sins, and how to receive Him as Lord and Savior. If they receive Jesus into their lives, you can take them through this same series of Bible lessons to help them become disciples of Jesus.

As I said, Obedience is a key that opens a mighty big door.

Lesson 4 Subject: Work

Scripture for this Lesson: Colossians 3:23

Colossians 3:23 says, Whatever you do, **work** at it with all your heart, as **working** for the Lord, not for human masters,

Many churches have neglected to teach the biblical meaning of work, for the most part ignoring work's image-bearing nature. As a result, the workplace, where most people spend 30-50% of their life, is strangely absent from the Christian understanding of mission and purpose in the world.

Everyone, especially Christians, need to understand the purpose and meaning of work from a biblical perspective. From the very beginning, **Genesis 2:15**, work has been a part of our lives. It says, The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

As a matter of fact, the scripture says in **2 Thessalonians 3:10**, "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."

Humankind was created to work and work is an essential part of our image bearing nature. The history of work begins in the book of Genesis and is tied closely to the creation of humanity. The first 25 verses of Genesis recount the story of God speaking creation into existence and declaring it good. In verses 26-28, God created humanity and immediately employs the crown of His creation in meaningful work. As image bearers of God, humanity was made to be sub-creators, to rule, to work, and to worship, continuing the creative process. God works and we work.

Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

Bible Commentaries says we were created, "to be God's responsible representative and steward on the earth, to work out the Creator's will and fulfill the divine purpose." The human race was meant to go from the garden and make all of the earth suitable for human flourishing. This was the incredible sequel to being created in God's image.

Work is not only an incredible privilege it is also a form of worship. Work is worship. The main goal of work is worship, through a lifestyle of God honoring vocational faithfulness.

The idea of "work as worship" comes from the Hebrew word *avodah*, a rich word that is rendered into many different English translations. In Genesis, we see *avodah* as work. It can also mean worship, service, ministry, and craftsmanship. The Hebrew word for cultivate is *avodah*. The use of the word *avodah* in the Hebrew Scriptures lends insight into how work, ministry, and worship are all connected.

Humanity was created for leadership within each individual's scope of responsibility. **Genesis 1:28** gives us a picture of what God originally intended for humanity, "God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"

While the word “dominion”, sometimes translated as “rule”, is a bit archaic, the idea is very important for several themes in the biblical narrative, especially vocation. As image bearers, humanity was created for dominion or what might be called leadership. And although we all lead in varying degrees, we all have spheres of responsibility, even if only for ourselves.

God granted humanity the responsibility of being His representatives and stewards in creation, fulfilling His divine will. This is meaningful work and an unbelievable privilege. And this mandate, given before the Fall, indicates God’s original intent for the world and for human participation in it.

Work is a process of creating and recreating for the purpose of shalom, “Peace.” In this sense, work is not defined primarily as a financial transaction but as a creative contribution to the common good. This fits well with **Genesis 2:15** where Adam is told to cultivate the land: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” As with all work, gardening is the process of taking raw materials and rearranging them for the benefit and flourishing of the human race. The institution of work as well as individual vocations are designed to provide people with what they need to flourish.

Though one of Adam’s responsibilities was to develop and care for the garden, his work was to extend beyond the garden to all of creation. Creation was not meant to be static. Adam’s race was called to continue the creative process, cultivating the world.

Created before the Fall, the structure of work has been declared good. After a frustrating day at work it can be easy to forget that work came before the Fall and is part of the good created order. In **Genesis 1:30**, just two verses after God gives the mandate to subdue and rule, He says, “And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.”

The first human job description in **Genesis 1:28**, often referred to as the Cultural or Creational Mandate, was given before the Fall and not rescinded after the Fall. Even though human relationship with God is broken, the mandate to subdue and rule, take responsibility and lead, has not been rescinded; in fact, it was reissued after the flood in **Genesis 9:1-7**.

Every part of creation, including the structure of work, has been touched by the corruption of the Fall. The entire created order is affected by the Fall, both the material earth and the immaterial structure of work suffered brokenness. **Romans 8:22-23** describes the whole created order including the structure of work, the workplace, and the worker: “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”

The Fall has introduced alienation into work, the workplace, and workers. As a result of the Fall, humankind experiences gross alienation in the four primary creational relationships, with, God, self, others and the created order. This alienation is intensified through work because work is fundamental to human identity, we were designed to work as God works. This deep connection with human nature gives work the power to increase alienation in each of the creational relationships.

Alienation is apparent when the work we do is unpleasant and unfulfilling. Or when a worker is separated from the end result of their work and any contribution the work may make to the common good. This is particularly true for many lower income workers who don’t have the luxury of looking for work that fits them. In its fallen state, work is often experienced as futile toil. **Ecclesiastes 2:17-18, 22-23** describes the alienation we often see in work.

(17-18) So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind. I hated all my toil, in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me... (22-23) What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity.

Creational truths about work conflict with the fallen reality often experienced in work. There is a tension between what work ought to be and what it often is. Giftedness and personal interest are luxuries when work opportunities are limited. The need to eat takes precedence over a desire to enjoy one's work.

Sin distorts the work that was intended to create shalom or peace. Fallen work is now part of the curse as it says in **Genesis 3:18**, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." This dual aspect of creational goodness and corruption means that a thoughtful and nuanced approach is required to understand our work.

Work exists in the "now and not yet." "Now and not yet" describes the context of the Redemption chapter of the story. The price of redemption has been paid and the work of renewal is breaking in upon the world, but the work is not yet complete. This creates tension and hope in everything we experience because both sin and redemption are at work in the world.

Our work is also impacted by this fact. Because of the work of Christ and the abiding life of the Holy Spirit, people are able to enter into work as it was meant to be. At the same time, there will always be an element of alienation in work until we work in the new creation.

Part of the alienation of work comes from how rapidly the results deteriorate, even great accomplishments can be quickly undone. We long for the new creation, but our work will never produce a utopia on earth. We create shalom but sin continues to mar it.

No matter how much alienation we experience in our work, we still have the option of working to honor God. **Colossians 3:23** says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Both **Ephesians 6:7** and **Colossians 3:23** are written admonitions to men and women who were enslaved in the Roman Empire. Slavery, possibly one of the greatest corruptions of the structure of work, was commonplace in the early church. These verses don't condone the practice, but they do set a redemptive direction for work that allowed slaves to embrace their work as an act of worship.

No matter how much alienation we experience in our work, it is still a reflection of our image bearing nature. In **Genesis 1:26-28**, God creates humanity in His image and immediately assigns him meaningful work. In **Ephesians 2:10**, we see the connection between God as workman and humanity as both His workmanship and His workmen: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Work can and should contribute to the flourishing of the common good. Through work, we have good roads, utilities, entertainment, food, housing, clothing, technology, and communication. Most of our needs and many of our desires are met through the institution of work. The various creational structures represented by our work contribute to the common good and to help others flourish.

Conclusion

Humanity has been tasked with the care and stewardship of creation. This is done primarily through the structure of work, thus faithfulness in work is essential for the disciple of Christ. Our work matters now. And we know that, in some way, our work matters in the future. There is great value and dignity in work that is done to the glory of God and for the common good. We are called to live life now, in all of life, and especially in our work. God is making all things new and as **1 Corinthians 3:9** says, “We are God’s fellow workers. This is our sure and certain hope.”

Lesson 5 Subject: Talents

Scripture for this Lesson: Romans 12:6

God is believed to have given humans talents for a few key reasons, these include using talents. Talents are seen as gifts from God, intended to be used for His purposes and to bring about good in the world.

Every one of us has been blessed with God-given talents and yes, that includes you. You don't have to take my word for it either because the world's bestselling book clearly spells it out. Yes, I'm talking about the Bible. **Romans 12:6** says, We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. That's a promise you can take to the bank!

But even though we know we've been blessed with certain God-given talents, using them can still feel like a challenge. Do you find it hard to put your talents to use or even figuring out what your talents are in the first place.

If you're struggling in either of those departments, take a deep breath. I'm going to share some of my favorite tips for using your God-given talents and figuring out what they are in the first place.

There are two main ways to use your God-given talents. You can use them at work, and you can use them to serve others outside of work.

You were created with unique gifts and talents, and the world needs you to use them. You were also created to fill a unique role, and the world needs you to do that too.

We just looked at **Romans 12:6**, which promised us that everyone has God-given talents.

Now before I go any farther, I want to explain I'm talking about God given Talent, not Spiritual Gifts. Yes they are closely related but not the same. Many people think they are the same thing. So I am going to try and show you the difference. We will get into Spiritual Gifts in the next subject lesson but for now just straight up talent.

God has gifted many people with talent but sadly very few use the talent for God's glory.

When I was young, God give me the ability to draw. I could draw western art, such as rodeo riders and events, portraits of people, and even had my own set of western cartoon character's I use for cowpoke calendar's. It was all God given because I never had a lesson on art. What I did not know was God was going to use my art ability one day in the church, long before I ever knew Him. I've used it since to draw and paint walls in Sunday school rooms. I used it to create Vacation Bible School theme's and senary. But the one I am most proud of is the bible skits and backdrops I have been able to create to touch the lives of so many people.

That's how it work's for everyone if we allow it. God will give you a talent and you take the talent and you develop it through use. Like I said earlier, gifts and talents are different but they are similar in that you need to put them both into practice.

Many people are musically talented from God, but it still takes practice and a lot of hard work to be good at it. But God give you that talent for a reason and it was most likely to use to touch others for Him.

If you have a gift in another area, you work at that. In the same way, God gives you these talents and you develop them. Sometimes one of the best ways to find out what you are called to do is by just volunteering to do stuff. You may discover what you are gifted to do through the process of elimination.

Here is the thing, not everything will be your talent, but that is not to say you will not be given several talents from God. The more you use them the more he may give you.

Sometimes as you find out what you are not good at, that narrows it down to what you are good at. You may be surprised to find that God has gifted you in an area you never expected to be gifted in. That is why we need to just get out there and do what we can do.

The Bible says in **2 Timothy 1:6**, “Stir up the gift of God that is in you.” The word stir means to fan into full flame. It is sort of like when you go camping and build a fire. You stir it and stoke it and help it to grow. When you are done camping, you extinguish the fire.

The problem is some are extinguishing the fire when we ought to be building it. The Bible warns to not quench the Spirit. That word quench could be translated “extinguish.” Don’t extinguish the work of the Spirit. Don’t take a gift that God has given you and bury it in the ground like the foolish servant in the parable Jesus told in **Matthew 25:14-30**.

God has a gift or gifts for you to utilize to bless others. The talents are not just a hobby to play with. They are tools to build with. And they are weapons to fight with. You see, as we use these gifts or talents, we discover that no one person has all of the gifts. The Lord, in His sovereign will, has chosen to give certain talents to certain people. I don’t know why He has gifted certain people in certain ways and hasn’t gifted others in that same way. But I do know as I said before in **Romans 12:5-6** it says, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

The gifts are given for the growth of Christians spiritually and the church numerically. As it says in **Ephesians 4:16**, speaking of Christ, From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

What are your gifts? If you don’t know, it is time to start finding out. Just start volunteering and see what God will reveal in your life. Sometimes someone else can help you identify your talent better than you can identify it yourself.

Leonard Bernstein was once asked, “What is the most difficult instrument to play in the orchestra?” His answer was surprising: “Second fiddle.” He said, “I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone to play second fiddle with enthusiasm—that’s a problem.”

What Bernstein is saying is that it’s hard to find someone willing to be on the sideline or in the background.

I remember back when I was in school, a senior, I was ask to do all the illustrations in our school annual that year. Man what an honor! To be remembered like that would be great. There would be my

art work for the history of the school. But I had one problem, I knew someone else could draw in our class also. He was more into the modern art but still he was an artist too! So I ask Him to help me with the illustrations. Worked out great, we both did around half the illustrations each. Later we got ask to draw the Longhorn mascot for the center of the new gym floor. We did, but a few years later it all burned to the ground. But we still knew what we did and so did many others.

How about if we just be the guy or the girl that God calls us to be? How about if we just be faithful in the little things? If you are faithful in the little things, God will give you greater opportunities. He always has for me and he will for anyone.

More was given because we were faithful with the talent and opportunities and resources. The Lord said, I am going to open more doors. But for you who hoard and hold on, I am taking away what you already had because you are not using what I gave you. That's the way God works.

Everyone has an ability. God does not expect the same results from every person, but He does expect the same effort. God doesn't compare you with anybody else. He compares you with you. This is all about you reaching your potential. We, as Christians, are not competing with each other. We are not opponents. Our opponents are the world, the flesh, and the devil. Let's just do the work set before us for the glory of God. Let's just be faithful with what the Lord has given to us and run our race well and remember who the real enemy is. Every gift or talent is important. Who are we to say that some talents are better than others?

The Lord might be nudging you to take a little step of faith. Why don't you take that step and see what the Lord will do? You don't know what God has in store for you. To blow off using your talent can actually be a sinful thing. We want to be faithful, serving the Lord until Christ comes again.

Some people get sidetracked with the gifts and they become preoccupied with mystical things, if you will. They are only interested in perhaps emotional experiences or receiving special words from the Lord or having some unique encounter with God.

I have had experiences with God throughout my life. I can remember times when God's presence was so tangible it was almost too much to bear. But let me say that this has been more the exception than the rule. I have learned that the Christian life is one of faith, and there are times when I won't seem to feel God. I won't sense His presence in a tangible way at every given moment, though I will at certain times, and thank God when those times happen. But we must learn to just move forward by faith and not become dependent on those things.

I have always believed in the old adage, If God give you a talent, use it or lose it. God gifted me with several talents and I try to use them all as much as possible. What about you? Are you using the talent God give you to help others? Or did you just bury it hoping God doesn't notice?

Lesson 6 Subject: Spiritual Gifts

Scripture for this Lesson: Romans 12:4-6

Romans 12:4-6 says, For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

A spiritual gift is a specific capacity for service that the Holy Spirit bestows upon every true Christian without exception at the moment of salvation. **1 Corinthians 12:7, 11** say, Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. And verse 11, All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Just like our talents, we each also receive gifts to help the church in some form or another. These gifts enables the Christians to perform that particular function in the body of Christ. A spiritual gift is not the same as a natural talent. Non-Christians as well as Christians can have natural talents. But only Christians have spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is not an office or position a person might hold in the local church. Nor is it a geographical place of ministry or a special aptitude for dealing with certain age levels in the church. Spiritual gifts are given to believers only and the basis for giving them is grace. They are never the result of a person's maturity, prayer or education. Every believer has at least one spiritual gift.

While the gift is given at the moment of salvation, the discovery and outworking of that gift is experienced as we are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Each believer receives the gift or gifts that the Lord wants him or her to have, so there is no room for competition in the body of Christ in exercising our gifts.

Another thing is there is no such thing as an unnecessary or unimportant spiritual gifts. Every gift contributes to the whole function of the body of Christ. We need each other. We are members one of another. No believer has all the gifts, though some may have several.

Spiritual gifts make possible the carrying out of the work of the ministry with harmony and effectiveness. Since God designed every member of the body of Christ to have a spiritual gift, every believer has a necessary ministry as a vital part of the body of Christ and every believer is therefore enrolled by God into the ranks of Spirit-directed service.

Listen to **Ephesians 4:12-13** where it says, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Every Christian is responsible before God to discover, develop and exercise their gift or gifts. The best way to discover what your gift or gifts might be is to know what gifts are available. What does the bible say. Since the purpose of the gifts is to build up the body of Christ, get involved with a local body of believers. Find out what are the current needs to be met in the church. Others in the church may recognize and appreciate your gifts and ask you to function accordingly. There should be some evidence of God's blessing on the exercise of your gift as others recognize and appreciate your contribution to the whole body. Be faithful in doing your part, no matter how lowly it may seem. As you are faithful God will eventually show you other gifts and ways to use them.

Let's talk for a moment about what are the spiritual gifts. The New Testament includes five lists of spiritual gifts. I want to list all of them first then we will talk about them.

Romans 12:6-8 says, We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is **prophesying**, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is **serving**, then serve; if it is **teaching**, then teach; if it is to **encourage**, then give encouragement; if it is **giving**, then give generously; if it is to **lead**, do it diligently; if it is to **show mercy**, do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12:28-30 says, And God has placed in the church first of all **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, then **miracles**, then gifts of **healing**, of **helping**, of **guidance**, and of different kinds of **tongues**. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 says, There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of **wisdom**, to another a message of **knowledge** by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit, to another gifts of **healing** by that one Spirit, to another **miraculous powers**, to another **prophecy**, to another **distinguishing between spirits**, to another speaking in different kinds of **tongues**, and to still another the **interpretation of tongues**. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Ephesians 4:11-13 says, So Christ himself gave the **apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers**, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

1 Peter 4:11 says, If anyone speaks, they should do so as **one who speaks the very words of God**. If **anyone serves**, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Now let's look at some of the gifts that Paul actually mentions in Romans 12, The Gifts of Ministry. It seems to me that whatever we undertake for God should be the best that can possibly be done. We want to do the best for the Lord. Why is that? Because God deserves the best. Sometimes people settle for mediocrity. I am so tired of watered down mediocre Christian versions of everything. Why can't we do a better job? Do it for the glory of God. Whatever you do for the Lord, do the best job you possibly can do. **1 Corinthians 10:31** says, So whether you eat or drink or **whatever you do**, do it all for the glory of God.

You see, God can gift us in many areas. I think sometimes we think the only real gifted ones are the ones that either teach, preach, or sing. Yes, they are gifted, but the church couldn't do what it needs to do with only those people out there. We need everybody doing their part and one gift is not more important than another.

The gift of teaching is needed in the church, especially today. The Bible says in **2 Timothy 4:2-3**, Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine.

There is a trend in the church today to diminish the role of biblical exposition. You will go to churches that have great worship, beautiful facilities, and wonderful programs for your kids. There is excitement. A lot of great things are happening. But then when the person gets up to preach, it is some short little thing like a talk or something and that's it. I disagree with that because I think that people will develop an appetite for what you feed them. I want people to know and love the Word of God. There is a trend in the church to diminish the role of the teacher and the teaching itself. If that is what is happening in your situation, it's only a matter of time until you become prey to false doctrine.

Jesus was called teacher in the bible many times. So what is the role of the teacher? To do a good job of teaching. The teacher is to, as one Bible commentator puts it, put the cookies on the lower shelf so the children can get to them. The purpose of teachers is not to impress people with how learned they may be, nor how intelligent or articulate they are. The teacher's job is to make Scripture understandable to you, so that you come away saying, "Wow, I finally understand what that verse is saying." Teaching is a supernatural gift that has been given by God to certain people to make the Word understandable. You know it when you hear it.

I take teaching very seriously. You know, I actually spend more time preparing my messages than I did years ago. Though I have years to draw on, I just recognize that every time I step into the pulpit my job is to declare the oracles of God and I want to carefully and rightly divide the Word of truth. Why? Because the Scripture says in **James 3:1** that "we who teach will be judged more strictly."

You see, I am going to be held accountable for everything that I have said from the pulpit and in bible study. I am going to be held accountable for every sermon and every bible study I have ever delivered. I want to do the best job I possibly can do. And if you are called to do that, just get out there and do it.

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastor-teachers are all gifted men given to the body of Christ so that Christians might be brought to maturity in Christ. The apostles and prophets are replaced in the body today by evangelists, church planters, and pastor-teachers, teaching shepherds, but the task is the same as the original apostles and prophets, to bring believers to maturity in Christ.

The Apostle was a small group originally appointed by Christ himself. To qualify for this gift the man had to have seen the resurrected Christ, called by Christ personally and given the powers of performing miracles to authenticate his apostolic authority.

The Prophet does not refer to Old Testament prophets but to New Testament ones. A man with the God-given ability to proclaim the truth by direct revelation from God, just like an Old Testament prophet.

The purpose of the Apostles and Prophets was to lay the foundation of the church. **Ephesians 2:19-20** says, Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Now that the church is established and the New Testament revelation is completed, these two have passed off the scene. In their place are Evangelist and Pastor-Teachers.

In the New Testament an evangelist was a man going from place to place where the gospel had not been preached. He would preach Christ, lead people to faith in Him, start a group of believers, appoint elders and move on. He was basically a planter of churches. Timothy and Philip are examples.

But the Pastor-Teacher was different. He was a man with the God-given ability to be a shepherd of God's flock, caring for the sheep by feeding, guiding, protecting and keeping them fit and healthy. "Pastor" is his job description, Shepherding. "Teacher" describes the means by which he fulfills his assignment, in other words Feeding the flock on the Word of God. He stays in one place teaching sound doctrine and shepherding the sheep.

These are gifts that edify or build up the body. These gifts do not cease. They began in the early church and still go on today. They are what the New Testament calls "grace gifts."

The gift of prophecy means preaching, not foretelling the future. The word basically means "to publicly proclaim." This gift has ceased in the sense of giving new revelation, but it continues in the limited sense of publicly proclaiming the truth of God already revealed in the Bible.

Since this gift of teaching appears in all five lists, we can be sure that it is of significant importance in the plan of God. The one who possesses this gift has the ability to communicate the Scriptures with clarity, ease, wisdom and effectiveness.

The Gift of Faith. This is the gift that enables certain believers to trust God without doubt or disturbance regardless of outer pressure and circumstances. Could be called the gift of vision, the ability to see what God wants done and the courage and faith to tackle a seemingly impossible job and accomplish it.

The Gift of Serving or ministering. This is the extraordinary ability to serve faithfully behind the scenes in practical ways, so as to assist in the work of the ministry.

The Gift of Administering or Leading. The one who has this gift has the unique ability to organize and administer with great ease and efficiency. This person is sensitive to the details involved in matters of organization and orderly leadership.

The Gift of Exhorting. Those who are gifted exhorters have the ability to appeal for action, "drive home" specific truths from the Scriptures and lead others into an active realization of the will of God for their lives. Exhorters have the ability to encourage, comfort and assure other believers as well as point out areas of need and disobedience. The exhorter is able to encourage the hearer to act upon that which he has heard. The gift of exhortation is the ability to get alongside someone and comfort him with love.

The Gift of Giving. All believers are instructed to give, as we are all instructed to exhibit faith and offer help, but the gift of giving is above and beyond the average stewardship response. It could be the giving of money, your time, your possessions and or anything God has blessed you with, that could bless someone else. Those with this gift demonstrate to a high degree the quality of committing their earthly possessions to the Lord and His work. They consistently and sacrificially give.

The Gift of Showing Mercy. This is the ability to demonstrate sympathy, understanding, compassion, patience and sensitivity toward those who suffer or undergo periods of severe pressure and emotional anxiety. Those who possess this gift are moved over the problems of others and seem to be available at critical times. How needed is this gift today, in this world of sorrow and suffering!

The Gift of Wisdom and Knowledge. The ability to understand how the truth applies to a specific situation and to put it into practice. A simple definition of wisdom is "the application of spiritual truth."

If wisdom is the application of truth, knowledge is just the facts and nothing more. Knowledge is understanding the facts scholarship in a human sense. These are the scholars who dig into the Scripture. They research. They are able, by the Spirit of God, to search out the facts. Knowledge is the academic side of truth; wisdom is application.

The Gift of Discernment. The ability to distinguish between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error, to spot subtle forms of phoniness and deception.

The last few spiritual gifts I want to talk about, some say, have passed off the scene today. But I believe they are still around just not used in the ways they were in the beginning of the church. These gifts were not designed for the edification of the body, but for confirming the testimony of the apostles and prophets, to show that they were in fact declaring the Word of God and from God. They still can take place today but not as much on demand as they were in the early church.

For example, the working of Miracles. A supernatural intrusion into the natural law with no other explanation than that God is acting. Anyone who does not think God still does Miracles today better read more scripture. **Hebrews 13:8** says, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. They may not happen as often as they did in the early church, but Miracles still happen.

Another one is the gift of Healing. The God-given ability to cure. Now I will be the first to tell you there are some charlatans out there who claim to be able to heal on demand. God is the only one who can heal but he will use us to heal someone when we call upon him for that purpose. I've seen it, I've been the one God used to do it before, so I believe it. It may not happen every time, but it does still happen.

Then there is the gift of Tongues. The God-given ability to speak a known language. Listen to **Acts 2:6-11** where it says, When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

This was the day of Pentecost and the Apostles were given the ability to speak in all these other languages so that everyone there could hear the message of Jesus Christ crucified.

Interpretation of Tongues is the God-given ability to interpret a known language. All the people from different areas on the day of Pentecost were the Interpreters of tongues, which was the language they spoke. They hear their own language and stood amazed at the word of God.

Like I said earlier when people say that these sign gifts have passed off the scene today, this does not mean that there are no miracles today or that God does not heal today in answer to prayer. Or that the gospel does not go out in other languages. It is simply that the purpose for which God gave these miraculous gifts originally was a sign to unbelievers to confirm the message of the Apostles and so they are not used as often today. They are still used just not as widely as they began for the church. We have the message of the Apostles in the New Testament, and it today confirms the message of anyone who claims to proclaim God's truth!

Lesson 7 Subject: Wisdom

Scripture for this Lesson: James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Biblical Wisdom is a far cry from the wisdom of this world. Time and again, Jesus opposes our expectations of what a wise life would look like. He commends the widow who gives little out of her poverty rather than those who give much out of their wealth in **Mark 12:43-44**. He calls on his followers to make their love for family a lower priority than their love for him in **Luke 14:26**. He calls the poor and the persecuted blessed in **Matthew 5:2-12**. And He says, True life can only be found by losing your life. **Matthew 10:39** says, “Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

Biblical wisdom opposes the wisdom of the world. In Scripture, the Lord reveals to us, a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. **1 Corinthians 2:7** says, No, we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

This wisdom runs counter to the wisdom of this age. This wisdom of God is not a thing or an idea. This wisdom from God is none other than Jesus Christ himself. Christ is, the wisdom and power of God. **1 Corinthians 1:24** says, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Since Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God, living wisely is intimately connected with him. We can draw three implications from this truth.

First, we live wisely by trusting in Christ. We trust in him for life itself, knowing that he is the only way to be made right with God. We also trust him that his Word is the faithful and true guide to living well unto the Lord.

Second, we live wisely by following his example of wise living. We look to his life and seek to follow it. Biblical wisdom reveals that in our own strength, we will always fail to follow Christ. The good news is that the risen and ascended Christ has sent his Spirit to dwell in his people and to empower us to obey. The same Spirit who empowered Jesus’s life on earth strengthens his people today.

Third, Christ as the wisdom of God means we live wisely by exalting him. Biblical wisdom shapes our priorities. It helps us see what truly matters. The wisdom of Scripture points us to the chief end of our lives, we exist to glorify God by exalting Christ through the Holy Spirit. If we are to live in line with biblical wisdom, we must know Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God. The way we come to know the Word incarnate is through the Word in Scripture. I hope this study will guide you through key sections of Scripture to help you better grasp the wisdom of God.

Now there is a lot of scripture about the importance of gaining wisdom and living wisely, but not much scripture on gaining information, material goods, power, money, influence or most of the other stuff people strive their whole lives to possess. But the one thing scripture places at the forefront of our seeking is the one thing most people ignore, wisdom. Perhaps we have been deceived by the world as to what is important.

I saw an example of wisdom and knowledge one time that stuck with me. Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit, but Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad.

Wisdom is what we need to do when a strict moral rule does not apply. It's how you decide between multiple good options. This kind of wisdom comes from God. **Proverbs 1:7** says, The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Fear is seeing ourselves in proper relationship to God and provides us with a God-centered approach to life.

It's important to know what wisdom is because James encourages us to seek it and live like we possess it. James says that wisdom is best viewed in how you live.

James 3:13-18 says, Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all **pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.** Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Wisdom equips you to live holy and blessed to pursue peace with those around you. Each one of these attributes of wisdom is like a seed planted in our lives – a harvest of righteousness that produces "peace."

Pure is an overarching attribute that informs all the others, it's sacred, yet venerable. It produces integrity and sincerity

Peaceable or Peace-Loving. You don't avoid conflict, but you strive for peace and not discord. You prefer peace.

Gentle or Considerate is willing to yield, to be flexible.

Submissive means open to reason, reasonable, persuadable. Means you are a good listener and can be changed if needed.

Full of mercy means merciful and using your resources to serve others, if it is practical help.

Good fruits. The best way to describe it is **James 3:12** where it says, My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water. **In other words,** we will produce a fruit of good deeds in our lives towards others.

Impartial is treating every one the same.

Sincere says you say and do the same thing with consistency.

We all have the Challenge to Live Wisely. **Verse 14-16** says, But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

The reason it is so hard is because there are 2 wisdom's in the world. A "wisdom from above" versus wisdom that "is earthly, natural, demonic." This alternative wisdom has its tendencies in devilish practices. What makes the devil, the devil? Worldly wisdom is self-absorbed.

You want what someone else has so badly that you despise the person who you think has your life. At that point, you begin to demonize the people who think otherwise. How do I know when "bitter

jealousy and selfish ambition” rules my life? The conversation moves from principles to personalities. In a me first world, community breaks down and communication stops.

In the end, just as there are only two kinds of piety, the self-centered and the God-centered, so there are only two kinds of ambition, one can be ambitious for oneself or for God. There is no third alternative. Ambitions for self may be quite modest, enough to eat, to drink, and to wear, as in the Sermon on the Mount or they may be grand such as a bigger house, a faster car, a higher salary, a wider reputation, more power. But whether modest or immodest, these are ambitions for myself, my comfort, my wealth, my status, my power.

Ambitions for God, however, if they are to be worthy, can never be modest. There is something inherently inappropriate about cherishing small ambition for God. How can we ever be content that He should acquire just a little more honor in the world? No! Once we are clear that God is King, then we long to see Him crowned with glory and honor, according to His true place. We become ambitious for the spread of His kingdom and righteousness everywhere. When this is genuinely our dominant ambition, then not only will all these things, be yours as well, our material needs will be provided, but there will be no harm in having secondary ambitions, since these will be subservient to our primary ambition and not in competition with it. Indeed, it is then that secondary ambitions become healthy.

Christians should be eager to develop their gift of Wisdom, by widening their opportunities, extending their influence, not to boost their own ego or build their own kingdom, but rather through everything they do to bring glory to God. That’s Wisdom from God!

As we said at the start of this study **James 1:5** said, If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

Conclusion: James’ point is not wisdom, it’s peace. The only way to peace is to live wisely. The only way to live wisely is to make Jesus your wisdom.

Lesson 8 Subject: Maturity and Growth

Scripture for this Lesson: Ephesians 4:13

Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

The blessings enjoyed in Christ include not only redemption, but Maturity and Growth. A renewal in our soul and life. The renewal we find in Christ as I said involves the concept of spiritual growth. Just as a healthy physical life is one of growth, so a healthy spiritual life is a process of growth and Maturity.

Sadly, not all Christians grow spiritually. Many have been Christians for years, with little change or improvement. They are no more, or often less, useful to the Lord than when they first became Christians. Failing to grow, they become stagnant, like a pool of water.

That is because "Spiritual Growth Is A Choice." It doesn't happen by default, unlike physical growth, it takes study and work. Spiritual growth, like emotional maturity, occurs only when we choose to grow. If we do not make that choice, and stick to it, there will be no spiritual growth!

In **2 Peter 3:18**, Peter ends his second epistle with, But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.

We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Peter begins his second epistle describing how we are to grow. Listen to **2 Peter 1:5-8**. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual growth is not an option, reserved for a few select Christians. The Word of God commands us to grow! We should also remember that "Spiritual Growth Is A Choice" that requires diligent effort.

Spiritual growth is not easy. We must work at it, Today, Tomorrow, and Always. But we can take comfort in knowing that even though "Spiritual Growth Is A Choice" it is Assisted by god. We are not alone in our efforts. God desires to complete the work he started when he saved us, that is the work of maturity. **Philippians 1:6** says, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. We are strengthened by god in our efforts.

In **Colossians 1:28**, Paul says the purpose of his ministry is to present people as "mature in Christ." He has a similar thought in **Galatians 4:19**, where he says he feels like one going through the pains of childbirth "until Christ be formed in you. The Greek word translated "maturity" (telos) has the sense of something "coming to the point of completion," something "turning out to be the thing that it was meant to be." Think of an acorn finally becoming a mature oak tree. A mature tree bears fruit. The Bible speaks of believers growing toward maturity, and bearing fruit, as something that is both expected of us and possible for us.

Hebrews 6:1 urges us to “press on to maturity,” and defines maturity in **Hebrews 5:14** as someone who has been trained to discern good from evil, and as someone who can receive the “solid food” of deeper Christian insight, having mastered the “elementary teachings,” which are “milk” for “babes.” It reads, But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

In **Ephesians** Paul describes a “mature” person as measured by the fullness of Christ. It lists some results of maturity, no longer being deceived by false teaching, as children would be, speaking truth in love, a similarity to Christ that in turn causes the entire fellowship to grow together in love. We could then understand maturity partly in terms of “Christ-likeness.”

James 1:4 explains that the end result of trial and tribulation is that it leads toward maturity. It reads, Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be **mature** and complete, not lacking anything. Knowing that God is at work can give us comfort when we face difficulties.

Bible verses about “learning” shed light on maturing. In **Philippians 4:11** Paul tells us that he “learned” to be content. That means there was a time when he hadn’t yet learned it, and it also means that it was possible to learn it. He learned it by actually living through the difficult times and discovering that God gave him the strength to face the difficulties as he went through them. God did the teaching. We also can expect that God will teach us to cope and to endure in our circumstances.

Verses about “bearing fruit” also give us insight into maturing, since it is a mature tree that bears fruit. Fruit can mean growth in character. It can also mean that the gospel is spreading, more people are becoming Christians, and are themselves maturing.

For example, in **Romans 7:4-5** it talks of the purpose for our belonging to Christ is “so that we might bear fruit to God,” contrasted with “when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.” Having become a Christian, we daily repress the sinful nature and grow toward bearing fruit.

Bible verses about “our purpose or goal” are relevant to maturing, since a purpose is achieved as the result of a process. Paul sums it up this way in **1 Timothy 1:5**, the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Many verses include “so that,” describing the intended results of the process of growth. Paul writes that Jesus “gave himself for us “that” he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds. **Titus 2:14** says, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.. Peter says in **1 Peter 2:9** we are God’s own people “that” you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

There are benefits to us in maturing. We develop character qualities, such as the fruit of the Spirit, that give us a level head in problems and that makes us useful to others. These character qualities of Christ are qualities that are admired around the world. Peter connects the qualities, the usefulness, and the fruit in these verses from **2 Peter 1:3-8** where it says, His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to

godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

More maturity equips us to take part in the growth and spread of God's kingdom. We join in the fight of good versus evil. **Romans 12:21** says we are in a position to heed Paul's injunction "do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good."

In summary, a maturing person would expect to be better at coping with difficulties, at managing behavior change, at having good interpersonal relations, and would be experiencing a degree of the fruit of the Spirit, including love. In short, a life modeled upon the life of Jesus.

That life actively introduces others to God's Kingdom, and nurtures others in the Christian life. Maturity would not be defined by how many church activities you are in, or by how long you've been a church member, but by love and patience. Maturity is not the same as information, but if you are mature you'll be able to make wise choices of all the things you've learned.

Hebrews 12:2 encourages us to keep our eyes on Jesus., and describes him as the "author and finisher of our faith." That word "finisher" is the same Greek word as the one we have been translating as "mature." According to this verse, Jesus gets us started, and Jesus brings us through to maturity. Our role is to exercise faith in this promise.

Lesson 9 Subject: Bible Study

Scripture for this Lesson: Joshua 1:8

Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Before I begin, I know someone just said Jesus didn't have a bible to study! So why should I study the bible to be like Jesus?

But He did have the scriptures of the Old Testament in Scrolls to read. And we see Him reading from them several times in the New Testament scriptures.

Bible study is crucial for becoming more like Jesus because it provides us a road map for understanding God's character and Jesus's example, helping us to transform our lives and walk more faithfully. By immersing oneself in scripture, one gains a deeper knowledge of Jesus's teachings and actions, enabling a more Christ like way of living.

It provides us something unique, a divine, eternal perspective, and speaks with absolute and final authority, revealing God's will. It alone is God's revelation of Himself. It provides us with the knowledge of who God is, and how we can know him. It alone describes God's solution to man's problem. It teaches us God's view of mankind, the problem of sin, and His glorious plan of redemption. It provides the key to happiness. The key to happiness is knowing and doing the will of God, which the Bible uniquely reveals. It is our duty as Christians. We live under an obligation by divine mandate to study diligently God's Word. **2 Timothy 2:15** says, Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

So let's start with a question of how does the Bible Point To Jesus?

Whether you're studying the Old Testament or the New Testament, all Scripture somehow points to Jesus. **John 5:39** says, You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me. After his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" in **Luke 24:44**. Jesus then "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures."

This perspective is what we need. All Scripture either foreshadows or flows out from the birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus. Any diligent student of the Bible, to rightly divide the word of God, needs to learn how to connect its various themes, verses, and events of the biblical books to Jesus. In the New Testament this is more obvious, but in the Old Testament there are numerous ways this plays out.

One of the ways is Prophecies. 25% of the Old Testament is prophetic in nature, foretelling the future. Unlike any other founder of a world religion, the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus is predicted in varying detail from hundreds to over a thousand years in advance.

The prophet Isaiah, writing 700 years before Jesus, is sometimes called the fifth gospel for the amount of prophecies he nails such as Jesus' virgin birth in **Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7**, his supernatural ministry in **Isaiah 61:1-2**, his substitutionary death with the wicked in **Isaiah 53:6-8**, his burial with the rich in **Isaiah 53:9**, and his resurrection from the dead in **Isaiah 53:10-11**.

What about the appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament. Several times in the Old Testament Jesus makes appearances in his pre--incarnate form. These are called christophanies. Jesus walked with Abraham in **Genesis 18**, He wrestled with Jacob in **Genesis 32:30**, He appeared to Moses in **Exodus 3:2-6**, He confronted Joshua in **Joshua 5:13-15**. He appeared with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace in **Daniel 3:24-25**.

There are representative figures and institutions that foreshadow the significance of Jesus. Adam's headship foreshadows Jesus as the second Adam. Aaron's priesthood foreshadows Jesus as our Great High Priest. David's reign foreshadows Jesus as the King of Kings. Moses' prophethood foreshadows Jesus as our ultimate prophet. In each type Jesus is greater than the shadow.

Various Old Testament events prepare us for the coming of Jesus. In Exodus, the blood of the lamb in the Passover symbolised God's covenant with the people to pass over them in judgment. So too, through the sprinkling of Jesus' blood of the new covenant, God's judgment passes over the Christian.

There are many things a person will learn about Jesus in the Old Testament. Then when the New Testament is studied you can see how the Old pointed to Jesus first coming. By studying the bible we learn not only who Jesus was but we learn how he was while on the earth. This is the idea of study, to become like Jesus.

1 John 4:17 says, This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world **we are like Jesus**.

But we can't be like Jesus unless we know how he was, that takes bible study.

Always begin your reading or studying of Scripture with prayer, asking God by his Spirit to lead you into all truth, to open the eyes of your understanding, that you may behold wondrous things in his word, and that the Word will be applied to your heart to transform you in your inner man.

There is a danger of the Bible becoming a hobby. The heart must be right as well as the head. Only where there is honesty of soul and spirituality of heart will there be clearness of vision to perceive the Truth, only then will the mind be capable of discerning the full import of what is read, and understand

not only the bare meaning of its words, but the sentiments they are designed to convey, and a suitable response be made by us. Spiritual matters require the Spirit's aid to be understood.

Whether you are studying a verse, a chapter or a book of the Bible, the more you read it, the more you will observe and understand. If you are studying a verse, don't read the verse alone, but read the verse within its context, the entire paragraph, or section. If you are studying a book of the Bible, it may take several days to read through the book, but you should spend the time to read through it at least twice before beginning to study it.

Read entire books at one sitting, starting at the beginning. Read different translations. Read out loud or listen to an audiotape. Read prayerfully. Read empathetically.

Pay special attention to the Parables that Jesus tells in the New Testament. Many of them are about Jesus and the Father, God. But also many are about the believers and the wicked. By reading and re-reading the parables you will have a better understanding of not only Jesus but of what God the Father want from those who have been saved.

There are many study programs out there to learn to study the bible. But find one that works for you. Not everyone can use the same study ways. Get you a bible that is easy for you to understand. I would suggest the NIV bible as my first choice, or if not, get the New King James Version or New Living Translation. Just get something that is written in a language you can understand. At first just pray, and read, then pray and re-read. The more you read something the more you pick up on. After a while God will start to fill you with the knowledge of the scriptures through the Holy Spirit that is with in you.

Before long you will start to understand Jesus, how He was and why He did what he did. And you thought bible study had nothing to do with being like Jesus!

Lesson 10 Subject: Holy Spirit

Scripture for this Lesson: John 14:26

How does the Holy Spirit help us become more like Jesus? The short answer is, the Holy Spirit works to cultivate godly character and lead believers to maturity in their faith, ultimately enabling them to become more like Jesus. As believers spend time in God's presence and reflect on Jesus' teachings and examples, they are progressively changed into His likeness, becoming more like Him. The Spirit convicts believers of sin, leading them to repentance and a deeper desire to be like Jesus, who lived a life free from sin. The Holy Spirit helps believers understand God's Word and renew their minds to be like the mind of Christ, leading to a deeper understanding of God's will and a desire to obey.

In **John 14:26** Jesus said, But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Okay, so now let's look at the long answer!

So is there a biblical basis for the call to be like Jesus? Let's start with **Romans 8:29** where it says, For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

From the opening pages of the Bible, we see the Holy Spirit cultivating and giving shape to life on earth. **Genesis 1:2** says, Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Like a gardener, the Holy Spirit uses a variety of tools to cultivate fruitfulness in our lives and infuse the character of Jesus into us. It is the role of the Holy Spirit to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Being made to be more like Christ is not possible in the strength or energy of our flesh.

Romans 8:6-8 says, The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

Knowing the degree to which we are growing in the likeness of Christ is essential for every believer because it reflects our true spiritual health and maturity. Growth in Christ-likeness is not merely about outward actions or religious performance, but about the transformation of our inner being by the Holy Spirit. When the character of Christ emerges from our "being" rather than our "doing," it signifies that our hearts have been genuinely changed, leading to authentic, sustainable growth as disciples.

This inner transformation ensures that our actions are a natural overflow of a Christ-centered life, rather than an effort to earn God's favor or the approval of others. By focusing on who we are becoming in Christ, rather than simply what we do, we align ourselves with God's desire for us to be conformed to the image of His Son, allowing His love, joy, peace, and other attributes to be evident in all we do.

2 Corinthians 3:18, And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

So what some of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us to be more like Jesus.

He dwells within us at all times. Once we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior, we receive the Holy Spirit from God the Father. **John 14:17** calls Him, the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

1 Corinthians 6:19 says, Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. Also **Romans 8:16** tells us, The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The Holy Spirit guards our salvation and assures us we belong to God. **2 Corinthians 1:22** says, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

So He gives us hope and peace during difficult times. **Romans 15:13** tells us, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He will help us to grow and lead us into holiness. **1 Peter 1:2** says, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ.

Knowing the degree to which we are growing in the likeness of Christ is essential for every believer because it reflects our true spiritual health and maturity. Growth in Christ-likeness is not merely about outward actions or religious performance, but about the transformation of our inner being by the Holy Spirit. When the character of Christ emerges from our "being" rather than our "doing," it signifies that our hearts have been genuinely changed, leading to authentic, sustainable growth as disciples. This inner transformation ensures that our actions are a natural overflow of a Christ-centered life, rather than an effort to earn God's favor or the approval of others. By focusing on who we are becoming in Christ, rather than simply what we do, we align ourselves with God's desire for us to be conformed to the image of His Son, allowing His love, joy, peace, and other attributes to be evident in all we do.

He gives us strength and endurance during trials. So many times during trials we feel we are alone and don't know what to pray for. But that's when the Holy Spirit steps in and gives us help without us even knowing. **Romans 8:26** says, In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. He helps us pray. **Ephesians 6:18** says, 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 Lord's people.

By praying in the spirit we grow and mature better because of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. **Jude 20** says, But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit

As we grow we can fight temptation to the world easier if we live by the Spirit within us. Because he provides power we can use over temptation. **Galatians 5:16-17** says, So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

But when we do go against what the Spirit is leading us to do and fall into sin, he brings conviction in our heart and mind. In **John 16:8** Jesus says, speaking of the Holy Spirit, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. And this is what he does in us when we fall into sin. It causes us to repent and ask forgiveness from God, which is the whole purpose of the Holy Spirit. To guide us on a path of righteousness towards God through Jesus.

Jesus said before he left and went back to the Father that the Holy Spirit will do several things for us if we continued in Him and walk the path He gives us. First he will provide us with understanding of The word, the Bible. In **John 16:13** Jesus said, But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. **1 Corinthians 2:9-12** says, However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived” — the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.

So our decision making, if we listen to the Spirit, is from God through the Spirit of God. He guides and directs events of our lives.

Paul was directed by the Spirit several times in the scriptures. One of the times in Acts 16:6 we’re told, Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. You could say, the Holy Spirit is the one who opens and closes doors for us to try and keep us in God’s will.

But also he gives us confidence over fear so we will go where God wants us to. Fear is one of the main things that keeps people from doing God’s will. But Paul told us in **2 Timothy 1:7**, For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. If we step out He will give us the right words to speak when needed if we just listen within us. Because Jesus told the disciples and us in **Acts 1:8**, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. But also he had told us earlier in **Matthew 10:19-20**, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us our spiritual gifts from the Father. He knows from the Father which gift or gifts, to bestow on each person. **1 Corinthians 12:7-11** says, Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. **Hebrews 2:4** also says, God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

But through the gifts we received from the Spirit we are able to have fruit of the Spirit. That fruit helps us to grow and mature into being more like Jesus in all we do. **Galatians 5:22-23** says, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

By following the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all we do we become more and more like Jesus each day while we are on this earth. Always remember what Paul said in **Galatians 5:24-25** where it says, Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Lesson 10 Subject: Faith

Scripture for this Lesson: 1 Corinthians 12:7-9

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another **faith** by the same Spirit.

Faith plays a very important role in our becoming like Jesus and it comes from God through the Holy Spirit to each of us.

Many Christians think they muster up their own faith in this life. But that could not be farther from the truth. God gives us faith through the Holy Spirit which is in us from Salvation.

It's very important that we have a clear understanding of what faith is before we proceed any further. In one of the most popular portions of Scripture, faith is defined as the substance of things hoped for. If you have hope for anything, faith is what gives it substance. Faith gives you every reason to affirm something is yours before you see it with your physical eyes. Why? Faith is the substance of things hoped for, it calls real those things that are not physically observable. It calls them done NOW! Faith is also defined as the evidence of things not seen, that is, the evidence of unseen realities. I do not see those things with my optical eyes but they're real to me. They're so real you can't take them away from me. Faith is the evidence of unseen realities. That means it is proof of the existence of something that is not tangible to the senses.

Now let me point out here that there's a difference between faith and believing. You may say I have faith because I believe in Jesus. Well, yes and no! You believe in Jesus for salvation then God gives you faith by the Holy Spirit to push you to become more like Jesus. Faith is the corresponding action to what you believe. Faith is the response of the human spirit to the Word of God.

Faith is a fundamental aspect of Christianity, and it plays a crucial role in helping believers become more like Jesus Christ. Through faith, Christians can develop a deeper relationship with God, cultivate spiritual growth, and embody the values and character of Jesus. This lesson will explore how faith helps us to be more like Jesus Christ, examining the biblical basis of faith, its role in spiritual transformation, and practical ways to apply faith in daily life.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of faith in the Christian life. **Hebrews 11:6** states, "And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." Faith is not just a feeling or a mental assent; it's a deep-seated trust in God's character, promises, and power. Through faith, we can experience the transformative power of God's love and grace.

Faith is essential for spiritual transformation, which is the process of becoming more like Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 3:18** says, "And all of us, with unveiled faces, see the Lord's glory as if reflected in a mirror. We are being transformed into the same image—from one degree of glory to another—as it comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Through faith, we can, Develop a deeper understanding of

God's love and character Experience the power of God's grace and forgiveness Cultivate spiritual disciplines like prayer, worship, and service Grow in fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control.

Faith helps us to embody the values of Jesus, including, Love and compassion. Jesus taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves in **Mark 12:31**. Through faith, we can develop a heart of love and compassion for others. Jesus modeled humility and servanthood, washing the feet of his disciples in **John 13:1-17**. Through faith, we can learn to put others first and serve with humility. Jesus taught us to forgive others and show mercy in **Matthew 6:14-15**. Through faith, we can experience God's forgiveness and extend it to others.

Faith helps us to overcome challenges and difficulties, just as Jesus faced and overcame trials in his life. Through faith we can, trust in God's sovereignty and goodness, even in uncertainty and find strength and courage in God's presence and promises. We can develop perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity and experience God's peace and comfort in times of struggle.

Here are some practical ways to apply faith in daily life. Spend time in prayer and Bible study to deepen your understanding of God's character and promises. Practice obedience to God's Word, even when it's challenging. Serve others in humility and love, following Jesus' example. Share your faith with others, trusting in God's power to transform lives.

Faith is not just a personal experience, it's also a communal one. The Bible emphasizes the importance of community in the Christian life. **Hebrews 10:24-25** says, And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, not staying away from our meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near. Through community, we can receive support and encouragement in our faith journey. Learn from others' experiences and insights. Growing in accountability and responsibility. While experiencing the power of collective prayer and worship.

In conclusion, faith plays a vital role in helping us become more like Jesus Christ. Through faith, we can develop a deeper relationship with God, cultivate spiritual growth, and embody the values and character of Jesus. By applying faith in practical ways and being part of a faith community, we can experience the transformative power of God's love and grace, becoming more like Jesus Christ each day.

Lesson 11 Subject: Worship

Scripture for this Lesson: Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

Worship helps us become more like Jesus by fostering a deeper understanding and relationship with God, which in turn transforms our hearts and minds into a Christ-like image. Through worship, we can be "changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another" by the Holy Spirit. God's purpose for His people to be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus.

Worship provides a space for us to encounter God's presence and experience His love and power. Worship is a spiritual discipline that helps us surrender to Christ and allow His presence to shape us. Through worship, we can learn to love God and others more deeply, and to cultivate humility, as seen in Jesus' example. Worship is connected to renewing our minds and transforming our thoughts and attitudes. Worship allows us to contemplate Jesus' sacrifice and the love He demonstrated on the cross, inspiring us to live in gratitude and obedience. Worship invites us to join God in His work and to be part of His kingdom.

In essence, worship is not just an activity, but a way of life that shapes us into the image of Jesus by drawing us closer to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to work within us.

So with that said, what is "Biblical Worship?" It would probably surprise you to know that much of what is done in the church is not Biblical Worship. It would be better accessed as man made Worship. Biblical Worship takes things a bit farther into the spiritual realm. Jesus said in **John 4:21-24** to the Samaritan Woman at the well, "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

Everyone seems to have an opinion about worship. In some circles of the church, we have lifted up 'good' worship more than we have lifted up the study of and the precise interpreting of God's Word. 'Good worship' is debated more than any ideas in scripture or what scripture says about the second coming of Jesus, or the virgin birth and its relevance, or how to reach people from going to Hell. We get more consumed with the songs we like or being safe and comfortable in our worship, than ever asking such an important question as, has our worship or even our church turned people off to the Lord? Or another question like, does God like what we are singing or would he rather us care for and serve the poor or broken hearted?

Worship has become consumerism instead of offering. Worship has become more about what we like than what we bring. Worship has become more about style than a surrendering of the life. In so doing, worship has become something we consume and then make a decision of do we like it or not. Worship has become about the self. Worship has become a response to whether we feel like the music or preaching or event leads me into an attitude of worship.

Often we choose whether church was good based on how I feel leaving the church instead of choosing church is good because we had an opportunity to come together and lift up the name of Jesus, listen to how He has initiated a relationship with us, poured out grace upon us, and have an opportunity to go and serve Him by ministering to others. Today worship comes with an expectation to make a decision about whether church was good because of what it did for me or how I feel during and afterwards, instead of responding to who God is and what He has and is doing.

Each one of us needs to do a check on our theology of worship. We need to wrestle with true, biblical worship. We need to wrestle with the question, “What is biblical worship?” That question will reveal the answer to “Who do I worship?”, “How do I worship?”, “When do I worship?”, and “Why do I worship?” These are questions each one of us must ask ourselves daily.

Jesus told the woman at the well in Samaria, true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. There was an understanding that worship happened in a location, but Jesus declares to her that worship isn’t stuck to a location or about a location, it’s not about being born of a certain race or culture, but about a life’s attitude, a response to who God is and what He has done. Catch what Jesus says, ‘true worship’. So there is a right kind of worship and a wrong kind of worship.

Worship can be what we do when we come to the church building on Sunday. Worship can be what we do when we sing on Sunday mornings or some other time during the week. Worship can be what we do when we carry out certain biblical traditions, such as communion. However, the building can be an idol, and the music can become an idol, and traditions can be an idol. We need to see that biblical worship is so much more than that.

We become like what we worship. Let that sink in for a moment.

If money is an idol of your heart, you will wrestle with greed. If comfort is an idol of your heart, you will wrestle with complacency. If power is an idol of your heart, you will wrestle with a ruthless attitude. If safety is an idol of your heart, then you will wrestle with being fearful. If a need for sexual gratification is an idol of your heart, you will wrestle with lust. If making yourself great in others eyes is an attitude of your heart, you will wrestle with arrogance and pride.

But if worshiping the true God is the intent of your heart, then you will become Christ-like. You will begin to become an image, or let’s say, a truer and truer image of Christ. In otherwords you will become like Jesus.

Yes, the center of worship is God. Jesus received worship, because He is God. The Spirit enables our worship and points us to Jesus. The idea is we praise Jesus, but we also join with Jesus in worship as He glorifies His Father. As the Holy Spirit reveals the Lord Jesus to the depths of our heart, He also takes us to the Son's relationship with the Father.

So how do we worship and why? Remembering the verse I started with from Romans 12:1, we give our bodies and let them be a living and holy sacrifice. The idea here is our entirety. It's a constant giving of our entire self. It reflects the picture of the sacrificial system. The sacrificial worship of the Old Testament was about submission, service, and reverence. A reverence that is filled with wonder, awe, and respect for the majesty and greatness and holiness of God. We even find there is a standard to worship. It's what God finds acceptable. It's found in obedience. When do we worship? All the time. In informal, formal, spontaneous, calculated, inside, outside, mentally, physically with dancing and clapping of hands, and more.

The next verse in Romans even explains to us what comes from worship. **Romans 12:2** says, Do not conform 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.

We are transformed and renewed. As we worship, God reaches in and transforms and renews us. The more we worship in this matter, the more we become like Jesus.

So what does worship have to do with me becoming like Jesus? The answer, EVERYTHING !

If worship is done in the biblical sense, there is no way you will not be changed and become more like Jesus.

Lesson 12 Subject: True Christianity

Scripture for this Lesson: Luke 4:8

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

True Christianity is a concept that has been debated and explored by theologians, scholars, and believers for centuries. At its core, Christianity is a faith based on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, the interpretation of these core elements has led to diverse expressions of Christianity throughout history and across cultures. This lesson will delve into the fundamental aspects of true Christianity, examining its core principles, values, and practices.

True Christianity is built on several core principles. One is Love and compassion. Jesus taught that loving God and loving others is the greatest commandment. **Matthew 22:37-40** says, Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” It emphasizes the importance of empathy, kindness, and selflessness. Then there is Faith and trust. Christianity is centered on faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of humanity. True believers trust in God's sovereignty, provision, and redemption. Also Forgiveness and redemption. Christianity teaches that humans are sinful and in need of forgiveness. It emphasizes the importance of repentance, forgiveness, and redemption through Jesus' sacrifice.

There are a few key values true Christianity. Jesus modeled humility and servanthood, teaching his followers to prioritize others' needs above their own. In **Mark 10:45** Jesus said, For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. True Christians strive to live with integrity, authenticity, and transparency, reflecting God's character in their words and actions. Christianity emphasizes the importance of caring for the vulnerable, promoting justice, and advocating for human rights.

It's not just about doctrine, it's also about practices that reflect one's faith. The true Christian will cultivate a deep prayer life, seeking to connect with God and express their gratitude, praise, and concerns. **Ephesians 6:18** says, And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. Also true Christianity emphasizes the importance of engaging with Scripture, seeking to understand God's Word and applying it to their daily life. They will prioritize building relationships with fellow believers, seeking to support, encourage, and serve one another.

Believers seek to develop a personal, intimate relationship with God, trusting in His goodness, wisdom, and love. They strive to obey God's commands, surrendering their will to His and seeking to align their lives with His purposes. Believers are called to love and serve others, reflecting God's character and demonstrating their faith in practical ways. Such as prioritizing forgiveness and reconciliation, seeking to resolve conflicts and restore relationships.

Those in Christianity trying to live up to what it means face various challenges and criticisms. Some critics argue that Christians often fail to live up to their professed values, leading to accusations of

hypocrisy. Christianity encompasses diverse cultural and denominational expressions, which can lead to disagreements and divisions.

I have always said, as long as you are trying to live and become like Jesus, don't worry about what anyone says. There will be critics in the world, but Jesus said I have overcome the world. In **John 16:33** Jesus said, I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

True believers should be characterized by authenticity and transformation. Believers experience a heart change, marked by a shift from self centered to God centered. True Christians exhibit the fruit of the Spirit from **Galatians 5:22-23** which includes love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Passion plays a significant role in true Christianity. Here are some ways passion can manifest. A deep love and passion for God can drive Christians to pursue a closer relationship with Him, seek His presence, and live for His glory. Christians can be passionate about serving others, demonstrating God's love through acts of kindness, compassion, and justice. Many Christians are passionate about sharing their faith with others, seeking to introduce them to Jesus Christ and the transformative power of the Gospel. Christians can be passionate about addressing social issues, such as poverty, inequality, and injustice, and working towards creating a more just and compassionate society. Passionate worship can be a hallmark of true Christianity, as believers express their love and adoration for God through music, prayer, and other forms of worship.

Some biblical examples of passion in Christianity include Jesus, Paul and others. Jesus' passion for His mission, His Father's will, and humanity's redemption is evident throughout the Gospels. The Apostle Paul's passion for spreading the Gospel and building up the early Christian church is evident in his letters and missionary journeys.

In modern Christianity, passion can manifest in various ways. Christians may participate in mission trips, demonstrating their passion for serving others and sharing their faith. Christians can be passionate advocates for causes that align with God's values. Passionate Christians may express their faith through art, music, writing, or other creative outlets.

Overall, passion can be a powerful catalyst for living out true Christianity, driving believers to make a meaningful impact in their communities and beyond.

True Christianity is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses core principles, values, and practices. It is characterized by a deep relationship with God, a commitment to loving and serving others, and a pursuit of authenticity and transformation. While challenges and criticisms exist, true Christianity remains a powerful force for good in the world.

As we reflect on the essence of true Christianity, we are reminded that it is a faith that seeks to transform lives, communities, and societies. May we strive to embody the principles, values, and practices of true Christianity, reflecting God's love and character to a world in need and becoming more like Jesus.