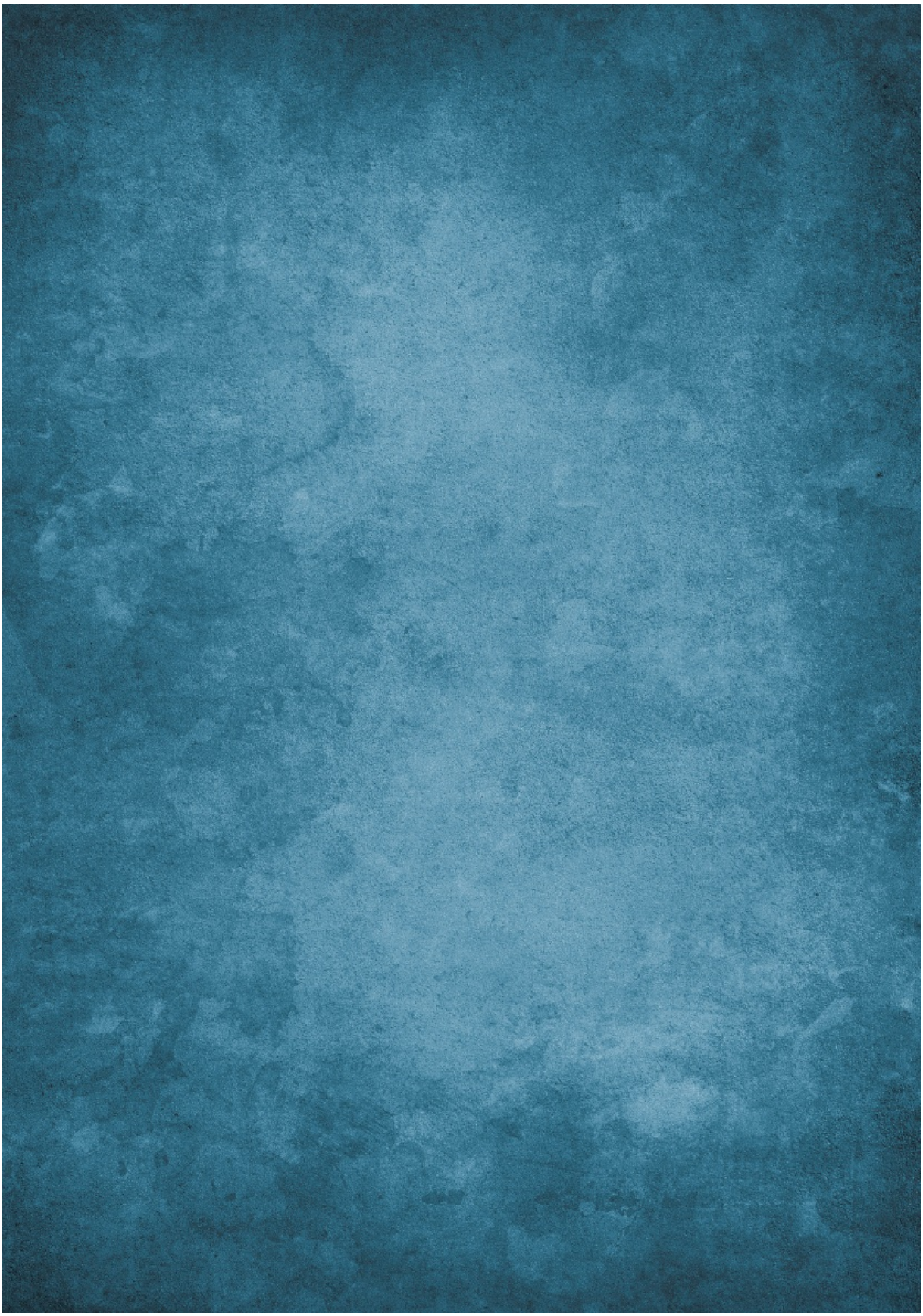
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Discipleship Essentials

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E X P A N D E D E D I T I O N

Greg Ogden

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To Eric

a dear brother who in his dying

radiated the presence

of the living Christ.

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A Word from the Author

Since the first release of *Discipleship Essentials*, it has been quite gratifying to see that this tool has been used in such a variety of settings to assist the growth and multiplication of disciples of Jesus. The response to *Discipleship Essentials*, though, is simply an indicator of a broadly felt need. Discipleship or spiritual formation appears to be a theme that is coming into focus as a vital necessity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer chided the church two generations ago because we were settling for what he called “cheap grace.” He said that we were practicing a brand of Christianity without a cross.

This was *easy believism*. In many circles it would seem that all that is necessary is to embrace certain creedal tenets, such as justification by faith alone. The ability to affirm right doctrine signifies that we are in the club. Dallas Willard has dubbed this as “bar code” Christianity. If we can be rung up by the great scanner in the sky, then eternal life is assured. With this understanding of the

Christian life, what is the need to have a transformed life?

Michael Wilkins comes at the same issue from a different angle. In his survey of Christian groups, people will readily identify themselves as “Christians,” but be quite reluctant to call themselves “disciples.” Why might this be? Being a Christian is easy. The only thing required is that we acknowledge our need of a savior and to receive a gift that I cannot earn nor deserve. But if I identify myself as a disciple, then I am making a statement about the quality of my followership. Being a Christian is a statement about what Christ has done for me; being a disciple is a statement about what I am doing for Christ.

Our problem is that we have made peace with an unbiblical distinction. Christian leaders have sent the message that it is alright to be a Christian without being a disciple of Christ. We expect that only a small percentage of Christians will “graduate” into the category of discipleship. We are reaping the results of the false notion that we have sown. It is broadly being acknowledged today by Christian leaders that we have done a miserable job of making disciples. George Barna and George Gallup consistently tell us that their polling demonstrates that in terms of moral values and lifestyle choices there is little distinction between Christian and non-Christian. We are compromised at the core.

We must reaffirm that biblically that there is no distinction between embracing God’s grace as a forgiven sinner and following Jesus as the primary shaping influence over our life. Christian and disciple are interchangeable as we read in Acts, “The disciples were called Christians first at Anti-och” (Acts 11:26). Therefore we must recalibrate where we set the bar of discipleship.

Discipleship Essentials was conceived for this very purpose. What are the basics that a follower

of Jesus needs to *practice as spiritual disciplines* (part 1), *comprehend as core biblical and theological truth* (part 2), *become in terms of character and lifestyle* (part 3), and *do to engage the church and the world* (part 4)? This is the content, but what is the context? One of the key issues here is—how are disciples made? The church has settled for a program approach. Pastors stand up in front of their congregations announcing the latest enrichment opportunities while the same 20

percent show up. “You all come!” we shout. They stay away in droves.

Disciples, though, are made in relationships through personal, eyeball-to-eyeball invitation.

How different this is from our normal approach to the program church! When I begin a new discipleship group of three or four, I approach a potential participant only after having prayed for a sense of call to this person. I say to them something like, “I have been praying about who to ask to join with me and a couple of others on a journey together as we grow to be followers of Christ.

The Lord has put you on my heart. Would you come along with me as we grow together over the next year to live more fully into what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?” Oh, how different it feels to be issued a personal call rather than a mass invitation!

I said at the outset of my book *Transforming Discipleship* that transformation in these small, reproducible groups of three or four has been the “ah-ha!” of my ministry. Almost every week for the last twenty-two years, I have had at least one of these groups in my schedule and it is always the highlight of my life. To the see these same people then reproduce by discipling others so that there is growth of a multi-generational tree—wow! It doesn’t get any better than this!

To all those who have written to me with their stories of transformation, I have been blessed through them to know that the call to write this material has been met with hungry hearts who have taken the task of making disciples seriously is most fulfilling! Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I can only hope and pray that a century from now (if Christ has not returned) when church historians study the time in which we live that it will be called an *age of discipleship*.

Greg Ogden

April 2007

Getting the Most from

Discipleship Essentials

What would happen to the church of Jesus Christ if a majority of those who claim to follow Christ were nurtured to maturity through intimate, accountable relationships centered on the essentials of God's word? Self-initiating, reproducing disciples of Jesus would be the result.

Discipleship Essentials is specifically designed to implement small, reproducible discipleship units. The vision that stands behind this tool is an ever-expanding, multi-generational discipling network. This tool brings together three elements which creates the climate for the Holy Spirit to bring about accelerated growth.

The first element is the unchanging truth of God's Word. We have moved into a post-Christian era in the Western world. Previously, when Christendom reigned, it was generally assumed that there was such a thing as a "revealed" truth or at least scientific, objective truth that was true for all. But now in these post-Christian times relativism prevails, especially in the realm of morals and lifestyles. "Live and let live" is the byword that reflects today's highest value—*tolerance*. It is assumed that all lifestyles and moral convictions are equal, because all truth is personal. In the midst of this morass of relativism, each of these twenty-four chapters is built around a "core truth"

that is true for all, because the source of this truth is a God who is the same for all.

For many, the Christian life seems like a mishmash of disconnected tiles. We have pieces of truth collected from sermons, private study, the wisdom of fellow believers, insightful books and so on. Yet we have not put them together so that they together tell a coherent story. One person who used this material in a discipleship group said it was like seeing the empty spaces of a mosaic being filled in, so that she could now see the complete picture of the Christian life and message.

The lessons are sequentially laid out so that there is logical flow and tiles are connected.

Yet for the truth of God's Word to be released in its transforming power, it must be pursued in the context of trusting, intimate and lasting relationships.

The second element in the Holy Spirit's laboratory is transparent relationships. The individual has replaced the family or community as the basic unit of our society. Serial and discarded relationships mark our era. The prevailing

philosophy is personal fulfillment based upon what feels good or right for me now. Many have not even witnessed the health of long-term, loving commitment. At the core of every human being is the desire for deep and satisfying relationships because we are created in the image of God. God made us for relationship with himself and with one another. A small discipleship group is a place to learn how to be intimate and self-revealing in a safe

place over time. What we will ultimately have when all is said and done is the people we love.

Transformation occurs when we grapple with the truth of God's Word in the context of transparent relationships. It is a biblical axiom that the Holy Spirit will have free sway in our lives to the extent to which we open ourselves up to one another. Honesty with God is not sufficient. We give God permission to reshape our lives when we risk self-revelation and confession to others. We can't grow in Christ by ourselves. We are people made for community.

There is *a third element that creates the climate for transformation—mutual accountability.*

Accountability is taking the relational context of discipleship to another level. Accountability means giving your discipling partners authority to call you to keep the commitments you have made to one another. You will convene your discipling relationship around a mutual covenant (see p. 14). A covenant is a shared agreement whereby you clearly state your mutual expectations. In so doing you are giving each other permission to hold you to your agreement.

In summary, when the truth of God's Word is at the heart of self-revealing, intimate relationships rooted in mutual accountability, you have the ingredients for Spirit-motivated transformation. This tool provides the structure for these three elements to come together. Add to this discipling unit a vision for equipping followers of Jesus to pass on the faith from one generation to the next, and you have the components to renew a ministry from the bottom up.

CONTEXTS FOR DISCIPLING

Discipling in the minds of many has become associated with a one-on-one, teacher-student relationship. In writing *Discipleship Essentials* I experimented with this material in a number of contexts. Up to that point my discipling paradigm had also been one-on-one. In addition to this traditional approach I led a threesome called a *triad* and a discipleship group of ten. I was startled by the difference in dynamics. I have come to see groups of three or four as the optimum setting for making disciples.

Why do I believe that a triad or quad to be superior to one-on-one? (1) The one-on-one sets up a teacher-student dynamic. The pressure is upon the discipler to be the answer person or the foun-tain of all wisdom and insight. When a third person is added, the dynamic shifts to a group process.

The discipler can more naturally make his or her contribution in the dynamic of group interchange. (2) Triad discipling shifts the model from hierarchical to relational. The greatest factor inhibiting those who are being discipled to disciple others (multiplication) is the dependency fostered by one-on-one relationsips. The triad/quad, on the other hand, views discipleship as a come-alongside relationship of mutual journey toward maturity in Christ. The hierarchical dimension is minimized. (3) The most startling difference between one-on-one and threes or fours is the sense of "groupness." The sense of the Holy Spirit's being present in our midst occurred much more often in the group versus the one-on-one. (4) There is wisdom in numbers. The group ap-

proach multiplies the perspectives on Scripture and application to life issues, whereas one-on-one limits the models and experience. By adding at least a third person there is another perspective brought to the learning process. The group members serve as teachers of one another. (5) Finally, and not to be minimized, by adding a third or fourth person who is being equipped to disciple others, the multiplication process is geometrically increased.

You might ask, if three is better than two, why isn't ten better than three? The larger the group, the more you water down the essential elements that make for transformation. (1) *Truth*—Learning occurs in direct proportion to the ability to interact with the truth, which becomes more difficult with an increased number

of voices contributing. It also becomes increasingly difficult to tailor the rate of learning to the individual, the larger the size of the group. (2) *Transparent relationships*—Self-disclosure is integral to transformation, and openness becomes increasingly difficult in direct proportion to the size of the group. If we are not free to divulge our struggles, then the Spirit will not be able to use the group members to effectively minister at the point of need.

(3) *Mutual accountability*—The larger the group, the easier it is to hide. Accountability requires the ability to check to see if assignments were completed, or commitments to obedience were maintained. Greater numbers decrease access to a person's life.

ROLE OF THE DISCIPLER

Discipleship Essentials can be used in a number of contexts (personal study, one-on-one, one-with-two or a discipleship group of ten), but whatever the context the key person is the discipler.

Tools don't make disciples. God works through disciples to model life in Christ for those who desire maturity. Simply covering the content violates the intent of this tool. The tool is a vehicle which helps create the context and provide content for disciplers who want to invest themselves in love and commitment to growing disciples. The tool raises the issues of discipleship, but the discipler embodies the principles in life patterns and convictions. Modeling will be where the real instruction occurs. Remember Jesus' words, "Everyone when he is fully taught will be *like* his teacher" (Luke 6:40 RSV).

The most recent studies in secular education reveal that modeling is still the most significant learning dynamic. Neither coercion nor rewards shape human behavior as much as a "motivated attempt to resemble a specific person."1 The lowest level of learning is compliance when one individual has control over another. The second level is identification. Influence is maintained because of a desire to remain in a satisfying relationship. Internalization is the third and highest step, for the desired behavior has become intrinsically rewarding. Modeling creates an atmosphere that affects values, attitudes and behavior.

Some of the specific roles a discipler will carry out are as follows: **1.** The first and key role of the discipler is to issue an "invitation to accountable relationship."

The commitment is described and the covenant is signed (see p. 14 for “The Disciple’s Covenant”).

The discipler becomes the “keeper of the covenant.” The discipling process should not commence until the invited disciple has prayed over and signed the covenant of commitment. Without the covenant there are no mutually agreed-upon standards for accountability.

The action pages in *Discipleship Essentials* are the tools for facilitating this accountability role.

After lessons eight (p. 80) and sixteen (p. 146) you are asked to review the original covenant and re-covenant together. An action page after lesson twenty (p. 184) asks you to prayerfully consider who will be your discipleship partners for the next leg of journey in order to continue the discipleship chain.

2. Initially, the discipler is the group convener and guide. The lessons are laid out in such a way that the discipler simply walks the partners through the discussion format. Approximately one-quarter to one-third of the way through the discipling process, the members rotate the task of guiding the weekly format, as a way to equip and prepare for leadership of the next generation.

3. The discipler prepares the assignments of *Discipleship Essentials* just as the disciples do.

Even though the discipling appointment will be guided by questions asked by the discipler, the guide shares his or her own responses to the discovery questions in the natural flow of conversation.

4. The discipler models transparency by sharing personal struggles, prayer concerns and confession of sin. The discipler does not need to have all the answers to biblical and theological questions. Feel free to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll try to find the answer or let’s research this together.”

The power of modeling is not dependent upon a false perfectionism. The discipler will gain as much insight into Scripture and the Christian life as those

who are being discipled for the first time.

SUGGESTED STUDY FORMAT

Though *Discipleship Essentials* is twenty-five sessions, I would not expect that you could cover the assignment in twenty-five weeks. The relationship is always primary. Just plowing through the lessons would violate the spirit of this type of group. Every group will vary in length according to your style of learning, the depth of personal matters you are sharing at any given time and the detours you take to pursue issues raised by the study. Remember that the idea behind a small, tailored discipleship group is to proceed at the pace that is comfortable for the participants. Don't feel obligated to cover every question, but use this book as a menu from which to select, especially if some of the material is familiar and already incorporated in your life.

The assignments are to be completed individually in their entirety prior to the discipling appointment. Each lesson contains discussion guides specifically designed for each of the following elements:









Core Truth—The core truth serves as the nugget around which each lesson is built. The rest of the chapter is designed to further clarify the central focus. Begin each lesson with a review of the core truth's question and answer.

Memory Verse—When we commit the Bible to memory, God's viewpoint on life slowly becomes ours. The psalmist writes, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). This discipline helps us grow to be more like Christ as we are grounded in his truth, encourage other believers with God's Word, and share our faith with others.

These verses should be reviewed approximately every sixth lesson.

Inductive Bible Study—The place to discover reality from the only perspective that counts is the Bible. We are not interested in stowing away truth as if we were simply trying to acquire more knowledge. The object of this Bible study is to encounter reality and then through God's power bring our lives in line with it. Larry Richards has summarized well the reality structure of God's Word: "That is, in the Word of God the Spirit of God has revealed the true nature of the world we live in, the true nature of man and of God, the ultimate consummation of history, the pattern of relationships, and response to God and to life which corresponds with 'the way things really are.'"2

Reading—Each lesson concludes with a teaching printed in the guide. This reading is intended to provide a contemporary discussion of the eternal core truth that will challenge our lifestyle and stimulate our thinking. The follow-up questions will help make the learning concrete.

Weave prayer through all that you do. Begin by acknowledging Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit, and open your lives to what he may desire to do in you. As you deepen your life together through personal sharing, prayer is a response to the burdens you unload or the blessings God gives. Finally, intercede for one another that you can make the changes in thought, word and deed that the Lord has brought to your attention.

1 *The Study of Identification Through Interpersonal Perception,* quoted in Lawrence O. Richards, *A Theology of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 1975), p. 83.

2Lawrence O. Richards , *Youth Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), p. 29.

A DISCIPLE'S COVENANT

In order to grow toward maturity in Christ and complete *Discipleship Essentials*, I commit myself to the following standards: **1.** Complete all assignments on a weekly basis prior to my discipleship appointment in order to contribute fully (see "Suggested Study Format").

2. Meet weekly with my discipleship partners for approximately one and one-half hours to dialogue over the content of the assignments.

3. Offer myself fully to the Lord with the anticipation that I am entering a time of accelerated transformation during this discipleship period.

4. Contribute to a climate of honesty, trust and personal vulnerability in a spirit of mutual upbuilding.

5. Give serious consideration to continuing the discipling chain by committing myself to invest in at least two other people for the year following the initial completion of *Discipleship Essentials.*

Signed_____

Dated_____

(The above commitments are the minimum standards of accountability, which are reviewed and renewed after lessons eight and sixteen. Feel free to add any other elements to your covenant.) Part One

GROWING UP IN CHRIST

Welcome to a relational discipleship journey that promises a time of accelerated

spiritual growth.

This intimate, highly invested experience brings together three ingredients that the Holy Spirit will use to form Christ in you: vulnerability, truth and accountability. *Vulnerability* happens when you open your life in a self-revealing way to other believers, giving permission for the Spirit to work in you. The more honest and transparent you are with others, the more you are entrusting your life to the Lord. The *truth* of Scripture serves as the cutting edge for growth. Since the material in this study is laid out in a sequential and systematic way, you will enjoy seeing the truth take shape before you eyes. Finally, *accountability* involves entering into a mutual covenant with others in which you are giving each other authority to hold one another to your commitments.

The combination of these three elements serves as the mold that God uses to give his shape to your life.

Making disciples is the theme of chapter one. Solid foundations will be laid in your life, and a part of spiritual maturity is the desire to pass on that faith to others. May God so take hold of you that you are equipped to invest in others and to make it a commitment for life.

Being a disciple (chapter two) is serious business. The only way to be molded into the person God wants you to be is to abandon self in obedience to Christ.

Chapters three to six focus on the disciplines of faith, what God uses in our lives to help us grow up into Christlikeness. The word *discipline* sometimes carries with it a certain heaviness or weightiness, but the idea of discipline in this book is thought of in the way Richard Foster speaks of it in his *Celebration of Discipline.* He says that spiritual disciplines are those practices that put us in the presence of God where we can have an intimate relationship with him.

Quiet time, the subject of chapter three, introduces the practice of a daily routine of meeting with the Lord. A quiet time can become a safe place where you experience the Lord as your fortress and protector as well as your closest friend. It can be the place in your day where you freely pour out your heart in an unedited fashion and where God can speak back to you through his Word and Spirit.

Bible study is a key ingredient in a quiet time. This book teaches the inductive method, an investigative study where you discover the meaning of a biblical text

through a series of discovery questions. This method is used throughout these studies to guide the unearthing of God's truth.

Prayer is another key ingredient of a quiet time. A simple guide for prayer is provided in chapter five to give structure to the dialogue of prayer.

Finally, in chapter six we focus on *worship.* Whether private or public, worship is the activity that will characterize our eternity in heaven, and we can experience a bit of that awe and wonder even now.

PREPARING FOR THE TASK AHEAD

The best way to prepare for your discipling session is to take a little time each day to work through the material. It is much better to spend twenty minutes each day than to do it all in one evening.

Discipline takes practice to incorporate into our daily routine. It has been shown that new habits take approximately three weeks to become comfortable and another three weeks to become a part of one's way of doing things. Pray that these disciplines will become second nature to your life and your partners'.

You have a wonderful, painful, delightful, challenging adventure ahead. God bless you as you grow up into him.



1 / Making Disciples

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 28:18-20

BIBLE STUDY: Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-6, 10

READING: A Biblical Call to Making Disciples

Core Truth

What is discipling?

Discipling is an intentional relationship in which we walk alongside other disciples in order to encourage, equip and challenge one another in love to grow toward maturity in Christ. This includes equipping the disciple to teach others as well.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

Jesus' mission statement for the church is to make disciples. These pivotal verses (Matthew 28:18-20) are commonly referred to as the Great Commission.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Matthew 28. What key events precede Jesus' giving the Great Commission, and how would this have affected the disciples?

2. The memory verses are *Matthew 28:18-20.* Copy these verses verbatim.

3. What do these verses teach us about Jesus?

4. Why does Jesus stress his authority (v. 18) as a backdrop to his command to

“make disciples”?

5. How is disciplemaking to be carried out?

6. When is a disciple made?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Jesus always lived with a view to the end of his earthly ministry. The preparation of a few who would carry on his ministry after he ascended to the Father was ever before him. This Bible study focuses on the training and transference of ministry to his selected disciples.

1. *Read Luke 6:12-16; 9:1-6, 10.* What do you suppose Jesus included in his all-night prayer? (See the reading on page 20 for some ideas.) **2.** What can you learn about Jesus’ strategic purpose for the selection of the Twelve from 9:1-6?

3. What power and authority was given to the disciples? What power and authority can we expect to receive from Jesus today?

4. What was Jesus’ role with the disciples after their return (9:10)?

5. What questions do these passages raise for you?

6. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: A Biblical Call to Making Disciples

When Jesus commanded his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19), he spoke the mission statement for the church. Jesus told his disciples to do what he had done during his three years of ministry. Jesus made disciples by selecting a few into whom he poured his life.

Multiplication. Just because Jesus focused the disciples secured that the Teacher’s influence on the world should be permanent, that His Kingdom should be founded on deep and indestructible convictions in the minds of a few, not on the shifting sands of superficial impressions on the minds of many.”[1]

much of his attention on a few does not mean

that he did not want to reach the multitudes.

What was the strategic advantage of having

Just the opposite. Eugene Peterson puts this

twelve men who would "be with him" (Mark

truth cleverly: "Jesus, it must be remembered,

3:14)? There are many reasons, but two seem

restricted nine-tenths of His ministry to

most relevant.

twelve Jews, because it was the only way to

Internalization. By focusing on a few

reach all Americans."2

Jesus was able to ensure the lasting nature of

Jesus had enough vision to think small.

his mission. We might wonder why Jesus

Focusing did not limit his influence—it ex—

would risk others' jealousy by publicly select—

panded it. When Jesus ascended to the Father,

ing twelve from a larger group of disciples

he knew that there were at least eleven who

(Luke 6:13). Why didn't Jesus simply con—
could minister under the authority of his
tinue to expand his growing entourage and
name, an elevenfold multiplication of his min—
create a mass movement? The apostle John
istry. Robert Coleman captures the heart of
captures Jesus' caution when people clam—
Jesus' methodology when he writes, "[Jesus']
ored to him because of the marvelous signs:
concern was not with programs to reach the
"But Jesus on his part would not entrust
multitudes but with men the multitudes
himself to them, because he knew all people
would follow."3
and needed no one to testify about anyone;
for he himself knew what was in everyone"

PAUL'S APPROACH TO DISCIPLEMAKING

(John 2:24-25 NRSV).

We see that the apostle Paul adopted the same
Though Jesus ministered to the needs of
goal and methodology in his ministry that

the crowds, he knew they were fickle. The
Jesus modeled. Paul's version of the Great
same ones who shouted "Hosanna" on Palm
Commission is his personal mission state—
Sunday were shouting "Crucify him" five days
ment. "We proclaim him, admonishing and
later on Good Friday. Knowing the whims of
teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we
the throng, Jesus built his ministry on a select
may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this
few who would form the superstructure of his
end I labor, struggling with all his energy,
future kingdom. Disciples cannot be mass pro—
which so powerfully works within me" (Colos—
duced but are the product of intimate and per—
sians 1:28-29). Paul is so passionate about
sonal investment. A. B. Bruce summarizes this
making disciples that he compares his agony
point: "The careful, painstaking education of
over the maturity of the flock to the labor

pains of a woman giving birth: “My dear chil—
Paul said, “I urge you to imitate me” (1 Corin—
dren, for whom I am again in the pains of
thians 4:16) and “You became imitators of us
childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Gala—
and of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
tians 4:19).

Following Jesus’ method, Paul invested in

individuals to make disciples. He too had his
Disciplemaking ensures that the gospel is
sights on the multitudes, but he knew that
embedded deeply in the lives of mature be—
solid transmission of the faith would not oc—
lievers who serve as links to the future. Disci—
cur as readily through speaking to an audi—
pling then is a relationship where we inten—
ence. Paul encouraged Timothy to use a per—
tionally walk alongside a growing disciple or
sonal style to link the gospel to future

disciples in order to encourage, correct and

generations when he exhorted him, “What

challenge them in love to grow toward matu-

you have heard from *me* through many wit—

rity in Christ.

nesses entrust to *faithful* people who will be

This book brings together three ingredients

able to *teach others* as well” (2 Timothy 2:2

necessary to produce maturity in Christ. *Rela-*

NRSV, emphasis added). Paul envisioned an in-

tional vulnerability means honest, self—

tergenerational chain of disciples linked to—

disclosing and confessional relationships that

gether through personal investment. Congive the Holy Spirit permission to remake us.

tained in this verse are generations in the dis—

Second, *the centrality of truth* is emphasized

cipling network, creating the following path:

when people open their lives to one another

Paul ➞ Timothy ➞ faithful people ➞ teach

around the truth of God’s Word and the Lord

others.

begins to rebuild their lives from the inside

We know Paul lived out this admonition,

out. And third, *mutual accountability* is au—

for his letters are filled with the names of

thority given to others to hold us accountable

those to whom he gave himself. Paul reto mutually agreeable standards—“iron sharp—

placed himself in the battle with soldiers like

ening iron.”

Timothy, Titus, Silas (Silvanus), Euodia, Syn—

We will not make disciples through meth—

tyche, Epaphroditus, Priscilla and Aquila.

ods of mass production that attempt shortcuts

They accompanied Paul on his missionary

to maturity. Robert Coleman clarifies the chal—

journeys, were entrusted with ministry re—

lenge: “One must decide where he wants his

sponsibility and became colaborers in the

ministry to count—in the momentary ap—

gospel. Paul attributed the change in their

plause of popular recognition or the reproduc—
lives to the impact of the message of Christ in
tion of his life in a few chosen men who will
his life on them.
carry on his work after he has gone.”4 The
The Bible teaches us not only the message
irony is that focusing on a few takes a long—
of our faith but also the method by which that
range view by multiplying the number of dis—
faith is to be passed on to future generations.
ciples and therefore expands a church’s leader—
We are called to do God’s work in God’s way.
ship base. Though adult education programs
The manner in which the Lord works is incar—
and small group ministries are good tools to
national: life rubs up against life. We pass on
produce maturity, without the focus of small
Christlikeness through intimate modeling.
discipling units a solid foundation is difficult

to build. Keith Phillips’s chart compares the

Year Evangelist

Discipler

numeric difference between one person a day

1

365

2

coming to Christ and one person a year being

2

730

4

discipled to maturity.5

3

1095

8

4

1460

16

5

1825

32

6

2190

64

7

2555

128

8

2920

256

9

3285

512

10

3650

1,024

11

4015

2,048

12

4380

4,096

13

4745

8,192

14

5110

16,384

15

5475

32,768

16

5840

65,536

Catch the vision and invest yourself now!

1A. B. Bruce , *The Training of the Twelve* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1971), p. 13.

2Eugene Peterson , *Traveling Light* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), p. 182.

3Robert E. Coleman , *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1964), p. 21.

4Ibid., p. 37.

5Keith Philips , *The Making of a Disciple* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1981), p. 23.

Reading Study Guide

1. What were Jesus' reasons for choosing twelve to be with him?

What can we learn from this about how to bring people to maturity in Christ?

2. How did Paul emulate Jesus' methodology?

Making Disciples

23

3. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, "I urge you to imitate me" (4:16). Can you see yourself saying or living that? Why or why not?

4. What ingredients are necessary for an effective discipling relationship?

5. What questions do you have about the reading?

6. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism.* Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1964. Summarize the eight-step process outlined in this classic.



2 / Being a Disciple

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 9:23-24

BIBLE STUDY: Luke 5:1-11

READING: Demands My All

Core Truth

Who is a disciple?

A disciple is one who responds in faith and obedience to the gracious call to follow Jesus Christ.

Being a disciple is a lifelong process of dying to self while allowing Jesus Christ to come alive in us.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Being a Disciple

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Memory Verse Study Guide

Jesus never enticed someone to be a disciple under false pretenses or promises. He clearly laid out the conditions and benefits of being one of his followers.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Luke 9:18-27. What is the setting for Jesus' call to discipleship?

2. The memory verses are *Luke 9:23-24.* Copy these verses verbatim.

3. What does it mean to deny self?

4. Illustrate ways from your own experience that you attempt to save your life.

5. Why does losing your life for Jesus actually save it?

6. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

The magnetism and power of the person of Jesus is at the heart of our faith. Note how the following incident portrays the compelling draw as well as the frightening impact of Christ on Peter's life.

1. *Read Luke 5:1-11.* Describe the setting as a backdrop for the dramatic catch of fish (vv. 1-3).

2. What was Jesus trying to demonstrate about himself with the command "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch" (v. 4)?

3. Notice Peter's conflicted reaction to the large catch of fish (v. 8). Why does he respond in this way?

4. What does it mean to catch people (v. 10)?

5. In verse 11 Luke tells us that the disciples "left everything and followed him." What did they give up? (Notice that this happened immediately after a great business success.) **6.** How would you describe the power of the person of Jesus?

7. What questions does this passage raise for you?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Being a Disciple

27

Reading: Demands My All

*Darrell Johnson**

“Life is difficult.” That is the way M. Scott Peck begins his very helpful book *The Road Less Traveled.* 1

Most people do not see this truth. Most people believe that life should be easy. The road most traveled is the road of moaning and grumbling about life’s difficulties. The road less traveled is the road of struggle and effort.

Caesarea Philippi Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say I am?” After receiving various answers, Jesus then asked the disciples, “Who do you say I am?” Peter, speaking for the Twelve, said, “You are the Christ” (v. 29; Mat—

try Jesus had done and said things that had stimulated the question “Who is this man?” In

less traveled is the road of accepting life's diffi—

thew 16:16).

culties and meeting them head-on.

Jesus accepted their answer, but he imme—

What Peck says about life in general is even

diately began to fill those terms—Messiah and

more true about life with Jesus Christ. Disci—

Son of God—with unexpected meaning. "The

pleship is difficult. Following Jesus Christ is

Son of Man," Jesus' favorite way of referring to

costly. In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus

himself, "must suffer many things and be re—

made it very clear that living with him meant

jected by the elders, chief priests and teachers

walking a road less traveled. "Enter through

of the law, and that he must be killed and after

the narrow gate," he said, "for wide is the gate

three days rise again" (v. 31). Jesus knew he

and broad is the road that leads to destruction,

must leave Caesarea Philippi and make his way

and many enter through it. But small is the

to Jerusalem. And he knew that in Jerusalem

gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and

he *must* suffer. And not only suffer but be re—

only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

jected. And not only be rejected but be killed,

Jesus promises to give anyone who will fol—

crucified. And then be raised.

low him abundant life (John 10:10), but he

Peter could not handle Jesus' words.

makes it very clear from the beginning that to

"Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never hap—

follow him is difficult and costly. He calls us to

pen to you!" (Matthew 16:22). Suffering and

follow him on the road less traveled.

death did not fit Peter's concept of the Messiah. The Messiah comes in glory and power.

JESUS' TRUE IDENTITY

Peter also knew the implication for himself

Mark 8:27-35 may be the hardest of the hard

of Jesus' concept of Messiahship. Just as there

sayings of Jesus. Jesus and his disciples were

would be no resurrection for Jesus without

traveling through the villages around Cae—

crucifixion, so there would be no resurrection

sarea Philippi, a city north of the Sea of Gali—

for the disciples without crucifixion. Peter had

lee. Caesarea Philippi was a pluralistic city, a

become the mouthpiece of the tempter, recity of rich and diverse religious and philo—

peating the temptation Jesus had resisted in

sophic heritage. Up to this point in his minis—

the wilderness.

*Some of the readings were written by Darrell Johnson, associate professor of pastoral theology, Regent College, Vancou-ver, B.C.

JESUS' DIFFICULT ROAD LESS TRAVELED

mands of our Lord. The word Mark uses in 8:34

From that day Jesus walked and taught the

means "to resist," "to reject" or "to refuse," in

road less traveled, the road that leads to Eas—

short, to say no.

ter but that goes right through the cross.

The phrase *deny yourself* is used in a num—
There are all kinds of forks in the road offer—
ber of important New Testament texts. For ex—
ing another way, a way around the cross, but
ample, in Mark 14:71 Jesus had been arrested,
each of them eventually ends in a cul-de—
and Peter was standing outside the courtroom
sac. There is only one road to life. This road
warming himself by a fire. Peter was con—
ends on the other side of the empty tomb,
fronted three times and accused of having
and we do not get there except through the
known Jesus. He began to curse and swear,
cross.
saying, “I don’t know this man you’re talking
Jesus gave this hard saying not only to his
about.” Peter denied that he even knew who
disciples but also to the multitudes. William
Jesus was.
Barclay rightly observed, “No one could ever
To deny yourself is to say, “I do not know the

say that he was induced to follow Jesus by false

person.”

pretenses. Jesus never tried to bribe men by

Denying yourself may involve denying

the offer of an easy way.”2 Jesus was up-front

things, but this is not what Jesus is getting at.

with any would-be follower: “If anyone would

Neither does it mean denying your self-worth.

follow me—and I hope you will because I can

Denying yourself does not mean denying your

give life abundantly—this is what you are in

feelings. And although some would say if you

for” (see Mark 8:34-35).

are enjoying following Jesus, something must

Notice he uses the word *if*. That *if* reflects be wrong, in truth it is not about denying

Jesus’ acknowledging our freedom to

yourself happiness. Finally, denying yourself

choose. A certain rich man heard Jesus’ call

does not mean deny your brains.

to discipleship, and he walked away (Mark

To deny yourself means to deny your self—
10:17-22). He heard what he was in for and
lordship. It means saying no to the god who is
judged it too costly. Mark tells us that Jesus
me, to reject the demands of the god who is
looked at the man and loved him (v. 21), still
me, to refuse to obey the claims of the god who
knowing what his choice would be. But
is me. A decisive no—"I do not know Lord
Jesus did not run after him or change the
Me—I do not bow down to him or her any—
terms of the call. Jesus said, "Estimate the
more." Jesus calls us to say no to ourselves so
cost" (Luke 14:28). "You call Me Messiah,
we can say yes to him.4
Christ. You wish to follow Me? If so, you
Take up your cross. This phrase has also
should realize quite clearly where I am go—
been misunderstood and misapplied. Many
ing, and understand that by following Me,
people use it to refer to enduring an illness or

you will be going there too.”

disability, a negative experience or bothersome

Jesus uses three vivid phrases to describe

relationship: “This is the cross I must bear.”

the road less traveled: deny yourself, take up

But Jesus’ words mean much more. “Jesus’

your cross, and lose your life for my sake.

statement must have sounded repugnant to

Deny yourself. This is probably one of the

the crowd and the disciples alike.”5 The phrase

most misunderstood and misapplied com—

would evoke the picture of a criminal forced to

carry a cross beam upon which he was to be

Elliot summarized it well: “He is no fool who

publicly executed.

gives what he cannot keep to gain what he

A criminal picked up his cross only after

cannot lose.”

receiving the death sentence. When a crimi—

That is why Paul told the Philippians, with

nal carried his cross through the streets, for

great joy,

all practical purposes he was a dead man. His

Whatever was to my profit I now con—

life had ended. A man on his way to public

sider loss for the sake of Christ. . . . I

crucifixion “was compelled to abandon all

consider everything a loss compared to

earthly hopes and ambitions.”6 Jesus calls his

the surpassing greatness of knowing

followers to think of ourselves as already

Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I

dead, to bury all our earthly hopes and

have lost all things. I consider them

dreams, to bury the plans and agendas we

rubbish, that I may gain Christ. . . . I

made for ourselves. He will either resurrect

want to know Christ and the power of

our dreams or replace them with dreams and

his resurrection and the fellowship of

plans of his own.

sharing in his sufferings, becoming like

This is a hard saying, but a liberating saying

him in his death, and so, somehow, to

as well. Human bondage in all its forms is the

attain to the resurrection from the dead.

result of being our own gods. Freedom comes

(Philippians 3:7-11)

when we lay down the ill-gotten, false crown,

when we say no, when we live as though the

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

gods who are us have already died.

What are some of the signs that we have not

Lose your life for my sake. Herein lies the

yet met Jesus' challenge head-on? The signs

paradox of the road less traveled: we finally

abound in churches today and manifest

find ourselves when we lose ourselves for

themselves as jealousy—not having what

Jesus' sake. And how do we lose our lives for

others have; competition—trying to achieve

him? By investing all that we are and have for

more than the next person; argumentative

him and his gospel. By saying to him, “Here

spirits—needing to have our own way; overis my home, my checkbook, my talents and

sensitivity—becoming resentful when not

gifts, my brain, my heart, my hands, my feet,

recognized for our work or wanting it to be

my mouth. Here—it’s all yours. Use it all to

noticed that we’ve lost it all for Christ. We

glorify yourself and further your purpose on

believe that we deserve the things we have—

earth.”

the nice homes and new cars. We plan our fu—

This a risky thing to say according to the

ture without reference to the kingdom of

world’s wisdom. But in the end, when history

God and spend the resources we have to imis completed, what will really matter? Noth—

prove our own kingdom. We use the gifts of

ing except the kingdom of God. The only in—

God to advance our own name, our own

vestments that pay off in the end are the in—

reputation.

vestments made in the kingdom now. Those

But “unless a kernel of wheat falls to the

who walk the road less traveled, the road of

ground and dies, it remains only a single seed.

losing everything for Jesus’ sake, end up

But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John

gaining everything that finally matters. Jim

12:24). The road to Easter goes through Good

Friday. The road to new life goes through the

through crucifixion. Jesus calls us to walk that

death of the old. The road to resurrection goes

road, the road he walked.

1M. Scott Peck , *The Road Less Traveled* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 15.

2William Barclay , *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), p. 201.

3F. F. Bruce , *The Hard Sayings of Jesus* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1983), p. 151.

4Bill Lane , *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 307.

5Ibid., p. 207.

6Bruce , *Hard Sayings*, p. 150.

Reading Study Guide

1. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement from Peck: “Life is difficult. . . . Once we truly see this truth, we transcend it”? Why?

2. Why was it difficult for Peter to accept that Jesus must die at the hands of the religious leaders?

Why is this still difficult to accept?

3. The reading identifies a number of things that denying yourself does not mean. Which speak to you and why?

4. According to the author, to “take up our cross” means that our life is already finished. What does this mean, and how do you react to it?

5. How do we find our lives in losing them?

6. The reading concludes by identifying some signs that we have not met Jesus’ radical claims head-on. Which of these are issues for you?

7. What questions do you have about the reading?

8. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Hall, Bill. “Biblical Foundations of Discipleship.” Chapter 1 of *The Complete Book of Discipleship.*

Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2006.



3 / Quiet Time

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 1:1-3

BIBLE STUDY: John 15:1-11

READING: If Quiet Time Is New to You

Core Truth

How does a disciple grow in Christ on a daily basis?

Just as Jesus went to a "solitary place" to meet with his Father (Mark 1:35), so a disciple should daily pull away from the busyness of life for a quiet time, a personal rendezvous with the Lord and Savior.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Quiet Time

33

Memory Verse Study Guide

Healthy fruit in our lives is the byproduct of well-nourished and cultivated roots. If we sink our inner life deep into the truth of God's Word, life will blossom in us.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Psalm 1. In what ways are the wicked contrasted with the righteous?

2. The memory verses are *Psalm 1:1-3.* Copy these verses verbatim.

3. The blessed man is first defined by what he does not do. What is the blessed man to avoid?

4. What does it mean to delight in the law of the Lord?

5. What comparison is made in verse 3?

What does this image teach us about how fruit grows and is nurtured in our lives?

6. How would you define *prospers* (v. 3)?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



34

D i s c i p l e s h i p E s s e n t i a l s

Inductive Bible Study Guide

Jesus also selects an organic image to describe the kind of relationship that we are to have with him if we are to bear fruit. Jesus says that he is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:5).

1. *Read John 15:1-11*. The word *remain* defines the connection between the vine and the branches (vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10). According to these verses, what does it mean to remain?

2. What do we do to remain in the vine?

3. Our purpose, according to Jesus, is to bear fruit (v. 8). What is the nature of the fruit that is to be produced through our lives?

4. Pruning is a necessary process in order to produce more fruit (v. 2). What does the Lord use to prune us of the "dead" branches in our lives?

5. Jesus issues a warning that those branches that do not remain are cut off, thrown into the fire and burned (vv. 2, 6). What does Jesus mean by this?

6. What does Jesus mean when he says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (v. 5)?

7. Jesus states in verse 11 that the intent of these instructions is to implant his joy in us and bring it to completion. What was the joy of Jesus that he wanted us to have?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Quiet Time

35

Reading: If Quiet Time Is New to You

Adapted from Lord of the Universe, Lord of My Life.1

A daily quiet time is a private meeting each day
(Hebrews 13:15). It may astonish us to realize
between a disciple and the Lord Jesus Christ. It
that God is seeking people who will do just that:
should not be impromptu. We can commune
“They are the kind of worshipers the Father
with the Lord on a spur-of-the-moment basis
seeks” (John 4:23). One indicator of the depth
many times each day, but a quiet time is a pe—
of our relationship with the Lord is our willing—
riod of time we set aside in advance for the sole
ness to spend time alone with him not prima—
purpose of a personal meeting with our Savior
rily for what we get out of it but for what it
and Lord.
means to him as well.

A daily quiet time consists of at least three
We receive benefits. The psalmist had this
components.
in mind when he wrote, “As the deer pants for

• Reading the Bible with the intent not

streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O

just to study but to meet Christ through

God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living

the written Word.

God" (Psalm 42:1-2). We benefit from a quiet

• Meditating on what we have read so that

time in several ways.

biblical truth begins to saturate our

• *Information.* We learn about Christ and

minds, emotions and wills. "Meditate on

his truths when we spend time with him

[the Book of the Law] day and night"

and his Word. Before we can obey him

(Joshua 1:8).

we need to know what he commands.

• Praying to (communing with) God:

Before we can understand what life is all

praising, thanking and adoring him as

about we need to know what he has

well as confessing our sins, asking him

taught.

to supply our needs and interceding for

• *Encouragement.* At times we get dis—

others.

couraged. There is no better source for

inspiration than the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

• *Power.* Even when we know what we

Why should we have a daily quiet time? There

should be and do we lack the strength to

are at least three reasons.

be that kind of person and do those kinds

It pleases the Lord. Even if there were no

of works. Christ is the source of power,

other consequences, this would be sufficient

and meeting with him is essential to our

reason for private daily communion with God.

receiving it.

Of all the Old Testament sacrifices there was

• *Pleasure.* Being alone with the person

only one that was daily—the continual burnt

we love is enjoyable, and as we spend

offering. What was its purpose? Not to atone for

time with Christ we experience a joy un—

sin but to provide pleasure (a sweet-smelling

available anywhere else.

aroma) to the Lord. The New Testament directs

Jesus had a quiet time. "Very early in the

us to continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to

morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up,

God, "the fruit of lips that confess his name"

left the house and went off to a solitary place,

where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). If our Lord

Third, plan ahead. Go to bed early enough

found it necessary to meet privately with his

so that you can awaken in a refreshed condi—

Father, surely his example gives us a good reation to meet Christ. The battle for the daily

son to do likewise.

quiet time is often lost the night before. Stay—

The question is whether we will be medio—
ing up too late hampers our alertness, making
cre Christians or growing Christians. A major
us bleary-eyed and numb as we meet the Lord,
factor in determining the answer is whether
or else we oversleep and skip the quiet time al—
or not we develop the discipline of a daily
together.
quiet time.
Fourth, make your quiet time truly a quiet
time. Psalm 46:10 speaks to this: “Be still, and

HOW TO BEGIN

know that I am God.” Turn off your radio or
Once you desire to begin a daily quiet time,
television. Find as quiet a place as possible and
what can you do to start?
make sure your location and position are con—
First, remember the principle of self-disci—
ducive to alertness. Get out of bed. Sit erect. If
pline: do what you should do when you should,
you are stretched out in bed or reclining in a

the way you should, where you should and for
chair that is too comfortable you might be
the correct reasons. In other words, self-disci—
lulled into drowsiness.
pline is the wise use of your personal resources
Fifth, pray as you start your time with God.
(such as time and energy).
Ask the Holy Spirit to control your investment
Second, set aside time in advance for your
of time and to guide your praising, confessing,
quiet time. A daily quiet time should take
thanking, adoring, interceding, petitioning
place each day at the time when you are most
and meditating, as well as to help you get into
alert. For some this will be in the morning,
the Bible. Open your mind and heart to Scrip—
perhaps before breakfast; for others it will be
ture.
another time of the day or evening. Though it
Sixth, keep a notebook handy. Write down
is not a hard and fast rule, the morning is a

ideas you want to remember and questions you

preferable time since it begins before the rush

can’t answer. Expression deepens impres—

of thoughts and activities of the day. An or—

sion—and writing is a good mode of expres—

chestra does not tune its instruments after the

sion.

concert.

Last, share your plans and goals with a

How much time should you spend? This

friend. Tell him or her you are trying to de—

will vary from person to person, but a good

velop the discipline of a daily quiet time. Replan to follow is to start with ten minutes a

quest his or her prayer that God will enable

day and build up to approximately thirty min—

you to succeed with your objectives.

utes. This regularly scheduled chunk of time

can be a major factor in strengthening self-

WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE

discipline. Here’s a suggestion: pause while

Following are some common problems that
reading this and make a decision—now—
are often encountered along the way.
about when and for how long, beginning to-
I know I ought to have a daily quiet time,
morrow, you will meet the Lord Jesus Christ
but I don't want to. Solution: Ask the Holy
for a daily quiet time.
Spirit to plant within you the desire to have a
Quiet Time

daily quiet time. Nobody else can do this for
ferent form of Bible study.
you. You cannot generate the desire, and no
There are two major reasons it is so difficult
other person can produce it for you.
to develop the discipline of a daily quiet time.
I don't feel like having a daily quiet time to-
First is the influence of the flesh. Keep in mind
day. Solution: Have your quiet time anyway
that your old nature is opposed to daily quiet

and honestly admit to Christ that you don’t
time (and to every other discipline that would
feel like meeting him but that you know he
please Christ; see Galatians 5:16-17). Pray that
nevertheless is worth the investment of your
the Holy Spirit will enable your new nature to
time. Ask him to improve your feelings and try
overcome your old nature in this battle.
to figure out why you feel this way. Then work
The second reason is resistance by Satan.
on the factors that produce such failings.
The devil opposes your every effort to please
My mind wanders. Solution: Ask the Holy
Christ. His strategy is to rob you of daily quiet
Spirit to give you strength to set your mind on
time joy, to complicate your time schedule by
Christ and his Word. Use your self-discipline to
keeping you up late at night and making it
direct your mind so that it wanders less and
hard for you to get up in the morning, to make
less. If you are in a quiet place, singing, pray—

you drowsy during your time with the Lord, to
ing and reading out loud will give a sense of di—
make your mind wander, and otherwise to dis—
alogue. Your mind will wander less when you
rupt your meeting with Christ. Ask the Holy
write things down, like making an outline for
Spirit to restrain the devil.
prayer or study notes while reading the Bible.
I miss too many quiet times. Solution: Ask

DO IT NOW!

the Lord to strengthen your desire and to give
Plan now for your daily quiet time tomor—
you power to discipline your use of time.
row—and every tomorrow. If you miss a morn—
Share with another Christian friend your de—
ing, do not quit. Deny the devil the pleasure of
sire to have a daily quiet time and allow your
defeating you. Ask the Lord to forgive you for
friend to hold you accountable for it. Don’t let
missing the meeting and to help you make it
an overactive conscience or the accusations

next time. You will doubtless miss several

of the devil play on your guilt. Confess that

times, and it will take repeated beginnings be—

you have failed to keep your appointment

fore you succeed in developing this discipline.

with Jesus, ask his forgiveness and renew

Indeed, it takes some people months to mature

your relationship.

to the point where they develop the habit of a

My daily quiet time is a drag. Solution:

daily quiet time. For some it is a lifelong battle.

Pray that the joy of the Lord would be reIn any case, don't quit when you miss. With

stored to your private meeting with Christ

God's help determine that you will grow to be

(Psalm 51:12). Put some variety into your apa committed disciple who meets Christ regu—

proach. Sing a hymn for a change, or try a dif—

larly in meaningful daily quiet times.

1 *Lord of the Universe, Lord of My Life* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), pp. 7-12.

Reading Study Guide

1. What is a quiet time, and what elements should be included?

2. Of the three reasons listed for a quiet time, which is the most compelling to you?

3. Of the practical suggestions listed, which ones give you the most difficulty? Which do you find helpful?

4. Which of the problems have you experienced? Are the suggestions helpful?

5. What questions do you have about the reading?

6. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you?

Going Deeper

Foster, Richard. "The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation." Introduction to *Celebration of Discipline.* 20th anniversary edition. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Munger, Robert Boyd. *My Heart—Christ's Home*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1954.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

BIBLE STUDY: Psalm 119:1-16

READING: Inductive Bible Study

Core Truth

What place should the Bible have in a disciple's daily quiet time?

Because the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the uniquely inspired revelation of God and the standard of truth in all matters of faith and practice, a portion of each day should be set aside to read, study and meditate on God's Word. The Bible is to the spirit what food is to the body.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

These verses are part of a classic New Testament passage that conveys both the source and the value of the Bible.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read 2 Timothy 3. How is Paul's instruction about the nature of Scripture a contrast to the nonbelieving world that Paul describes?

2. The memory verses are *2 Timothy 3:16-17.* Copy the verses verbatim.

3. Paul says that "all Scripture is God-breathed," or inspired. How is the inspiration of Scripture different from an "inspired" speech or writing?

4. How is Scripture useful in these ways?

Teaching

Rebuking

Correcting

Training

5. How does Scripture equip us for every good work?

6. Studying Scripture can simply increase our information. How do we move from information to transformation?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Bible Study

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Inductive Bible Study Guide

Psalm 119 is the longest of the psalms and is a celebration of God's law. The value of God's law is stated succinctly: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (v. 105). By reading the first sixteen verses we will see what our attitude should be toward God's Word and its place in our lives.

1. *Read Psalm 119:1-16.* What are the different words and phrases for the law of God?

2. What are we to do regarding the law of God?

3. What will be the results in our lives if we do these things?

4. Verse 11 gives one reason for memorizing Scripture. What is the reason stated here, and what other reasons come to mind?

5. What questions do you have about this passage?

6. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: Inductive Bible Study

Inductive Bible study uses the scientific

a. Notice a description of God, Jesus

method of investigation. We start with the data

and/or the Holy Spirit.

in the biblical text and from that draw conclu—

b. Consider how (or if) the character

sions about meaning and application. The pro—

or personality of the author relates

cess of study begins with the six investigative

to the passage.

questions that a good reporter would use in

c. Notice any supernatural beings

gathering information to write a story—Who?

mentioned.

What? Where? When? How? Why? Once the

d. Notice any human characters men—

truth has been found, its meaning can be ex—

tioned.

plored and application to our lives is possible.

2. *What* is happening?

The following outline provides much detail—

List key verbs, commands given by

more than you could ever follow in one

and to whom, promises, conditions

study—but gives a good overview of the three—

implied in text or context, local cus—

step study process. See page 44 for a sample

toms mentioned, flow of conversa—

study using this outline.

tion.

3. *Where* do the events occur?

HOW TO PREPARE

How many miles from one place to

First of all, pray, asking the Lord to quiet your

another? Is this place significant for

heart and to make you receptive to the truth

other events?

that you will hear.

4. *When* do the events occur?

a. How long does each event take?

I. Observation (What does it say?) If we take

b. What can be learned from the men—

obedience to God seriously then we must

tion of rulers, ages of characters,

find out what God is saying. The first step is

lapse of time, genealogies, cultural

to observe exactly what is in the text before

differences?

we jump to our own preconceived ideas.

c. Are there clues about the historical

A. Overview

background or season of year?

1. Skim material with a view to its main

5. *Why* do the events occur?

themes.

6. *How* do the events happen?

2. Note context of passage and back-

C. Summary

ground if necessary.

1. Write down the main thrust of the

3. Reread in a different translation and

passage. This may become the main

look for differences.

thought that you want to develop.

4. Look for main thought divisions—

2. Make notes on unsolved problems as

read the passage in paragraphs.

you go through the text. These may be

solved in the process of understand—

B. Ask Six Investigative Questions

ing, or you may have to consult refer—

1. *Who* are the main characters, and

ence works such as commentaries,

how are they described?

study Bibles, dictionaries or atlases.

Bible Study

43

II. Interpretation (What does it mean?)

2. What requires a change of thought?

The aim of interpretation is to bring out

How can I make that change?

the meaning of the passage for the people

3. Where do I need a change in my be—

to whom it was written and for us today.

havior?

A. Definitions

4. What can I do now?

1. What do the terms, phrases and sen-

Set long-and short-range goals for

tences mean?

behavior. Have a plan. Break down

2. What are modern equivalents?

your change of behavior or things

3. List any surprising terms used, as

you want to know into steps. For ex—

well as figures of speech—similes,

ample: get counseling, get sugges—

metaphors, puns, plays on words, hy—

tions for reading, set goals in behav—

perbole.

ior change, ask someone to hold you

B. Relationships

accountable.

1. Why this phrase, word or idea?

C. Assert your will.

2. Why did the author say it here?

D. What principles are relevant if the his-

3. What relationship does one thought

torical situation is no longer relevant?

have to another?

E. Apply your knowledge to particular areas.

C. Implications

1. Attitude and obedience to God; atti-

1. What is the full significance of the

tude toward self.

statements?

2. Situations and relationships in family

2. Beware of spiritualizing or allegoriz-

life.

ing.

3. Coworkers, employers, subordinates,

fellow students.

III. Application (What does it mean to me?)

4. Teaching, practices, relationships in

A. Cultivate a voice of the Spirit.

your home church and in other

B. Apply the main point to your life.

churches, missionary work.

1. What has already been a part of my

5. National, political, sociological and

thinking? What is new to me?

economic questions.

Sample Bible Study

Luke 18:1-8

Observe

Interpret

Apply

What does it say?

What does it mean?

What does it mean to me?

(who, what, when, where,why how)

Who are the main characters,

Raise appropriate questions

Confession—I too easily lose my

and how are they described?

and draw conclusions about

focus of attention when I am praying

1. Judge

the meaning of the text.

for people to come to Christ who have

been resistant for a long time.

• did not fear God

1. *Why does Jesus choose an unjust*

• did not care about people

judge to make a point about the

Attitude of obedience—Prayerful

• was unjust

justice of God? Is the unjust judge

intercession over long-term needs.

2. Widow

being compared to or contrasted

Pray for my sister daily for the relief

with God? It appears that the point

of her chronic back pain.

• kept bothering the judge to

is that if even an unjust judge will

render justice

render justice because of the

3. God

persistence of the widow, how

• brings about justice to his

much more will a God who cares.

chosen ones

2. *Why does Jesus choose a widow as*

• listens to those who cry out to

the protagonist? Widows were

him

powerless. All they had was the

• renders justice quickly

power of persistence, no other

leverage.

What is happening?

3. *What is the main point of the*

1. List key words or phrases.

parable? To pray and not lose

• parable, pray, not lose heart,

heart. To remain in faithful prayer

justice, faith

to the end, until Jesus returns.

2. Promise

4. *What is the point that Jesus wants*

• God will bring justice quickly to

us to learn about God? God is

those who cry out to him

eager to render justice and he

3. Flow of conversation

hears the cries of his people.

• widow keeps coming to the

judge

• judge refuses to give justice

• she keeps bothering him, and he

finally renders justice because

he is getting worn out

Why is this story told?

1. To show us that

• we should always pray and not

lose heart

• God is eager to grant justice to

those who cry out to him

2. It makes us think: Will the Son of

Man find faith when he returns?

Bible Study

45

Reading Study Guide

1. What is the inductive method?

2. Why is it considered a scientific method?

3. What is the difference between observation, interpretation and application?

4. This method can be greatly simplified for daily use. What do you notice from this study method that could be helpful in getting the most from a passage of Scripture?

5. Practice this method by creating your own three-column guide on Luke 11:5-13. Review the instructions to see the items that you will want to draw from the text. Share your findings with your partner(s). What issues did this raise for you?

Going Deeper

Watson, David. “The Word of God.” Chap. 7 in *Called and Committed: World-Changing Discipleship.* Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.



5 / Prayer

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Matthew 6:9-13

BIBLE STUDY: Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8

READING: How Do We Pray?

Core Truth

What is prayer, and how can a disciple pray effectively?

Prayer is transparent dialogue. It is a conversation with God in which we address him and in quiet are addressed by him. There are four types of prayer, which are summarized by the acronym ACTS.

***A*doration:** appreciating God for who he is apart from what he has done for us.

***C*onfession:** acknowledging to God our specific sin and seeking his pardon.

***T*hanksgiving:** appreciating God for his benefit to us.

***S*upplication:** interceding for ourselves or others according to God's will.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Prayer

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Memory Verse Study Guide

There is no better place to begin to learn how to pray than to study the prayer that was a response to Jesus' disciple's request, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).

1. *Putting it in context:* The Lord's Prayer is set in Matthew 6, where Jesus contrasts true and false ways of showing devotion to God. How is the Lord's Prayer an expression of true love for God?

2. The memory verses are *Matthew 6:9-13.* Copy these verses verbatim.

3. The first petition is that the Father's name be hallowed. Why does Jesus start here?

4. What scope of subjects does the Lord's Prayer cover?

5. Notice the different types of prayer in the Lord's Prayer. What seems to be missing from the types listed?

6. Why is this a helpful model for prayer?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



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Inductive Bible Study Guide

These two passages of Scripture help to interpret one another. This study weaves them together, so be ready to flip back and forth between them. We will discover how Luke 11 helps explain Jesus'

unusual comparison of God to an unrighteous judge in Luke 18.

1. *Read Luke 11:5-13; 18:1-8.* What is the point of Jesus' stories about prayer in 11:5-8 and 18:1-5? How do the widow and the friend illustrate this point?

2. What position do the friend and the widow have in relationship to their "benefactors"? What does this teach us about the posture of prayer?

3. What do these passages teach us about God? Is God a reluctant giver who must be cajoled? Use these passages to show that God is generous.

4. What attitude of prayer is Jesus calling us to have in 11:9 and 18:1, 8?

5. Why does God want us to ask him for things when he already knows our needs?

6. Can God's actions be influenced by our prayers? Why or why not?

7. What questions do you have about this passage?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Prayer

Reading: How Do We Pray?

Prayer is transparent dialogue. It is the way we
ship and fellowship and openness, home
have an intimate conversation with the Cre—
to intimacy and acceptance and affirma—
ator of the universe and the Redeemer of our
tion.2
lives, who is wild about spending time with us.
Prayer is a relationship with the One who
Prayer represents the place of greatest safety
has already declared us his beloved children
where we can pour out our hearts in an
and who wants to be close to us. So what
unedited fashion, much like we would to a dear
should we talk about in prayer? Just as conver—
friend who accepts us as we are, warts and all.
sations with close friends have topics, so there
Though the following poem is about friend—
is a dialogue we can have with our Lord. It is
ship, it expresses our experience of prayer as well.
the subject matter of prayer, the parts of the

Oh, the comfort—the inexpressible

conversation, that we will examine here. Using

comfort of feeling safe with a person,

the acronym ACTS introduced earlier, we'll dis—

Having neither to weigh thoughts,

cuss the four basic parts of prayer: adoration,

Nor measure words—but pouring them

confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

All right out—just as they are—

Chaff and grain together—

ADORATION

Certain that a faithful hand will

The first movement of the heart in prayer is

Take and sift them—

adoration. It is helpful to distinguish adoration

Keep what is worth keeping—

from thanksgiving. Adoration is appreciating

And with the breath of kindness

who God is himself, whereas thanksgiving is

Blow the rest away.1

appreciating God for what he has done for us.

Prayer is a come-as-you-are affair. It is

Ole Hallesby captures this nuance. “When I

God’s welcome into his heart. Richard Foster

give thanks, my thoughts circle about myself

begins his wonderful book *Prayer: Finding*

to some extent. But in praise my soul ascends

Your Heart’s True Home with this winsome into self-forgetting adoration, seeing and prais—

vitation:

ing only the majesty and power of God, His

grace and redemption.”3

The Lord is inviting you—and me—to

Adoration lifts us out of ourselves to behold

come home, to come home to where we

the wonder and beauty of God. The psalms, the

belong, to come home to that for which

worship book of the Bible, are effusive and de—

we were created. His arms are stretched

monstrative in their praise.

out wide to receive us. His heart is enlarged to take us in. For too long we have

I will exalt you, my God the King,

been in the far country: a country of

I will praise your name for ever and

noise and hurry and crowds, a country of

ever.

climb and push and shove, a country of

Every day I will praise you

frustration and fear and intimidation.

and extol your name for ever and ever.

And he welcomes us home: home to se—

Great is the LORD and most worthy of

renity and peace and joy, home to friend—

praise;

his greatness no one can fathom.

fection, we begin to see how contaminated our

(Psalm 145:1-3)

hearts are.

One way to practice adoration is to select an

In Greek, *confess* means “to agree with.” In

attribute of God and write in your journal the

confessing to God we are agreeing with God
fruits of your imagination. For example, some
about what he sees. By making confession a
ideas might include: God is sovereign—that
regular part of our conversation with the Lord
means that not one molecule in the universe is
we are giving him permission to show us our
out of God's control; God is omniscient—
lives through his eyes. Our prayer is "Lord, let
never will God have to slap his forehead and
me see me as you see me."
say, "Oh boy, I forgot all about that"; God is im—
Confession is the courageous and honest
manent—like air, God is the very breath in
admission that we have violated God's holy law
which we live and move and have our being.
and are in desperate need of forgiveness. King
Isn't it rather egocentric of the Lord to want
David ran from God for almost a year after his
us to fill our minds and hearts with thoughts
adulterous affair with Bathsheba and his

of him? If we see praise only as giving God
treacherous abuse of power in having her hus—
compliments, then we miss the everyday na—
band killed. Finally the prophet Nathan un—
ture of praise. Enjoyment spontaneously over—
masked David's deceit and said, "You are the
flows in praise. We go to an enjoyable movie
man" (2 Samuel 12:7). That is when David
and speak its praises. When my wife and I take
came clean. Psalm 51 records his penitence.
a Sunday-afternoon drive on a spectacular day,
Have mercy on me, O God,
we keep saying to each other, "Look at that."
according to your unfailing love;
Praise not only expresses our joy, it also com—
according to your great compassion
pletes it.
blot out my transgressions. . . .
Why does God want us to praise him? Not
For I know my transgressions,
only because he deserves it, but for what we

and my sin is always before me.

get out of it. What is the greatest thing God

Against you, you only, have I sinned

can give us? More of himself. “Praise is the

and done what is evil in your sight.

sweet echo of his own excellence in the hearts

(Psalm 51:1, 3-4)

of his people.”4

The idea of confession brings to mind a confusing issue. How do we distinguish between

CONFESSION

Satan’s accusations and God’s conviction? We

When we fill our hearts with the glory of God

often forget that we have an enemy who is

and pray as Jesus taught us, “Hallowed be your

called the “accuser of the brethren” and who

name,” the natural movement of our hearts is

wants us to wallow in our guilt. This enemy

to see the darkness of our lives in light of his

has plenty of ammunition with which to work.

radiance. In our former house the walls were

His objective is to discourage us about the
painted “antique” white, which to my eyes
progress we are making in our relationship
looked pretty white until pure white was
with Christ, perhaps through nagging mes—
placed next to it. It was only then that I could
sages such as “You call yourself a Christian yet
see how tainted was the antique white. When
you are still dealing with the same things.
we measure our lives against God’s moral per—
Come on, who are you kidding?” We begin to

draw the conclusion that we are unworthy to
gone, the gulls perch on his hat and linger.
be God’s child. These weights of discourage—
This weekly offering to the sea gulls was his
ment are not of God but are the enemy’s ways
way of giving thanks.
of taking us out of the battle.
The man is Eddie Rickenbacker. In October

Yet God’s convicting Spirit is incisive, fo—
1942 he was flying in his B-17 on a mission to
cused and piercing. The searchlight of the
deliver a message to General Douglas Mac—
Holy Spirit unmasks specific sins, and we are
Arthur when he went down in the Pacific. All
then led to godly sorrow and grief over how we
eight crew members escaped into life rafts. Af—
violated our relationship with the God who
ter eight days, all their rations were gone. All
claimed our heart. From there we are led to re—
means of survival had been exhausted. In a
pentance, which means a change of behavior.
weakened state, the men shared in an after—
And finally—and immediately—the Lord
noon devotional service and then tried to rest.
cleanses our spirit so that inwardly we feel
As Rickenbacker was dozing with his hat over
fresh and renewed like the air after the first
his eyes, he felt something land on his head.
rains of spring.

He knew it was a sea gull, which meant food.

Satan causes us to wallow in unnamed

The crew survived. God had sent a sea gull

guilt, but God’s conviction is focused and

hundreds of miles from shore to their rescue.

meant to lead us to restoration. Any demean—

Rickenbacker never forgot to say thanks.

ing messages and put-downs are not from the

We so easily lose our sense of gratitude and

Lord but are from our overactive conscience or

forget the good things the Lord has done for

the one who wants us to believe lies about our—

us. Thanksgiving is the cultivation of a mem—

selves. There is no condemnation for those

ory. It is prayerfully listing the good that is in

who are in Christ Jesus.

our life.

THANKSGIVING

SUPPLICATION

When we truly understand the rescue that God

Supplication means to ask with intensity, ear—

has performed in snatching us from the guilt
nestness and perseverance, to ask and keep on
and condemnation of our sin, then we will re—
asking. In the context of prayer Jesus says,
alize that the fundamental motive of Christian
“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you
living is thanksgiving. One of the signs of the
will find; knock and the door will be opened to
filling of the Holy Spirit, says Paul, is “always
you” (Luke 11:9). Supplication can be broken
giving thanks to God the Father for every—
down into intercession for others and petitions
thing, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”
for ourselves.
(Ephesians 5:20).
Intercession is to stand between two parties
An old man walks alone on a Florida beach
and plead the case of one to another. In this
carrying a bucket of shrimp. He makes his way
case it is to stand between God and another and
to the end of the pier, and soon a mass of danc—

plead to God on the other's behalf. Intercession
ing dots fills the sky. The evening silence gives
is perhaps the most unselfish act of love, be—
way to screeching birds. For half an hour the
cause the person who is blessed by God seldom
man stands surrounded by the birds until the
knows who has been praying for him or her.
bucket is empty. But even when the food is
God has given us the great privilege of bringing

others into his presence through prayer, just as
(John 4:10). John Piper says that a prayerless
the four friends carried the paralytic into the
Christian is like a bus driver trying to push his
presence of Jesus in Mark 2:1-12.
bus out of a rut by himself because he doesn't
And how should we pray intercessory
know that Clark Kent is on board. If we knew,
prayers? As a point of comparison we can place
we would ask.5

the content of our prayers against Paul's inter—

This leads us back to where we began.

cession in Ephesians 1:16-19, 3:16-19, and Co—

Prayer is an invitation into the heart of the Fa—

lossians 1:9-12. While we often focus on mate—

ther. Jesus says that even evil fathers give good

rial needs such as healing, job problems or

gifts to their children when they ask. Would a

financial matters, Paul was concerned that

father give a scorpion to a son who asks for a

God would be found sufficient, that the knowl—

fish? "How much more will your Father in

edge of God's will would fill our lives, that we

heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask

would be surrounded and inundated by the

him" (Luke 11:13). Prayer needs no special relove of God.

ligious language. We are invited to know and

Our failure to ask is a failure to know Jesus

carry on a transparent conversation with the

well. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the

One who accepts us as we are. Let your conver—

well, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is

sation be marked by adoration, confession,

that asks you for a drink, you would have asked

thanksgiving and supplication.

him and he would have given you living water”

1Dinah Maria Mulock Craik, “Friendship.”

2Richard Foster , *Prayer: Finding the Hearts’ True Home* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), p. 1.

3Ole Hallesby , *Prayer* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), p. 141.

4John Piper , *Desiring God* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1986), p. 41.

5Ibid., p. 133.

Reading Study Guide

1. What is adoration?

2. What makes God worthy of worship?

3. What is confession?

Why does it follow adoration?

4. What is the connection between thanksgiving and remembering?

5. What is the biblical definition of intercessory prayer?

How does this contrast with how we often pray for one another?

6. Why is prayer so difficult?

7. What questions do you have about this reading?

8. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Foster, Richard. “Prayer.” Chap. 3 in *Celebration of Discipline.* 20th anniversary ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.



6 / Worship

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Revelation 4:11

BIBLE STUDY: Revelation 4—5

READING: Handling the Trauma of Holiness

Core Truth

What activity defines the primary purpose of the church?

The functions of the church have been variously defined as teaching, fellowship, outreach and worship (see Acts 2:42-47). Of these important functions, honoring God through worship is the church’s primary purpose, because it is our eternal vocation.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Worship

55

Memory Verse Study Guide

In Revelation 4 we are brought into the throne room of God. His throne blazes with glory and beauty and is surrounded by creatures who continually praise the Lord, saying, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty” (v. 8).

1. *Putting it in context:* Beginning with Revelation 4:1, note the elements of worship in this heavenly scene.

2. The memory verse is *Revelation 4:11*. Copy the verse verbatim.

3. Why is God declared worthy?

4. What does it mean that God is worthy?

5. What does it mean for God to *receive* glory and honor and power?

6. What do you think are the benefits to us when we worship God?

7. How has this verse spoken to you this week?



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Inductive Bible Study Guide

Revelation 4—5 opens a window on the continuous activity around the throne of God. Through this window we get a glimpse of our eternal vocation.

1. *Read Revelation 4—5.* Describe your impressions of the heavenly scene around the throne of God (4:1-11).

2. What characteristics are ascribed to God (4:1-11)?

3. What images are used in chapter 5 to describe Jesus?

What do you make of the sudden shift of images for Jesus from “the Lion of the tribe of Judah”

(5:5) to “the Lamb looking as if it had been slain” (5:6)?

4. Why is Jesus considered worthy to open the scroll (5:9-10, 12)?

5. What do these chapters teach us about the worship of God?

6. What questions do you have about this passage?

7. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Worship

Reading: Handling the Trauma of Holiness

The Key to Authentic Worship of the Living God

Darrell Johnson

The church is a caring community—a serving,
classic example of this. The one occasion that
studying, praying, healing community. But
George Jefferson, Archie's black neighbor, had
what is the fundamental purpose of the
dinner at Archie's, Archie asks him, "Are you
church? If it is true that "the chief end of man
an atheist?"
is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever" (West—
George: "No, I believe in God."
minster Shorter Catechism), then fundamen—
Archie: "That's nice . . . Interestin', too. I
tally the church is a worshiping community.
mean how the black people went from wor—
Isaiah's experience in the year of King Uz—
shiping snakes and beads and wooden idols . . .
ziah's death brings us to the heart of authentic
all the way up to our God."
worship. Two factors make for vital worship of
George: "What do you mean, your God?"

God: the presence of God and the God who is

Archie: “Well, he’s a white man’s God, ain’t

present. The awareness that God is present and

he?”

a recognition of who this God is make for

George: “That ain’t necessarily so. What

meaningful worship. In other words, authen—

makes you think God isn’t black?”

tic worship of God is a function of our affirma—

Archie: “Because God created man in his

tion that he is here and our understanding of

own image, and you’ll note I ain’t black.”

who he is. The vitality and relevance of our

George: “Well, don’t complain to me about

worship is directly related to our view of God.

that.”

The depth and authenticity of our worship

Archie: “Look, you seen the pictures of God,

of God flows automatically from our concept of

ain’t you? That Dago artist painted him on the

God—from who we think he is. That seems

ceiling in Rome . . . remember?”

straightforward enough, doesn’t it? All we need

George: “You mean that white Dago artist

to do is think correctly about the God who is

painted him.”

here with us. However, two “laws of the soul”

Archie: “Ev’ry picture I ever seen of God, he

militate against knowing God as he really is.

was white.”

George: “Maybe you were looking at the

negatives.”

First, we tend to form our own conceptions of

Every human being has that same ten—

God. All too often we create a god who is sim—

dency—to form our own conceptions of who

ply the projection of the God we wish existed.

God is.

We tend to create God in our own image.

Fortunately for us, God desires that we

A number of years ago Spencer Marsh wrote

come to know him as he really is. Out of that

a delightful book entitled *God, Man and Archie*

desire to be known, God has revealed him-

Bunker. 1 The author shows how Archie Bun—

self—in creation, in the life and history of Isker's God acts and feels very much like Archie,

rael, in Scripture and most completely in Jesus

a white racist, acts and feels. Marsh recounts a

Christ. This leads us, however, to the second

tendency of our hearts: we often suppress

(Revelation 4:8).

God's revelation of himself.

To encounter the living God in his holiness

is a deeply frightening experience, as Isaiah

WE REFUSE TO LOOK AT GOD

shows us. The holy God constitutes a threat to

When God does reveal himself as he really is,

humans. We either deal with that threat in all

we either ignore what we see or repress it. We

its trauma or ignore or suppress it, and unfor—
do this because of what God reveals about him—
tunately most people do the latter. It is the way
self. What we discover about him is too much
our psyche deals with trauma, and therefore
to handle. The writer of the book of Hebrews
we live with a less than adequate view of God.
says, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the
It is psychologically easier to live with a lie
hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31). This
than with such shocking truth. Karl Barth
was Isaiah’s experience. He was brought face to
once said that religion is not the fruit of hu—
face with God in his essence—and he trembled
manity’s pursuit of God but the product of our
to the bone, crying out, “Woe to me! . . . I am
repression of the trauma caused by the holi—
ruined!” (Isaiah 6:5).
ness of God. Adam hid from God—and people
Throughout Scripture God reveals different
since have continued to do so.

dimensions of his character, what we call the

Why is the holiness of God such a threat?

attributes of God. A. W. Tozer defines an atThe answer hinges on the meaning of the word

tribute of God as “whatever God has in any way

holy. Two basic ideas are contained in that

revealed as being true about Himself.”2 Scrip—

word. The first is separateness, being totally

ture speaks of many of God’s attributes: his

other; the second is purity, having absolute

self-existence, self-sufficiency, eternality, wis—

perfection. The first constitutes a threat to our

dom, transcendence, faithfulness, goodness,

autonomy or self-lordship; the second consti—

justice, mercy, grace, love and sovereignty, to

tutes a threat to our moral integrity. We can

name only some. But the one underlying,

better understand each of these threats by

overarching, all-encompassing attribute of

looking at the prophet Isaiah’s response to

God that he reveals is his holiness. Holy is

them.

what God is in his very essence.

S

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw

ELF-RULE CRUMBLES BEFORE HIS

H

the Lord seated on a throne, high and ex-

OLINESS

alted, and the train of his robe filled the

The root of the word *holy* is related to a word

temple. Above him were seraphs, . . . call—

that means “divide.” *Holy* therefore comes to

ing to one another: “Holy, holy, holy, is

mean something totally unique, separated

the L

from the normal. When God reveals himself as

ORD Almighty; the whole earth is

full of his glory.” (Isaiah 6:1-3)

holy, he is saying he is the Wholly Other. He is

totally and wholly other than anything else. In

From the beginning to the end of time that

Isaiah’s words God is “high and exalted” (Isa—
song continues to rise from the angelic choir
iah 6:1). Emil Brunner expresses it well.
and the voices of the saints. Not “Love, love,
love”; not “Mercy, mercy, mercy”; not “Truth,
Holiness is the Nature of God, that
truth, truth”; but “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord
which distinguishes Him from every—
God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come”
thing else. . . . Holiness is not a quality

which God possesses in common with
trembled, for he knew he rightly should die in
other beings; on the contrary, it is that
the flames of holiness.
which distinguishes Him clearly and ab—
We ignore this attribute of God because we
solutely from everything else.3
want to feel that we are good people, yet in the
Through Jesus Christ we discover that God

presence of such absolute purity our claims of
is personal, that he is our friend, that he cares
moral excellence are shallow. We must either
for us, that he watches over us. But we must
own up to our sinfulness before God or change
never lose sight of his essential character—he
our concept of him to remove the shame we
alone is God. There exists between him and us
feel. We construct a morally neutral God who
an infinite quantum leap.
doesn’t really care about anything.
Notice that Isaiah’s first response to God is
Notice that the Lord said nothing to Isaiah
terror. “Woe to me, . . . I am ruined! For I am a
about his sin. Yet holiness by its very nature
man of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). Isaiah, a
exposes uncleanness. Authentic worship will
mere man, in the very presence of God! He
always have two expressions—awe before the
trembles to the bone. So did Job: “I am unwor—
Wholly Other and shame before the Absolutely

thy" (Job 40:4). So did Habakkuk: "I heard and

Pure.

my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the

But fortunately that is not the whole story.

sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs

trembled" (Habakkuk 3:16). In the presence of

THE PARADOX OF GOD'S HOLINESS

the holy God, humans cannot but feel the gulf

Though Isaiah was terrified in the presence of

that separates us from God.

God, he also desired to remain in it. "Woe is

Meeting the holy, living God smashes the

me," he cries out, but he doesn't run away.

myths of autonomy, the myth that human be—

Perhaps he knew that he could never flee God's

ings are the final authority, our own lords. In

presence. Or perhaps there is something about

the presence of God we are but dust and ashes.

God in his holiness that is irresistible.

Every breath we breathe is a gift of his grace.

The holy Lord draws us to himself even in

When a person refuses to bow in humility be—
our fear and shame. Is it that we were made for
fore the holy Creator, he or she represses the
him? Even though we feel that threat to our
truth about God in order to function (Romans
existence—that threat to our supposed virtue,
1:18-23).
wisdom and righteousness—even though we
know he could annihilate us because of our
A PURITY THAT TOLERATES NO
sin, we still need him. He is what we have
UNCLEANNESS
thirsted for all our lives.
There is a second meaning to the word *holy.* Ho—
Like Isaiah, we are caught in a dangerous
liness, by its very nature, must burn away sin.
tension. Isaiah senses his nothingness, both as
Isaiah's response to God's self-revelation is
a human and as a sinner, yet he desires to sing
therefore to be expected. When he said, "Woe
with the hosts of heaven, "Holy, holy, holy."

is me. . . . For I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa—
But how can he? How can he remain before the
iah 6:5), he confessed that what came from his
Holy God as a sinner? We recognize the very
lips manifested what was deep in his heart—
center of God's heart when Isaiah writes,
sin. In the presence of the fire of purity Isaiah
Then one of the seraphs flew to me with

a live coal in his hand, which he had
that we realize the depth of God's love. His very
taken with tongs from the altar. With it
essence naturally recoils at our sin, but he
he touched my mouth and said, "See,
chooses for us to enter into a relationship with
this has touched your lips; your guilt is
him in which we are granted the greatest priv—
taken away and your sin atoned for."
ilege in the universe. Because of Jesus Christ
(Isaiah 6:6-7)

and in Jesus Christ we dare to approach the
The tension is resolved by grace. The solu—
Holy Creator of the universe and address him
tion to Isaiah's dilemma (and ours) is atone—
as "*Abba*, Father."
ment. "But here the atonement does not come
The vitality and depth of our worship are di—
from man's side by an offering of sacrifice. It
rectly related to our view of God. If we truly
comes from God's side, God Himself effecting
know him as he is, three things will character—
it through the seraph by means of a coal."4
ize our worship: awe before the Wholly Other,
This is a beautiful foreshadowing of the cross
shame before the Absolutely Pure, and joyful
of Jesus Christ. On the cross God himself ef—
gratitude before the Merciful One. When we
fects the final remedy for sin. We can take ref—
know that he alone is God, we fall before him
uge from God's awesome holiness in the
in awe. When we know that he alone is perfect,

wounds of Jesus Christ—wounds that touch

we fall before him in shame. But when we

not only our lips but our very being with for—

know that he, the Holy One, so desires our fel—

giveness and cleansing.

lowship that he gave his only Son to make it

God's holiness and his love are not in con—

possible, we fall before him in gratitude and

flict. The love of God is God willing us to know

praise and sing the wonder of his holiness and

him and then making it possible to remain in

the glory of his amazing grace.

his presence. It is in the context of holiness

1Spencer Marsh , *God, Man and Archie Bunker* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

2A.W. Tozer , *Knowledge of the Holy* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1961), p. 20.

3Emil Brunner , *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, n.d.), p.58.

4Otto Procksch, "agiov," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament,* ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 10

vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-1976), 1:93.

Reading Study Guide

1. Why is the way we think about God crucial to our worship of God?

Worship

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2. What are the two "laws of the soul" that militate against knowing God as he truly is?

3. Why do we tend to suppress God's revelation of himself?

4. What are the two meanings of *holy?*

How are they a threat to us in our sinfulness?

5. How does God go about overcoming the gap that stands between his holiness and us?

6. How does your own view of God need to change in order for you to worship more fully?

7. What questions do you have about the reading?

8. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Foster, Richard. "Worship." Chap. 11 in *Celebration of Discipline.* 20th anniversary ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998.

Part Two

UNDERSTANDING THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST

This section attempts to capture the content of what we believe. It contains the most heavy theology or doctrine that we will examine. We should not shy away from doctrine, for as Dorothy Sayers says, "The dogma is the drama."1 The greatest drama ever played out in history awaits our discovery.

We begin our discovery of God and his intent in chapter seven by examining the mystery of the Trinity. We will see what it means that *the three-person God* is a

being in community with himself through all eternity.

Chapter eight discusses how we are made in God's image. The clue to understanding the image of God in humans is the trinitarian nature of God. As God is a being in fellowship, so we were made for relationships—with God and with each other.

In chapter nine we discover that something intruded to break our relationship with God and each other. The Bible calls this *sin.* Sin is separation from God in the present and in eternity.

The wonder of wonders is that in spite of our rebellion against God's authority and our distrust of his goodness, God kept coming after us. The demonstration of the extent and extravagance of *God's love* (chapter ten) is the death of Jesus on the cross. And chapter eleven shows how we find *redemption through Christ.*

We can know the story of the gospel, acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God in human form and even affirm his resurrection without it ever making a difference in our life. The way we take these historical events and apply them to ourselves is through faith in Christ. How can a righteous God forgive sinners without compromising his holiness? This is one of the questions about *justification by faith* we will explore in chapter twelve.

This section concludes on the highest of notes— *adoption.* The setting for justification is the courtroom, with God as the presiding judge. But adoption moves us from the courtroom to the family room, from God as judge to God as father. In adoption we are drawn up into the life of God and included in the circle of his love as his sons and daughters.

1Dorothy L. Sayers , *The Whimsical Christian* (New York: Macmillan, 1978), p. 23.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Deuteronomy 6:4; 2 Corinthians 13:14

BIBLE STUDY: Exodus 20:1-7; 3:13-14; John 8:58-59; Acts 5:1-4

READING: Contact

Core Truth

Who is the God a disciple worships and serves?

Though we cannot fully comprehend the nature of God, there is only one eternal God, who though one is at the same time three persons—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

Two memory verses help to capture the biblical emphasis on the oneness of God as well as the threeness of God: Deuteronomy 6:4, which is known as *the Shema* and can be found over the entrance of most synagogues, and 2 Corinthians 13:14.

1. *Putting it in context:* List all the commands mentioned in Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

2. The memory verse is *Deuteronomy 6:4.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. Why do you think it was necessary to be so adamant that there is one God? What is the relevance of such an insistence today?

4. The next memory verse is 2 Corinthians 13:14. Copy the verse verbatim.

5. What characteristic is associated with each member of the Trinity?

What does this tell us about their individual roles?

6. What does Paul want the Corinthians to recognize?

How does this apply to you?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Trinity is not a biblical word, nor are there many passages which mention the three persons of the trinity together (Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14 are a couple of exceptions). How did we come to believe that God is one being who is three persons? It is because the Bible describes all three as divine, with distinct personalities.

God the Father—read Exodus 20:1-7.

1. Put into your own words the prohibitions of the first three commandments in vv. 3-7.

2. Why is there a prohibition against having other gods (v. 3)?

3. What is a graven image?

4. Why is there a prohibition against graven images or any likeness of anything (v. 4)?

5. What does it mean for God to be jealous? (Isn't this a bad thing? Why or why not?) **6.** What does it mean to take the Lord's name in vain?

God the Son—read Exodus 3:13-14; John 8:58-59.

7. What claim was Jesus making for himself?

8. How did the religious leaders interpret Jesus' reference to being the "I AM"?

God the Holy Spirit—read Acts 5:1-4.

9. How do these verses demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is a personal, divine force?

10. What questions do you have about these passages?

11. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: Contact

The hit movie *Contact* (1997) featured a char—

14). Why did John select this image to convey

acter who was obsessed with making contact

the identity of Jesus? The Word has to do with
with extraterrestrial life. When she was a child,
communication—contact. Words are a means
her father instilled in her the fascination that
of self-revelation, taking hidden thoughts and
there must be life somewhere in the vast ex—
expressing them in such a way that connection
panse of the universe. Jodie Foster played the
can be made. We cannot be known unless we
role of an astrophysicist whose consuming
share our innermost thoughts and feelings,
passion was to receive the signals of intelligent
and we do that through words, as does God.
life that must exist somewhere. She spent
Scripture says, “Who has understood the mind
long, dreary hours listening to sensitive com—
of the LORD?” (Isaiah 40:13). We are beholden
puters and high-intensity speakers that were
to God to make himself known.
connected to satellite relays. Suddenly one day
By using the image of the Word, John is

the speakers began to pulsate with a rhythmic
telling us that God is speaking. When God
sound that was out of this world. Contact!
spoke and said all that he had to say to us, his
The small lab of offbeat scientists became a
speech materialized in the person of Jesus
beehive of activity. Every scientist and media
Christ. “In the past God spoke to our forefa—
outlet was focused on the phenomenon of
thers through the prophets at many times and
alien life. All effort was put into unscrambling
in various ways, but in these last days he has
the signal and deciphering the code of this civ—
spoken to us by his Son” (Hebrews 1:1-2).
ilization that evidently had progressed far beyond life on Earth. Questions abounded: Who

THE ETERNAL SON OF THE FATHER

are these beings? What are they like? What are
John reminds us of another beginning. The
their intentions?
book of Genesis starts with “In the beginning

In the first few verses of his Gospel, John
God created the heavens and the earth." Gene—
declares that contact has been made. His sub—
sis 1:1 describes the old creation, whereas
ject is not a life form of higher intelligence
John 1:1 introduces the new creation.
that inhabits another planet but the One who
Did Jesus have a self-conscious awareness
brought this universe into being in the first
that he existed prior to creation? Quite clearly.
place. This passage sets out to answer certain
On the eve of his crucifixion, during his final
questions: Who is this being who has made
meeting with his disciples in the upper room,
contact with us? Who is Jesus? What is he like?
he expresses a longing to be with the Father in
What is his intention for us?
the way he had been before coming to earth.
He prays, "And now, Father, glorify me in your

presence with the glory I had with you before

The motif that John selects to convey God's
the world began" (John 17:5). The phrase "The
contact with us is *the Word:* "In the beginning
Word was with God" (John 1:1) describes the
was the Word, and the Word was with God, and
relationship between the Word and God. In
the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh
Greek the literal meaning is that the Word was
and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:1,
in face-to-face relationship with God. There

has always been a close and intimate connec—
ment in the Bible that is that straightforward?
tion between the Word and God.
Why didn't Jesus make the bold claim "I am
This is where things get a little confusing.
God"? The reason is that Jesus did not want to
We have two beings that claim to be eternal yet
be understood as saying that he was identical
are different from each other. Do we have two

with the Father. The Father is God and the Son
gods? It was verses like John 1:1 and Jesus'
is God, but the Father is not the Son, and the
speaking of himself as the eternal "I AM" that
Son is not the Father.
led to the formulation of our understanding of
But clearly John is affirming that all that
the plurality within one God. As we shall ob—
can be said about God can be said about Jesus
serve later, the Holy Spirit was also ascribed
too. Jesus defended his actions in healing the
with divine and personal qualities, yet with a
lame man on the Sabbath, saying, "My Father
distinct role as separate from the Father and
is always at his work to this very day, and I, too,
the Son. This then led to the formulation of
am working" (John 5:17). Jesus says the Father
the Trinity—one God, yet three persons. The
doesn't take any time off from doing good, and
singular God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
neither does he. How did the Jews understand

How did this idea come about? There is no

this comment? “For this reason the Jews tried

chapter in the Bible that begins: “Now con—

all the harder to kill him; not only was he

cerning the Trinity . . . “ *Trinity* is not a biblical breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling

word, but it is a description of a biblical reality.

God his own Father, making himself equal

The idea of the Trinity came about because of

with God” (John 5:18). Jesus says later, “I and

biblical teaching that equated the Son and the

the Father are one” (John 10:30). Jesus didn’t

Holy Spirit with God and because of our expe—

mean one and the same or even one in pur—

rience of God. I am drawn to C. S. Lewis’s de—

pose, but one in essence. This statement is fol—

scription of how our understanding of God as

lowed by “again the Jews picked up stones to

Trinity came into being.

stone him” (v. 31). They explained in verse 33,

People already knew about God in a vague

“We are not stoning you for any of these [mir—
way. Then came a man who claimed to be God;
acles], . . . but for blasphemy, because you, a
and yet he was not the sort of man you could
mere man, claim to be God.”
dismiss as a lunatic. He made them believe
John makes other assertions about Jesus’
Him. They met Him again after they had seen
divinity that are indirect claims to deity—
Him killed. And then, after they had been
Jesus doing things that only God could do.
formed into a little society or community,
John lists two: Jesus is the agent of creation,
they found God somehow inside them as well;
and the giver of life.
directing them, making them able to do
Jesus, agent of creation. “Through him all
things they could not do before. And when
things were made; without him nothing was
they have worked it out they found they had
made that has been made” (John 1:3). John

arrived at the Christian definition of the

makes the all-encompassing pronouncement

three-personal God.1

that everything in the created order came into

existence through the agency of Jesus. He

WHY DIDN'T JESUS SAY SO?

states it first positively, "all things were made

If Jesus is God, why don't we have some state—

through him," then negatively, "without him

nothing was made that has been made." Note

"*Abba*, Father" (Romans 8:15-16).

the very careful distinction of roles. Jesus is

What does it mean to be adopted into the

not the author or the designer of all things but

family of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

the means by which all things came to be. The

Imagine that a church picnic is being held at a

Father is the originator of the design, but the

nearby park. You have many errands to run af—

Son is the one who carries it out. The Father is
ter the service and don’t get around to packing
the architect and Jesus is the builder.
your picnic lunch. You rush home a few min-
Jesus, our life source. John affirms a second
utes before the picnic begins to throw a lunch
indirect claim, “In him was life, and that life
together. All you find in your refrigerator is a
was the light of men” (v. 4). Throughout John’s
shriveled piece of baloney, two slices of stale
Gospel, Jesus is said to have life within himself
bread and some crusty mustard remains. You
and to give life to whom he wills (5:21). Jesus
slap it together and rush off to the park.
is self-existent and underived, so he can say
When you arrive, you happen to sit at a ta—
what no sinful human being can say about his
ble already occupied by a large family. You lay
or her life: “No one takes it [life] from me, but
your spread out on the table—a puny baloney
I lay it down of my own accord. I have author—

sandwich. The family proceeds to take from

ity to lay it down and authority to take it up

their enormous picnic basket golden-brown

again” (John 10:18).

fried chicken, mouth-watering potato salad,

baked beans that have been simmering for

days and two beautiful chocolate cream pies.

So what is God’s intent in the contact he has

They look at your baloney sandwich and make

made with us? C. S. Lewis puts it succinctly:

an invitation: “Why don’t we put it all to-

“The whole purpose for which we exist is to be

gether?” You protest, but the cook says, “Oh,

taken into the life of God.” 2 The Holy Spirit is

come on, there’s plenty of everything—and we

the life of God in us. Think of the Holy Spirit as

just love baloney sandwiches. Let’s just put it

the personality that is born from the love be—

all together.” You came to the picnic a pauper

tween the Father and Son. “The union between

and are eating like a king.

the Father and Son is such a live, concrete

We came into this world as orphans and

thing that this union itself is also a Person." 3

Jesus adopted us into his eternal family. "Let's

The Holy Spirit in us is the one who brings us

put it all together," the Lord says to us. "Let me

into the family of God. We are adopted into the

draw you into my life, for that is the purpose

life that is shared between the Father and the

for which you exist." The Father and Son say to

Son. Paul says that being a Christian means re—

us through the living presence of the Holy

ceiving the spirit of adoption. It is the life of the

Spirit, "Everything that we are and have is

Holy Spirit within us that causes us to cry,

available to you."

1C. S. Lewis , *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 143.

2Ibid., p. 141.

3Ibid., p. 152.

The Three-Person God

Reading Study Guide

1. Why does John select the image of the Word for Jesus?

2. What difference does it make whether Jesus is eternal or a created being?

3. What is the relationship between the Father and the Son?

4. How would you explain how we came to believe in the Trinity?

5. Why didn't Jesus simply say, "I am God"?

6. What role does the Holy Spirit have in the life of a believer?

7. What questions do you have about the reading?

8. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Lewis, C. S. "The Three-Personal God." In *Mere Christianity.* New York: Macmillan, 1943.

Packer, J. I. "The Only True God." Chap. 4 in *Knowing God.* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973.



8 / Made in God's Image

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Genesis 1:26-27

BIBLE STUDY: Genesis 1—2

READING: The Jewel in the Crown of God's Creation **Core Truth**

What is humanity?

God, the self-existent Creator, called the world into being through his infinite creativity and power. The peak of God's creative work was humankind, male and female, made exclusively in his image.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Made in God's Image

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Memory Verse Study Guide

The place to begin our understanding of the nature of human beings is the beginning. What does Scripture tell us was God's original intent in creating us? These verses contain the clues to what it means to be created in God's image.

1. *Putting it in context:* Starting with Genesis 1:1, the creation formula for each of the six days follows a consistent pattern. How does the formula abruptly change when it comes to the creation of the man?

2. The memory verses are *Genesis 1:26-27.* Copy the verses verbatim.

3. God refers to himself in the plural ("us" and "our"). What could be the reason for this?

What does this reveal about what it means to be created in God's image?

4. Verse 27 says that humankind created as “male and female” is an expression of being created in God’s image. How is this another clue for how we are created in God’s image?

5. What authority are humans given?

What responsibility does this imply?

6. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Some have viewed Genesis 1 and 2 as contradictory accounts of creation. Instead, try to see Genesis 2 as an expansion and further explanation of Genesis 1:26-27. Genesis 1 is an overview, whereas Genesis 2 details the process of creation.

1. *Read Genesis 1—2.* The Bible begins, “In the beginning God . . . “ What does this teach us about God?

2. What is the benediction that God pronounces over the created order prior to humankind’s coming into being (1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25)?

3. How does the benediction change with the creation of humanity (1:31)?

What does this tell us about how God views humanity?

4. In Genesis 2 man is created prior to woman, and he is alone. What is not good about being alone (2:18)?

5. How does God go about filling what is missing in the man (2:18-25)?

6. When God presents the woman to the man, how does the man's exclamation (v. 23) express his fulfillment?

7. Genesis 2:24 is the classic biblical definition of marriage, quoted by both Jesus and Paul in the New Testament (see Mark 10:6-9; Ephesians 5:31). According to this verse what are the essentials for a marriage relationship?

8. What questions do you have about these passages?

9. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: The Jewel in the Crown of God's Creation

German philosopher Immanuel Kant loved to

them" (v. 27; emphasis added).

take long walks on summer evenings to medi-

The benediction pattern. On the third day

tate and think. On one occasion he was sitting

God begins pronouncing a benediction at the

in a park when a policeman noticed that he

end of each day of his completed work. Notice

had been there for several hours. The police—

that verses 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25 conclude with
man came up to him and said, “What are you
the same “And God saw that it was good.” What
doing?” Kant answered, “I’m thinking.” The
does this mean? It means first of all that God is
policemen said, “Well, who are you?” Kant re—
having a great time with his creative work. He
plied, “That’s precisely the problem I’ve been
is also saying, “I did a great job. This is coming
thinking about.”
out just the way I intended.”
Genesis 1—2 addresses the policeman’s
But the jewel of God’s creation has not yet
question: Who are we? The entire first chapter
been set in the crown. Note that after the hu—
flows toward the creation of human beings. If
mans are created the benediction changes
the musical score of Genesis 1 were the 1812
slightly, but very importantly. After God had
Overture, the fireworks would fill the evening
completed all his work he “saw all that he had

sky and the cannons would thunder their sa—

made, and it was *very* good" (v. 31).

lute upon reaching Genesis 1:26-27.

The creation formula. Throughout the first

six days of creation leading up to the creation

THE PEAK OF GOD'S CREATIVE WORK

of humans, God uses an impersonal formula.

In Genesis 1 the structure of the first six days

Starting at verse 3 we read, "And God said, 'Let

of creation reaches its apex in the creation of

there be light.'" This same formula, with slight

humans.

variation, is consistent throughout the pas-

Only God creates. The first evidence of hu—

sage: "Let there be an expanse," "Let the water

manity's uniqueness centers around the word

. . . ," "Let the land produce vegetation." God

create: "In the beginning God created the

speaks and it is so.

heavens and the earth." The Hebrew word is

But with the creation of the humans the

never used to refer to human creative ability,
formula abruptly changes. At verse 26 we read,
because God can do something humans can
“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our im—
never do—create out of nothing. The Hebrews
age, in our likeness.’” Human beings are the
believed that no material world existed until
expression of the personal nature of the Cre—
God called it into being.
ator and are therefore qualitatively different
The word *create* is also used at a crucial
from the animal world and the rest of creation.
juncture in the creation process—when con—
Human beings bear the stamp of God.
scious life comes into being: “So God *created*
There is a qualitative difference between be—
the great creatures of the sea . . . and every
ings and things. As an author I have a sense of
winged bird” (v. 21). And it is used three times
accomplishment in having a book in print, an
of the creation of humans: “So God *created*

expression of my creative work. But that pales
man in his own image, in the image of God he
in comparison to 5:16 a.m. on August 31,
created him; male and female he *created*
1975, when our daughter Aimee came into the

world. Creating a baby, which expresses per—
glory I had with you before the world began"
sonhood, and making a book cannot be com-
(John 17:5). The Father confirms his eternal
pared. God had made things and creatures, but
love for his Son at the inauguration of Jesus'
now he creates a being who bears his personal
public ministry. As Jesus came out of the water
mark.
of baptism, the Holy Spirit descended on him
In what sense are humans created in God's
in the form of a dove and a voice spoke from
image? The words *image* and *likeness* in verses heaven, "This is my Son, whom I love; with

26 and 27 indicate that there is something

him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:16-17). The

about God that we replicate, copy or resemble

Son lived under the pleasure of the Father.

something that corresponds to the original.

God did not create in order to complete

God leaves the distinct imprint of his nature

something lacking in himself; he created out

on us. What is it?

of the fullness and overflow of his love. Paul

tells us in Acts 17:25, "[God] is not served by

CLUES TO THE IMAGE OF GOD IN HUMANS

human hands, as if he needed anything, be—

There are two significant clues in Genesis

cause he himself gives all men life and breath

1:26-27 that point us toward an exciting dis—

and everything else." Out of the exuberance

covery.

of his love God wanted human beings to be

The plurality of God. The first clue we find

drawn into the circle of his love. Meister Eckin verse 26: "Then God said, 'Let

us make

hart, the German mystic, said that the cre—

man in our image, in our likeness.’” God is

ation came into being out of the laughter of

using plural pronouns for himself. This is

the Trinity. God enlarged the circle and drew

particularly surprising since the verb *make*

us in.

is singular. The one God speaks of himself as

The love within the Godhead that produces

plural.

an object of that love can be seen in a smaller

Who is God talking to? Some say the heav—

way in the union between husband and wife.

enly host or angelic beings who were present

My wife and I went spent the first five years of

at creation. Yet this couldn’t be, because they

our marriage convinced that we didn’t want to

were just observers, not participants in creat—

have children. We had all the arguments of

ing. A better explanation is that the Lord is

those raised in the sixties: we wanted to be free
talking to himself. This is a veiled reference to
and not tied down; it would be cruel to bring a
our New Testament understanding that the
child into the world that lived under the spec—
one God is three persons. From all eternity
ter of nuclear holocaust. But the arguments
God was a being in fellowship. God is his own
seemed silly when we suspected that my wife
community, self-existent and self-sufficient.
was pregnant. We admitted to one another that
Prior to God's creating the world the only real—
the prospect of having a baby was something
ity was this three-person God.
we welcomed. Then my wife got word from the
The New Testament shows us that the Fa—
doctor that her pregnancy test was negative.
ther and the Son have an eternal relationship
We were both surprised by the depth of our
of love. When Jesus is waiting to be taken to
disappointment. It had been only a matter of a

the cross he prays to his Father, “And now, Fa—

few suspicious weeks, but during that time our

ther, glorify me in your presence with the

love had already formed for the child of prom-

ise. Our union sought completion in one we

IMPLICATIONS OF THE IMAGE OF GOD

could love together. Fortunately the preg—

The first priority of these love relationships is

nancy test was wrong and our joy was fulfilled.

that we were made to be loved by God. In Gen—

Aimee has been the delight of our life ever

esis 2:2 we read, “By the seventh day God had

since.

finished the work he had been doing; so on the

Much as a child born of the love between a

seventh day he rested from all his work.” God

man and a woman reflects the parents’ image,

paused to enjoy his creativity.

we humans reflect the image God planted in

In the New Testament salvation is spoken

us. The first clue to what it means to be created

of in terms of entering God's *rest.* The *rest* of in God's image is that just as God is a being in God is to be included in the pleasure of God

fellowship, so are we made for relationships.

and in joining the circle of his love. The oft—

This leads us to the second clue.

quoted statement of Augustine is true: "Our

Humanity as male and female. The second

hearts are restless until we find our rest in

clue is found Genesis 1:27, "So God created

thee." The first order of priority then is verti—

man in his own image, in the image of God he

cal—our relationship with the one who made

created him; male and female he created

us for himself.

them." We could easily pass over this closing

Second, to be made in God's image means

phrase and miss its import. Yet humankind as

that success in this life is measured by our in-

"male and female" is a further indication that

vestment in horizontal relationships.

we are made for relationships. We mirror God

A counseling session brought this truth

as a being in fellowship, meaning that God

into focus for me. The man I had been talking

made us different so that we could have per—

with for over an hour was close to a decision.

son-to-person relationships with each other.

He was trying to come up with sufficient rea—

In Genesis 2:23 man shouts his joy at the

son to restoke the fire of his dying marriage.

creation of woman. Up to this point the HeThe hostility in the marriage had become so

brew word used for man is *adam*, which means

intense that he and his wife needed a rest from

humankind. But when the woman is created,

each other. The respite had been welcomed by

the word for man changes.

both, and he said that he was enjoying being

The man *[adam]* said,

alone. His business was stimulating and finan-

“This now is bone of my bones
cially rewarding, and he was getting excited
and flesh of my flesh;
about an old hobby that had some promise of
she shall be called ‘woman’ *[ishah]*,
being lucrative. The only trouble was that if he
for she was taken out of man *[ish]*. ”
pursued the hobby, it would most surely take
him further away from his wife. Then he made
Man did not become male until there was
a matter-of-fact statement—a kind of sum—
female. The man is incomplete without his
mary assessment of where he saw his life at
counterpart, and vice versa. Humankind as
that moment. He said it in such a way that the
male and female is another way of saying that
significance of it didn’t seem to dawn on him.
what we mirror God in his plurality as hu-
“Everything in my life seems to be going well
mans in plurality. We were created for love re-
. . . except my relationships.”

lationships, for the vertical love of God and

If our primary relationships are in disarray,

the horizontal love with humans.

what does the rest matter? To be made in the

from the motive of love and for love. To be like

image of God is to be made for love relation—

God is to put our priority time and energy into

ships. To be made in God's image is to be made

loving God and others.

Reading Study Guide

1. In examining Genesis 1, what are the indicators that humans are the special creation of God?

2. What does it mean to be created in the image of God?

How would you support this biblically?

3. What other explanations have you learned for what it means to be created in God's image?

4. What are the implications of the biblical view of humans for how we understand the worth of the individual?

How might this differ from an evolutionary view of humans as higher-order animals?

Made in God's Image

5. If being created in God's image means we are made for relationship, what impact should this have on our priorities or how we measure success in life?

What needs to change in your priorities?

6. What questions do you have about the reading?

7. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Lewis, C. S. "Making and Begetting"; "The Good Infection." In *Mere Christianity.* New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Action Page

REVIEWING YOUR COVENANT

Once you have established a covenant, it is important to periodically review its expectations and renew your commitment. As with any relationship we can become lax in our attentiveness to what makes it work. These questions will lead you to refine the covenant and recommit your energies to its accomplishment.

1. Review the covenant you made at the beginning of this relationship. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being highest, rate yourself on your accomplishment of each of the five elements in the covenant.

Share your rating and explain its meaning to each other.

2. As you reflect on the discipling process, what have been the benefits for your growth in Christ up to this point?

3. What have been the disappointments or the unfulfilled expectations?

How might these be overcome?

4. What changes would you like to make in the disciple's covenant of commitment?

5. To what do you need to recommit yourself in order to be faithful to the covenant?



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LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Romans 3:23; 6:23

BIBLE STUDY: Genesis 3

READING: Bewitched and Beguiled

Core Truth

What severed the relationship between God and humanity, and what were the consequences?

Though we were created in the image of God and therefore in perfect harmony with him, we willfully disobeyed God's authority and distrusted his goodness. As a consequence our relationship with God was broken, resulting in spiritual death, which in turn tarnished our relationship with ourselves, others and creation.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

The two memory verses are classics in describing the universal nature of sin and its dire consequences for our relationship with God.

1. *Putting it in context:* Put in your own words Paul's indictment of humanity in Romans 3:9-23.

2. The memory verse is *Romans 3:23.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. What is the extent of our sin? Does it make any difference in our standing before God that we might not all sin to the same extent?

4. How is sin defined? Is the glory of God a fair standard to be measured by?

5. The second memory verse is Romans 6:23. Copy the verse verbatim.

6. *Putting it in context:* Note Paul's argument from Romans 6:15-23, contrasting being slaves to sin with being slaves to righteousness. How does 6:23 summarize Paul's line of reasoning?

7. What do we earn by our sin?

8. What is meant by "death"?

9. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Sin

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Inductive Bible Study Guide

Genesis 3 tells the story of the fall of humanity, which ushered sin into the world. The very nature of sin—its ability to deceive and confuse us and distort our knowledge of right and wrong—is exemplified in the serpent's beguiling persuasion of Eve to taste the forbidden fruit and then in Adam and Eve's hiding in shame from God.

1. *Read Genesis 3.* What was the serpent's ploy in verse 1?

How does he distort God's generous words from Genesis 2:16-17?

2. In 3:2-3 how does the woman demonstrate that she is already distrusting God?

3. What temptation is placed before the woman in verses 4 and 5?

4. From observing the serpent's strategy, how would you define sin?

5. How do the consequences of sin affect humankind's relationships with self (v. 7)?

with God (vv. 8-10)?

with fellow humans (vv. 11-16)?

with creation (vv. 17-19)?

6. What questions do you have about this passage?

7. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: Bewitched and Beguiled

Bill Hybels, the pastor of Willow Creek Church
evil passes, not through states, nor between
near Chicago, preached a sermon one Sunday
classes, nor between political parties, but right
on the theme that we are all sinners in need of
through every human heart, and through all
a Savior. After the service a salesman came for—
human hearts.2
ward to tell Hybels that he didn't see himself as
a sinner. Hybels asked him if he had been abso-

THE SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM

lutely faithful to his wife. The man hedged a
The first five verses of Genesis 3 reveal the core
bit. "Well, I travel a lot, you know . . . " Then
of the human problem—us. In this account

Hybels asked about his expense account. “Oh, humans turn away from their Creator, giving everybody stretches the truth a bit,” the man up their idyllic state of innocence, their perfect said defensively. Finally Hybels asked him if he fellowship with God in a lavish garden where ever overstated or exaggerated a claim. “That’s all their needs and wants were abundantly standard practice in the industry,” the man supplied.

told him. Hybels responded, “Well, let’s see. God had given these humans a risky gift— You’ve just told me you’re an adulterer, a freedom of choice. Without the ability to cheater and a liar.” This man was appalled by choose, humans would be robots. Without Hybels’s brash insensitivity. “How dare you choice there is no love. Without freedom, love call me those awful things!” he exclaimed. He, is a preprogrammed response. For example, like all of us, wanted to see himself in the best

how do you think my wife would have reacted

possible light.1

to me if instead of asking, “Will you marry

It has been said that the Christian faith

me?” my proposal for marriage was a com—

makes no sense unless you start with the as—

mand, “You will marry me”? Her response

sumption that there is something drastically

would have been “Oh, no I won’t!” Love cannot

wrong. Can anyone deny that there is some—

be forced; it must be chosen. God honored us

thing insidious at work in this world? The Bi—

by giving us the risky gift of freedom as a nec—

ble places the problem for the ills of humanity

essary condition for love.

not on a societal flaw but in a character defect

In Genesis 3 we are immediately confronted

in the heart of every individual.

by the one who would lure away this innocent

Alexander Solzhenitsyn spent eight years in

couple from their trusting and obedient rela—

a Soviet gulag following World War II. He en—
tionship with God: “Now the serpent was more
tered prison a die-hard communist, believing
crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD
that a new social order could create new peo—
God had made” (3:1). This talking snake, Sa—
ple. But it was in prison that he discovered that
tan, is the evil opposition to the good God. He
the core issue was not the economic or gov—
is “more crafty” than any other creature; he is
ernment system. Solzhenitsyn writes,

> the master of the half-truth and the innuendo,
> It was only when I lay there on rotting
> and he begins to do his work on the woman.
> prison straw that I sensed within myself the
> first stirrings of good. Gradually, it was dis-

DISTRUST THE GOODNESS OF GOD

closed to me that the line separating good and

The serpent’s first strategy is to cause the

woman to question whether God is for her. “He
for driving are obviously meant to protect us
said to her, ‘Did God really say . . . ‘ “ When we
as well as others who share the road. Our best
hear something that doesn’t seem to square
interest is always freedom within limits,
with the integrity of the source, we say, “Did
within defined boundaries.
they really say that?” Satan’s tactic is to begin
to sow doubt, to cause the woman to question

REBEL AGAINST GOD’S AUTHORITY

whether God is too restrictive.
The serpent now becomes more brazen. He
In her defense of God the woman is showing
knows the woman is staggering. The wedge of
signs that the seeds of doubting God’s good—
doubt is working its way into her spirit. She is
ness are taking root. “The woman said to the
questioning what she had come to believe
serpent, ‘We may eat from the fruit of the trees
about God’s abundant care. Satan closes in for

in the garden’” (v. 2), but she slightly alters
the kill, openly challenging the authority of
God’s original command. God had said to
God. “You will not surely die,” the serpent says
Adam, “You are free to eat from any tree in the
to the woman. “For God knows that when you
garden; but you must not eat from the tree of
eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will
the knowledge of good and evil, for when you
be like God, knowing good and evil” (3:4-5).
eat of it you will surely die” (2:16-17). Eve
Satan implies that God is jealously guarding
shows that she is becoming fixated on God’s
his position of authority, which he doesn’t
restrictions. “We may eat fruit from the trees
want to share with anyone else. But if Eve eats
in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not
of the tree, he lets her think, she can attain the
eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of
same level as God.
the garden, *and you must not touch it,* or you

What exactly is the tree of the knowledge of will die’” (3:3). God had restricted eating, but good and evil? What did it signify to the origi— he never said anything about touching. This nal hearers? The phrase *good and evil* is syn— was Eve’s added restriction.

onymous with all knowledge. It means to as— Restrictions are often interpreted as harsh pire to knowledge on the level that only God confinements, yet unrestricted freedom leads has—omniscience. Biblical scholar Daniel only to destruction. Laws such as the Ten Fuller says that to aspire to the knowledge of Commandments are given so that we honor good and evil is to seek “that maturity which the Creator and keep from bringing harm to frees one from being dependent on someone ourselves. God forbade Adam and Eve from else for guidance on how to act wisely.” 3 The eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and first humans were forbidden from aspiring to a

evil so they would avoid the consequence of

knowledge possessed only by God himself,

dying.

whereby they might consider themselves free

What if we had the attitude of unrestricted

from dependence on him. By this restriction

freedom when it came to driving a car? *No one*

God is saying to them, “I have made you de-

is going to make me drive within the confines

pendent on me for life, for wisdom. You work

of these road lines, we think. *If I feel like zig-correctly only when you keep your connection*

zagging across lanes, then I will. If I decide to

with me. As soon as you aspire to be equal with

take a shortcut across someone’s front lawn,

the Creator, you lose all the good that I in-

that’s up to me. No one can hem me in. Laws

tended for you.”

We even have an acceptable name for this

things?" (Romans 8:31-32). The effects of the
god of independence—individualism. The pro—
Fall can be reversed in only one way—by put—
tection of individual rights and the freedom
ting our trust in Christ, who is for us. Christ
from tyranny are deeply rooted in our society,
died the death we deserve. We are given new
but we crave much more, individualism with—
hearts when we submit ourselves to God's au—
out limits. Robert Bellah's masterful study on
thority and trust his goodness, even while con—
the American character, Habits of the Heart,
fessing that we have committed high treason
found that freedom was the most resonant,
against our Maker. John Stott summarizes this
deeply held American value. But the freedom
powerfully.
he discovered was lopsided. We want to be left
The concept of substitution may be said
alone, to be free from other people's values and
to lie at the heart of both sin and salva—

beliefs, free from arbitrary authority in work,

tion. For the essence of sin is man sub—

family and political life. Freedom is defined

stituting himself for God, while the es—

solely in terms of being free from something.

sence of salvation is God substituting

We want rights without responsibility.

himself for man. Man asserts himself

We might expect that God would wash his

against God and puts himself where only

hands of us disobedient creatures, but the

God deserves to be; God sacrifices him—

good news is that our Lord came looking for us

self for man and puts himself where only

in the person of Jesus Christ in order to pro—

man deserves to be. Man claims preroga—

vide new hearts for us. In response to our dis—

tives which belong to God alone; God ac—

trust he demonstrated beyond a doubt that he

cepts penalties which belong to man

can be trusted.

alone.4

Paul said, “If God is for us, who can be

The only appropriate response is to cast

against us? He who did not spare his own Son,

ourselves on the mercy of God.

but gave him up for us all—how will he not

also, along with him, graciously give us all

1Bill Hybels , Honest to God? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), p. 22

2Alexandr Solzhenitsyn , The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956 (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 612.

3Daniel Fuller, “The Fall” (unpublished class lectures, 1972), p. 11.

4John R. W. Stott , The Cross of Christ (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 160.

Sin

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Reading Study Guide

1. *What are some of the ways people attempt to deflect personal responsibility for sin?*

2. *What is the biblical diagnosis as to why “something is drastically wrong”?*

3. *How does the serpent sow seeds of doubt in the woman?*

4. *What seeds of doubt do we allow to take root in our own minds?*

5. *Why would a good God establish boundaries or restrictions?*

6. *What is the meaning of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?*

7. *In what ways do you see people acting as if they were God?*

Where do you see that tendency in yourself?

8. *What is God's solution to the stain of sin on the human heart?*

9. *What questions do you have about the reading?*

10. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Lewis, C. S. "The Great Sin." In Mere Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Stott, John R. W. "The Consequences of Sin." Chap. 6 in Basic Christianity. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1958.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: *Romans 5:8*

BIBLE STUDY: *Luke 15:11-24*

READING: *The Waiting Father*

Core Truth

What is God's response to our distrust and disobedience?

The Bible is the love story of God's revelation of himself in pursuit of wayward humanity. This pursuit reaches its climax in the cross with the gift of God's Son,

Jesus Christ.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Grace

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Memory Verse Study Guide

1. *Putting it in context: In Romans 5:6-11, what amazes Paul about God's action at the cross?*

2. *The memory verse is Romans 5:8. Copy the verse verbatim.*

3. *What condition were we in when Christ demonstrated his love for us?*

4. *How did he demonstrate his love for us?*

What makes this demonstration so astounding?

5. *This verse teaches us that God took into account everything there was to know about us and still decided to lay down his life for us. How is this liberating?*

6. *How has this verse spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

The story of Jesus that takes us to the heart of the gospel and the heart of God is the parable of the prodigal son. But on further study we see that the story is not so much about the rebellious son as it is about the waiting father.

1. *Read Luke 15:11-24. What was the younger son saying to his father by asking for his share of the property (v. 12)?*

2. *How far down did the son go (vv. 14-16)?*

3. *What do you think the phrase "he came to his senses" means (v. 17)?*

4. *Why did it take so long for the son to turn back to his father?*

5. *What was the son willing to say and do on his return to his father (vv. 18-19)? What did the son leave out of his practiced speech (v. 21)? What does this indicate?*

6. *What was the father's response to the return of his son (vv. 20, 22-24)?*

7. *How would you feel if you were the prodigal son?*

8. *Summarize the gospel message contained in this story.*

9. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

10. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Grace

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Reading: The Waiting Father

Have you ever seen a two-or three-year-old stand for: “He divided his property between child look in the mirror for the first time? The them” (15:12). The father chooses to remain child does not initially recognize the smiling the young man’s father even though the son face staring back at her. Then in a moment of no longer wants to be the son. In order to keep insight she exclaims delightedly, “That’s me.” the door open for the son’s possible return, the As Jesus tells the story of the prodigal son in father chooses to bear the pain of rejection. Luke 15:11-24, he holds a mirror up to us. Ini— The father could have deadened his wound by tially we read this story and think, Yeah, I

cutting himself off from his son, but he chose

know people like that. Then all of a sudden it

to live with the open sore as the price for his

dawns on us, That's me. Jesus tells a story that son's eventual return.

becomes our story.

And of course the son's plans for greatness

and glory are over in the blink of an eye. He

AN UNGRATEFUL SON AND A LOVING

loses it all, and to survive he attaches himself

FATHER

to a citizen who raises pigs. Knee deep in the

Through the character of the younger son,

mud of a pig sty, tending to animals that a Jew—

Jesus puts his finger on the essence of the hu—

ish boy is forbidden to touch, "he came to his

man problem from which almost every hu—

senses" (v. 17). The phrase "He came to his

man misery derives. Our problems all begin in

senses" is a Hebrew way of saying that he re—

the conspiracy for autonomy from the One

pented. In other words, this is his turning

who made us. Freedom for the younger son

point, his fork in the road indicating it is time

meant doing what he wanted to do, beholden

to start walking back home.

to no one.

But even more disturbing than the son's de-

THE ROAD HOME

sire for freedom is the pain he inflicts on the

But even though the son is ready to start back

heart of his father. There is no precedent in the

home, it is evident that he does not yet appre—

customs of the Jewish and Arab world for a fa—

ciate that waiting for him is a brokenhearted

ther to divide his property with his children

father. He returns home out of self-interest,

before his death. When the son demands, "Fa—

not because he feels bad for what he has done.

ther, give me my share of the estate," he is in

Pain prods him home. We catch his true moti—

essence saying, "Father, I want you dead so

vation at the end of verse 17: "I am starving to

that I can get what is coming to me." In the
death." Though he would face certain shame
face of such a horrible insult, the cultural ex—
when he encounters the villagers, his family
pectation would have been for the father to as—
and especially his father, his pain and hunger
sert his authority and uphold the family honor
overwhelmed the shame.
by beating the son into submission, then disin—
We humans are a curious lot. It seems that
heriting him.
only when the pain increases to an intolerable
But the father does the unprecedented. He
level are we finally motivated to change. We
acts in a way contrary to everything that a fa—
can endure and tolerate our self-destructive
ther in the ancient Near East was supposed to
habits until something bad happens that fi-

nally makes us ask, "What am I doing to my—

sonship. But he still had not come to terms

self?" Many of us begin our walk toward the Fa—

with his father's pain, only his own.

ther because the way we are currently living is

not working. We are pragmatists at heart. The

A WELCOME OR A REJECTION?

words of Jesus are an invitation to come home:

What might the father's reaction be at the re-

"Come to me, all you who are weary and bur—

turn of the son? As the patriarch of the clan the

dened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew

father would be expected to uphold family

11:28).

honor by humiliating the son and making him

Further evidence that the son didn't fully

bear his shame. When the son arrived at the

appreciate how he had hurt his father is that

house and the servants announced his arrival,

he thought he still had some bargaining power

the father could have said to them, "What son?

left. Though he acknowledged his sin to some

I don't have a son. He is dead."

extent by saying, "Father, I have sinned against

Instead the unexpected occurs. "But while

heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy

he was still a long way off, his father saw him

to be called your son" (15:18-19), he had the

and was filled with compassion for him; he ran

audacity to make the request "make me like

to his son, threw his arms around him and

one of your hired men."

kissed him" (v. 20). I am convinced that the

He did acknowledge his unworthiness by

whole gospel is contained in one word, but.

realizing that he had forfeited his right to ever

The son braces for a public humiliation, flog—

be called a son. He sought the lowliest possible

ging, recounting before the family how he had

role as a hired servant. In Middle Eastern cul—

wasted the family income—but! That little

ture there were two kinds of servants, house—

conjunction expresses a reversal, an antithe—

hold slaves that would have been permanent
sis, something contrary to all that should be.
residents in the father's house, and hired ser—
Critics of the Christian faith, especially
vants. Household slaves had living quarters
Muslims, have questioned the necessity of the
built for them, and their daily needs were pro—
incarnation and the cross for forgiveness. They
vided for by the master. But hired servants
say that if God is God, he simply forgives. Why
were day laborers with no security or longev—
is it necessary for God to become human and
ity. Unscrupulous landowners would hire day
die on the cross? They point to this parable as
laborers and not pay their wages, but the fa—
evidence. There is no incarnation or cross
ther was so just that even the lowliest and
here, and yet Christians say that this story is
most exploitable workers had "food to spare"
the gospel. Where are the incarnation and
(v. 17).

cross in this story?

Even though the son was willing to be the

lowest of the low, it still appears to have been a

THE INCARNATION

calculated move. Perhaps it was his goal to pay

Jesus' identification with us in the incarnation

back over time the wealth that he had taken

is captured in the sentence "but while [the

from the family. Did repentance for the son

son] was still a long way off, his father saw him

mean earning his way back into the good

and was filled with compassion for him."

graces of his father? If he could just repay his

Where was the father when the son returned?

debt, then he could earn back his freedom and

Was he at home waiting for the son to return

Grace

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so that he could lower the boom? No. He was

himself between his son and the shame that

out on the road leading to the village, daily

would be heaped on him. The father bears the

waiting for the return of his son. Likewise, in—

shame that would have been directed toward

stead of being safely cloistered in heaven, God

the son.

came to seek and to save the lost. The father

Up to this point there are no words from the

wanted to be the first to greet the son. He had

father. He substitutes kisses for words. Only

closed the gap, shortened the distance.

now does the son know what repentance is.

When the father saw his boy, his heart went

Notice what the son does not say when it

out to him. The word compassion comes from

comes time to deliver his prepared speech. He

a word associated with guts or innards. Com—

says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and

passion denotes a gut reaction, an intense vis—

against you. I am no longer worthy to be called

ceral response, a deep feeling that clutches at

your son" (v. 21), but leaves out "make me like

the stomach. In the Middle East when a partic—

one of your hired men." Was this a calculated

ularly moving story is told that draws forth

move? Perhaps he saw the response of his fa—

pity from the listeners, a person can be heard

ther and said to himself, Hey, this is going

to respond, "You are cutting up my intestines."

much better than I had imagined. Maybe I can

Compassion means "to suffer with." The fa-

get a better deal.

ther's reaction was to come alongside his

But I believe that when the son saw his fa—

pained son.

ther sprinting toward him, his heart collapsed

within him. How could he strike a bargain?

THE CROSS

How could he pay back that kind of love? When

Where is the cross in the story of the waiting

someone has given their life for you, what can

father? The cross is here, but we are culturally

you give back in return? The son could only

blind to its presence. It is contained in the

throw himself on his father's mercy.

phrase "[the Father] ran to his son, threw his

The father then set about to systematically

arms around him and kissed him." In the Mid—

restore the son's broken relationships. He

dle East a man of mature years always walks in

turns to the servants who had run with him

a slow, dignified manner. Walking with a mea—

and gives several quick commands.

sured pace is a way of commanding respect

• *"Quick! Bring the best robe." The best*

and projecting deserved honor. It is very un—

robe was reserved for an honored digni—

dignified for a man to run in public. The word

tary. This was the signal to the village el—

Jesus uses here for run is one that Paul uses to ders to treat his son with respect.

describe the Christian life as a race. For the fa-

• *"Put a ring on his finger." This is not any*

ther to run in this fashion he would have to lift

ring but the family signet ring that says

up his robes, expose his undergarments and

that the son has been restored to a posi—

sprint down the road. This itself would have

tion of authority within the family.

been a shameful, humiliating act. Instead of

• *"[Put] sandals on his feet." Slaves were*

the son bearing the shame, the father in his

barefoot, but a son wears sandals.

running to the son bears it for him. The father

• *"Bring the fattened calf and kill it." Meat*

reaches his son before the village children, his

was a rare delicacy. The fattened calf was

servants or the village elders do, and he places

a grain-fed animal raised for the specific

purpose of celebrating the presence of

the father is absorbed with his joy over the

an honored guest. It was also a signal

son's return. God wants us to take our eyes off

that the whole community was invited

our disqualification and look into his face and

because it could feed over one hundred

see his affection for and delight in us. The good

people.

news is that the way is open to come home. He

While the son focused on his unworthiness,

is calling us home.

Reading Study Guide

1. *Why is this story our story?*

2. *What finally made the son come to his senses?*

3. *What bargain was the son hoping to strike with the father?*

What does this tell us about the state of his heart?

4. *What evidence do we see in this story of the presence of the incarnation and the cross?*

5. *When did the son finally understand the cost of his father's love?*

6. *Describe the state of the father's heart in your own words.*

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7. *How does God's story of loving pursuit become our story? Talk with your partner(s) about your experience of God's love in these areas: the nature of your life before Christ*

how you came to Christ

how life is different for you in Christ

8. *What questions do you have about the reading?*

9. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Packer, J. I. "The Love of God." Chap. 12 in Knowing God. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973.



11 / Redemption

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Isaiah 53:4-6*

BIBLE STUDY: *1 Corinthians 15*

READING: *The Hope Jesus Offers*

Core Truth

How did Christ reconcile the severed relationship between God and humanity?

Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to be the one mediator between God and humanity (1 Timothy 2:5). Through Christ's substitutionary death on the cross the penalty of sin has been paid, and by his bodily resurrection from the tomb, death has been defeated.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



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Memory Verse Study Guide

There are numerous biblical passages that attest to the substitutionary nature of Christ's sacrificial death. But when the New Testament writers wanted us to understand the significance of Christ's death, they found in Isaiah's prophecy the truth that the Messiah would be a sacrificial servant before he became the reigning king (see Matthew 8:17; Acts 8:32-33; 1 Peter 2:22-25).

1. *Putting it in context: What characteristics of the Messiah do you notice in Isaiah 52:13—53:12?*

2. *The memory verses are Isaiah 53:4-6. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *What did Isaiah prophesy that Jesus would take upon himself?*

4. *What did he accomplish for us?*

5. *What was our condition while Jesus was doing what he did for us?*

6. *What is our hope for wholeness through the cross?*

7. *In what ways have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul reminds the Corinthian church of the teachings about Jesus' resurrection—and ours, in the last days. He counters the claim some were making that Christ was not raised from the dead and goes on to discuss the necessity for a body to die in order for it to be raised again in glory.

1. *Read 1 Corinthians 15. What is Paul's summary of the core of the gospel in verses 1-4?*

2. *In verses 5-11 Paul catalogs the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Why is it important to establish these?*

Why does Paul find it necessary to establish his own encounter with the resurrected Christ?

3. *Look at verses 12-19. What are the consequences if Jesus had not been raised from the dead?*

4. *In verses 20-23 Paul identifies Jesus as the "firstfruits" of the resurrection. What does he intend to convey through this image?*

5. *How would you describe our resurrection bodies in light of verses 35-50?*

6. *Verses 51-57 state the ultimate victory won by Jesus' resurrection. How does Jesus' resurrection remove death as the last barrier?*

7. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

8. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Redemption

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Reading: The Hope Jesus Offers

Paul viewed the gospel as a treasure that had
person who had ever walked on the earth: he
been deposited in his account to be preserved
was without sin. What good would a substitute
intact as an inheritance for the next genera—
be if he had to be concerned with his own sin?
tion. Paul exhorted Timothy, "Guard the good
In the book of Hebrews Jesus is described as the
deposit that was entrusted to you" (2 Timothy
ultimate high priest, who represents us before
1:14). When the owner demanded an account—
God. "Unlike the other high priests, he does not
ing, Paul, like a good steward, wanted to make
need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his
sure that the gospel message was delivered in
own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He
exactly the same way that he had received it.
sacrificed for their sins once for all when he of-

“For what I received I passed on to you as of

fered himself” (Hebrews 7:27-28).

first importance: that Christ died for our sins

Jesus was sent by God to be the perfect me—
according to the Scriptures, that he was bur—
diator for our sin. “For there is one God and
ied, that he was raised on the third day accord—
one mediator between God and men, the man
ing to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).
Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for
The good news is the death, burial and res—
all” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus was the only quali—
urrection of Jesus. It is through the work of
fied mediator between God and humankind
Christ on the cross and his resurrection from
because he was the God-man. What set Jesus
the dead that we are redeemed from the guilt
apart and gave him the credentials to act on
of our sin and are born again to new life.
our behalf was that he was divine, God in the
flesh (John 1:14).

WHY WAS JESUS ABLE TO FORGIVE US

What evidence do we have for the deity of

FOR OUR SIN?

Christ? John Stott in his book Basic Christian-

“Christ died for our sins,” wrote Paul. The ob-

ity has a very helpful summary of the self—

jection that immediately comes to mind is:

consciousness of Jesus.1 Stott approaches the

What does Jesus’ death on the cross have to do

deity of Christ through the claims of Christ.

with me? Jesus seems to take my sin person—

How did Jesus view himself?

ally, as if it were directed toward him.

When King David confessed his sin of adul-

HIS SELF-CENTERED TEACHING

tery with Bathsheba and the murder of her

Jesus’ self-centered teaching is striking when

husband to cover up Bathsheba’s pregnancy,

compared to the self-effacing teaching of other

he said to the Lord, “Against you, you only,

religious leaders. Jesus said, “I am the truth,

have I sinned and done what is evil in your

follow me,” whereas others said, “There is a

sight" (Psalm 51:4). Though David had sinned

truth, path or way. Follow that." The words I

against people and certainly needed to ask for

and me were often on his tongue.

their forgiveness, ultimately all sin is disobedi-

• *"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).*

ence against God's authority.

• *"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).*

Jesus was offered by God as the substitute to

• *"I am the resurrection and the life"*

pay the guilt of our sin. He is qualified to be the

(John 11:25).

sacrifice for our sin because he was unlike any

• *"I am the way and the truth and the life"*

was associating himself with one who would

(John 14:6).

come from outside this world and who is wor-

• *"Come to me . . . and I will give you rest"*

thy of worship.

(Matthew 11:28).

As we saw in our reading on the Trinity in

The most astonishing of Jesus' words came

chapter seven, Jesus had a consciousness of an

in a hostile dialogue with the religious leaders.

intimate and transparent relationship with his

These men rested secure because they could

heavenly Father.

trace their religious lineage back to Abraham,

to which Jesus retorted, "Your father Abraham

WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED IN CHRIST'S

rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he

DEATH ON THE CROSS?

saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Astonished,

Christ's death on the cross was God himself

the Jewish leaders responded, "You are not yet

paying the penalty for our sin. Paul writes,

fifty years old, . . . and you have seen Abra-

"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us,

ham!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, . . .

so that in him we might become the right—

before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:57—

eousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

58). In referring to himself as "I am" Jesus was

The image that most powerfully captures

identifying himself as God. When Moses was

the substitutionary work of Christ on the cross

called by God to deliver the Israelites from capis that of the lamb of God. When John the Bap—

tivity in Egypt, Moses wanted to be able to tell

tist saw Jesus walking by, he said, "Look, the

the elders who had sent him. When Moses

Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the

asked God who he was, God answered, "I AM

world" (John 1:29). The image of the lamb of

WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Is—

God is a combination of the Passover lamb and

raelites: 'I AM has sent me to you'" (Exodus

the offering associated with the annual Day of

3:14). Jesus is clearly stating that he is none

Atonement.

other that the great I AM who was present as

The Passover lamb. Paul writes, "Christ, the companion and power of Moses. our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 The title Jesus most often used for himself Corinthians 5:7). When the Israelites were in was "Son of Man." It is common to contrast captivity in Egypt, the last of the plagues sent this title with "Son of God," as if "Son of Man" upon the Egyptians was the death of the first— refers to Jesus' humanity and "Son of God" ex— born. God told Pharaoh that he would send the presses his divinity. In fact "Son of Man" was angel of death throughout the land. The Isra— the title for the Messiah taken from the book of elites were instructed to sacrifice a one-year— Daniel. Daniel had a vision of a figure coming old lamb without blemish and smear the blood down from heaven to establish his rule on on the doorframes of their houses. That night, earth. "In my vision at night I looked, and when the Lord came to strike down the first—

there before me was one like a son of man,

born, he passed over the homes that were un—

coming with the clouds of heaven. . . . He was

der the protection of the blood (Exodus 12).

given authority, glory and sovereign power; all

The blood was a symbol of sacrificial death and

peoples, nations and men of every language

substitution.

worshiped him" (Daniel 7:13-14). So when

The Day of Atonement. When the image of

Jesus referred to himself as the Son of Man he

the Passover lamb is combined with the substi-

Redemption

tutionary sacrifice of the Day of Atonement,

is alive. But what difference would it have

this powerful convergence of symbols captures

made if Christ had not been raised? Why is the

the work of Jesus. Once a year on the Day of

resurrection necessary to complete our re—

Atonement (Yom Kippur) the high priest en—

demption?2

tered into the holy of holies in the temple

Without the resurrection we would have

where the glory of the holy God was said to re-

sympathy without victory. The cross is the

side. No sinful human being dared enter this

demonstration of God's love for us (Romans

space, so the high priest took with him the

5:8), but we need more from God than just un—

blood of a goat that had been sacrificed on be—

derstanding. Empathy with our brokenness is

half of the people's sins. The blood was sprin—

welcome, but we need someone who has over—

kled on top of the mercy seat as an act of atone—

come it and shown us the way out. Hope

ment. God's anger against the sins of the

comes not just with sharing the darkness but

people was assuaged by this substitute. Equally

with leading us out into the light.

powerful is the image of the high priest plac-

Satan would have won. Paul implies that

ing his hand on the head of a second goat, the
the cross was a trap into which Satan blindly
scapegoat, confessing the sins of the nation
walked. Being limited in knowledge, Satan did
and then sending the goat into the wilderness.
not see God's plan to use the cross for redemp-
"The goat will carry on itself all their sins" (see
tion or to follow it by a resurrection. "None of
Leviticus 16).
the rulers of this age understood it [the
Christ's death on the cross satisfied God's
cross]," Paul writes, "for if they had, they
justice and purchased mercy. Justice demands
would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1
that sin be paid for. Dying on our behalf, Jesus
Corinthians 2:8). Satan used the human rulers
died the death we deserve so that we could
of this age to bring about the death of Jesus,
have mercy that we don't deserve. He bore the
and in so doing brought his own downfall.
brunt of God's fury toward sin and faced aban-

“Having disarmed the powers and authorities,

donment, isolation and separation from his

[Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, tri—

Father while on the cross. At the moment

umphing over them by the cross” (Colossians

when Jesus cried out from the cross, “My God,

2:15).

my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark

Death would remain the final enemy. The

15:34), the Father turned away from the Son,

final obstacle we all face is death. Jesus took on

who bore our sin. Payment had been made.

our humanity “so that by his death he might

When we acknowledge our need for forgive—

destroy him who holds the power of death—

ness through repentance and believe in

that is, the devil—and free those who all their

Christ’s sufficient sacrifice, we are given the

lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”

gift of mercy.

(Hebrews 2:14-15). By his triumph over death

in the resurrection, Jesus has taken the fear

WHY WAS THE BODILY RESURRECTION OF

and sting out of death. Through Christ's rising

JESUS NECESSARY?

from the dead, "death has been swallowed up

The central symbol of our faith is the empty

in victory. Where, O death, is your victory?

cross. The unoccupied cross is a sign that we

Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians

do not seek the living among the dead. Christ

15:54-55).

There would be no newness of life. The

take the tribe to a hospital in another part of

cross brings forgiveness of sin, but the resur—

the jungle for treatment. In order to reach the

rection offers us new life. Paul sees in the act

hospital it was necessary to cross a large river.

of baptism by immersion the two movements

Yet the tribe refused to cross, believing that

of death and resurrection. When we are low—

the waters were inhabited by evil spirits.

ered under the water, a watery grave rolls over

The missionary explained how he had

us. In this act we are identifying with Christ's

crossed the water and no harm had come to

death on the cross. All of our sin is nailed to

him, but the people didn't care. He next led

the tree. The debt has been forgiven. As we rise

them to the river bank and placed his hand in

from the water we leave that old life in the

the water. The people still were too afraid. He

grave and come forth to newness of life. "The

walked out knee-deep into the water and

old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corin—

splashed around, and they wouldn't budge. Fi—

thians 5:17). "We were therefore buried with

nally he turned around and dove into the water

him through baptism into death in order that,

and swam beneath the surface until he

just as Christ was raised from the dead

emerged on the other side. As he came out of

through the glory of the Father, we too many

the water he punched his hand in the air as an

live a new life" (Romans 6:4).

act of triumph. The people broke into cheers

and followed him across.

MAKING THE WAY

Jesus emerged from a grave that repreA missionary to Brazil served a native tribe in

sented the fear of death and guilt of sin, thrust

a remote part of the jungle. A contagious dis—

his fist in the air with the triumph of resurrec—

ease was ravaging the population. The mis—

tion and someday will call us all to follow him

sionary determined that the only hope was to

across. The way has been made safe.

1John R. W. Stott, "The Claims of Christ," chapter 2 in Basic Christianity (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1958).

2In "The Resurrection of Christ," chapter 4 of Basic Christianity, Stott has an excellent discussion on the evidence for the resurrection. The bodily resurrection of Jesus is a well-attested historical event. Reasonable people can believe in the resurrection.

Reading Study Guide

1. *What does the image of the gospel as a deposit say to you?*

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2. *Why is the deity of Jesus a necessary prerequisite for what Christ accomplished on the cross?*

3. *Of the claims to Christ's deity, which do you find most compelling?*

4. *What was accomplished through Christ's death on the cross?*

5. *How does Christ's death satisfy God's justice and purchase our mercy?*

6. *Which benefit of the resurrection provides you the most hope?*

7. *What questions do you have about the reading?*

8. *Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Stott, John R. W. "The Claims of Christ," chap. 2; "The Resurrection of Christ," chap. 4; "The Death of Christ," chap. 7 in Basic Christianity. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1958.



12 / Justification

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Ephesians 2:8-10*

BIBLE STUDY: *Romans 3:21-31*

READING: *Surprised by Joy*

Core Truth

How are the benefits of the cross transferred into our lives?

It is by faith in Jesus Christ alone that we are declared right (justified) before God. God's gift of faith is the recognition of our utter moral bankruptcy and our inability to earn God's favor and that we must receive and rest on Jesus Christ, who has done it all.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Justification

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Memory Verse Study Guide

We struggle with the place of good works in the Christian life. These memory verses clarify the proper balance. Good works or our human efforts to please God can never be the basis for our salvation but are clearly the evidence of it, according to Ephesians 2:10.

1. *Putting it in context: Read Ephesians 2:1-7. In what terms does Paul describe the hopelessness of humanity (vv. 1-3), and what is the surprising reversal starting at verse 4?*

2. *The memory verses are Ephesians 2:8-10. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *What is the relationship between grace, faith and being saved (v. 8)?*

4. *How has God taken away our grounds for boasting about our salvation?*

5. *According to verse 10, what is the place of good works in the life of the believer?*

6. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Paul has laid out the argument against humanity in devastating terms in the early chapters of Romans. We are all under a death sentence, deserving the wrath of God, but God sent Jesus Christ to do for us what we could never do for ourselves. Our response to Christ's saving act of grace is faith.

1. *Read Romans 3:21-31. How would you define the righteousness of God?*

2. *What does it mean that the righteousness of God "has been made known" apart from the law (v. 21)?*

3. *How do we get the righteousness of God (vv. 22, 24, 26, 28, 30)?*

4. *What does it mean to have faith in Jesus?*

5. *Why must the righteousness of God be a gift apart from the law?*

6. *What has Jesus Christ accomplished for us?*

7. *Why does the principle of faith remove the grounds for boasting (vv. 27-28)?*

8. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

9. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Justification

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Reading: Surprised by Joy

Performance-reward is the value system that

assuage God's anger. It was out of fear that he

drives the world today. Our worth is measured

gave up a potentially lucrative career in law to

by our ability to live up to certain standards.

enter the monastery. The turning point came

Expectations are conveyed to children very

on a sultry July afternoon in 1505. As he ap—

early. A parent rewards desirable behavior and

proached the Saxon village of Stotterheim, the

punishes undesirable behavior. Love and

skies grew more and more menacing. Sud—

worth are often seen as conditional.

denly there was a crashing storm, punctuated

Since the performance-reward system is

by a bolt of lightning that knocked him to the

part of the air we breathe, we assume that this

ground. Fearing for his life and convinced this

is the way God operates as well. We think God

was a message from God, Luther cried out in

runs the universe using the scale of justice.

terror, "St. Anne, help me, and I will become a

When our life ends we expect that there will be

monk!"

an accounting of our deeds. All of our good

For Luther God was to be feared and pla—

deeds will be piled on one side of the scale and

cated. This terror culminated when he had to

all of our bad deeds on the other side, and our

serve his first Communion. The thought of

only hope is for the scale to tip the right way.

taking in his hands the very body and blood of

Yet the gospel is revolutionary because its

Christ was too much for him. When he came
message is contrary to all that we have been
to the prayer of consecration, he froze at the
programmed to believe. Paul writes, "But now
altar, his eyes glazing over and beads of sweat
a righteousness from God, apart from law, has
forming on his forehead. A nervous hush filled
been made known" (Romans 3:21). In other
the congregation. Luther could not speak. He
words, being made right before God has come
had to stop and take a seat in disgrace.
to us apart from our ability to live up to God's
When Luther came to the prayer of conse—
expectations. Paul contrasts the righteousness
cration for the Communion elements, he was
that comes from God with the righteousness
supposed to say, "We offer unto Thee, the liv—
we attempt to attain by being good people.
ing, the true, the eternal God." Luther wrote
about this moment in reflection, "At these

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

words I was utterly stupefied and terror—
In the early sixteenth century, Martin Luther
stricken. I thought to myself, 'Who am I, that I
struggled to comprehend "the righteousness
should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to
of God," and his struggle led to the Protestant
the divine Majesty?' Shall I, a little pygmy, say
Reformation and the rediscovery of the truth
'I want this, I ask for that?' For I am dust and
of justification by faith alone. When Luther
ashes and full of sin and I am speaking to the
heard the phrase "the righteousness of God,"
living, eternal, and the true God."1
he cowered in fear before a threatening deity.
Yet Paul's positive use of the phrase "the
An Augustinian monk, Luther felt he was in
righteousness of God" intrigued Luther. Paul
bondage to an exacting God, who could never
was saying that this was a good thing rather
be pleased. To Luther God was a terror. His re—
than something harmful. Luther came to real—

ligious devotion was prompted by his need to

ize that his view of God was only half correct.

The New American Standard Version is the

marketplace and then set free were said to be

best translation of Paul's point: "That he might

redeemed. Redemption is the price paid to set

be just and the One who justifies the person

one free. A ransom is the price paid to free one

who has faith in Jesus" (v. 26). The righteous—

from captivity to a kidnapper. Jesus said that

ness of God is twofold: God is just, but he is

he "did not come to be served, but to serve, and

also the justifier.

to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark

Luther was right to say that God is just. The

10:45). "You were bought at a price," Paul says.

justice of God is an expression of his holiness,

"You are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:20,

which is in total opposition to our sin. There is

19).

a genuine hostility that God feels when we fla—

There was a young boy who lived in a New

grantly violate his will. To violate God's holy

England seaport and loved to watch the boats

standard is to incur a penalty that must be

come in from their daily catch. One day he de—

paid. Justice must be satisfied with judgment.

cided to build a little sailboat all his own. He

This Luther understood all too well.

worked for weeks, making sure every detail

But that is not the whole story, as Luther

was right. The big day finally arrived when he

came to realize. God is just, but he also justi—

would launch his boat. As he watched trium—

fies. He not only exacts demands, but shows

phantly, the wind changed suddenly and his

mercy as well. Justification is a legal term, but little boat was swept out of sight. He was bro-it does not mean we are not guilty or declared kenhearted. Every day he went to the beach to

innocent before God. Justification is full rec—

see if his boat had washed up on shore, but it

ognition that the crime has been committed

was never there. Then one day he saw his boat

and there must be a payment for it. So on the

in a store window. He ran inside and excitedly

one hand God's verdict is "Guilty as charged,"

told the shopkeeper that it was his boat. The

and on the other hand it says "You're free. Pay—

woman informed him that the boat would cost

ment for the crime has been made." Justifica—

him five dollars. After pleading to no avail, the

tion means that all the demands of the law

boy pulled out the money and gave it to the

have been met. Equally balanced in the phrase

woman. As he left the store, he was heard to

"righteousness of God" are justice and mercy.

say, "Little boat, you are twice mine. You are

But how can we be guilty yet also be free to go?

mine because I made you, and you are mine

How can God remain just and also release us

because I bought you." The death of Jesus was

from payment of sin?

the purchase price of our life. We have been

bought back.

GOD'S MERCY: REDEMPTION AND

Propitiation is the second word used to de-

PROPITIATION

scribe God's gift of righteousness. The NIV

Paul addresses this seeming paradox with two

translation avoids this technical word with the

key words: redemption and propitiation. "They phrase "sacrifice of atonement." A more literal

are justified freely by his grace through the re—

translation of the text would read, "They are

demption that came by Christ Jesus" (v. 24).

justified by his grace as a gift, through the re-

Justification is a word associated with law

demption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God

courts, whereas redemption is a word con—

put forward as a propitiation by his blood" (Ronected to the marketplace. Slaves sold in the

mans 3:24-25).2

Justification

To propitiate is to satisfy anger, a concept
instantaneous believers when their world
prevalent in pagan mythology. In a story of the
comes crashing down around them. Temporal
Trojan War, Paris carried off Helen to Troy. The
faith is using God as a temporary means to re—
Greek force sent to rescue Helen was held up
trieve us from a bad situation. When the cir—
by ferocious winds, prompting Agamemnon,
cumstance eases, then the faith disappears.
the Greek general, to send for his daughter,
Faith is not mere intellectual assent. Bibli—
who was ceremonially sacrificed to mollify the
cal faith is not just acknowledging a certain set
anger of the gods. The gods, now satisfied,
of facts to be true. We might be able to agree
caused the winds to blow in the right direction
with certain propositions—Jesus is God's Son,
so that the rescue could be performed.
he died for our sins on the cross, the Bible is
But instead of humans making offerings to

God's Word. But holding these rational convic—

satisfy God's anger, God himself takes the initions doesn't mean we have saving faith.

tiative and puts forth his own Son as the offer—

Take the life of Elvis Presley as an example.

ing for our sin. Jesus paid the penalty for our

He grew up in a Christian home in Mississippi.

sin by bearing it on the cross and satisfying

During his childhood he attended summer

God's justice, and at the same time offering us

church camp for five consecutive years, and

mercy as the One who took our place. God is

each summer he went for free because he

just and the justifier of all who have faith in

memorized 350 Scripture verses. Yet this in—

Jesus.

tellectual knowledge of Scripture didn't seem

to have an effect on his life. Head knowledge is

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

not the same as saving faith. So what is real,

"Faith in Jesus Christ" is the second key

saving faith?

phrase in Romans 3:21-31. How do we make

Faith is putting your trust or confidence in

God's righteousness our own? "This righteous-

the right object. Faith is only as good as the ness from God comes through faith in Jesus

object you have faith in. This is conveyed in

Christ to all who believe. . . . [We are] justified

the Chinese symbol for faith, hsin. The charac—

freely by his grace through the redemption

ter pictures a man and a square with several

that came by Christ Jesus . . . through faith in

short lines depicting his speech. The meaning

his blood" (vv. 22, 24-25). Faith is the instru—

of the symbol is that faith is the confidence

ment by which we attach ourselves to Christ.

that one has in a person and his or her words.

It is the conduit that carries grace to the heart

And even more reliable than words is Jesus

of the believer. But to understand true, biblical

Christ, the ultimate object of our faith.

faith we must first realize what it is not.
Faith is an admission of our bankruptcy.
Faith is not temporal. Temporal faith is
The principle of faith is very different from
synonymous with foxhole faith, faith on re—
what our works-oriented society teaches us.
serve for trying circumstances. People some—
Works-oriented success tells us to hold on to
times treat faith like a spare tire: they hope
our pride and show God that we are pretty
never to have to use it. As long as we can han—
good people. Faith says that we realize that our
dle things, our faith is in ourselves. But when
bank account is overdrawn and we will never
we are in over our heads, we suddenly plead for
have the resources in ourselves to make our—
God to straighten things out. People become
selves right before God. Faith is declaring

bankruptcy and throwing ourselves on the

control and place our faith in Christ, who

mercy of the court.

alone is the one who gives us the free gift of

Faith is an act of commitment. Faith

righteousness. He then credits our account

means putting our entire trust in Jesus Christ.

with his righteousness and stamps “paid in

Paul uses the phrase “the obedience that

full” on our life. “There is now no condemna—

comes from faith” (Romans 1:5). This means

tion for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Ro—

that our entire life is placed at the disposal of

mans 8:1).

Jesus.

May we discover what Luther found: “If you

Faith is a decision. We must decide where

have a true faith that Christ is your savior,

to place our confidence. Ultimately there are

then at once you have a gracious God, for faith

only two options. One option is to trust that we

leads you in and opens up God’s heart and will,

can make ourselves right before God and can

that you should see pure grace and overflow—

control our destiny. But as Luther discovered,

ing love. This is to behold God in faith, that

this leads only to the burden of condemnation

you should look upon his fatherly, friendly

and never knowing when we have done

heart, in which there is no anger nor ungra—

enough. The second option is to relinquish

ciousness."3

1Roland Bainton , Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther (Nashville: Abingdon, 1950), p. 30.

2For a discussion of the meaning of propitiation, see J. I. Packer , Knowing God (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), pp. 162-65.

3Bainton , Here I Stand, p. 50.

Reading Study Guide

1. *How is being made right with God contrary to performance-reward?*

2. *How did Martin Luther misunderstand God's righteousness?*

Justification

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3. *What two elements are included in the righteousness of God?*

4. *How does God satisfy his justice and mercy?*

5. *What is so startling about the biblical concept of propitiation?*

6. *What is saving faith?*

7. *Do you feel that you have exercised saving faith? Why or why not?*

8. *What questions do you have about the reading?*

9. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Bainton, Roland. "The Gospel." Chap. 3 in Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther. Nashville: Abingdon, 1950.



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LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Romans 8:15-16*

BIBLE STUDY: *Galatians 4:1-7; 1 John 3:1-2*

READING: *Abba's Child*

Core Truth

What is the greatest benefit we receive from our new standing with God?

The highest privilege of the Christian life is our adoption as children into God's eternal family through God's natural Son, Jesus Christ.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



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Memory Verse Study Guide

In this section of Romans Paul discusses what it means to be sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit testifies to our adoption, and through becoming part of God's family we are also entitled to an eternal inheritance.

1. *Putting it in context: Trace the concept of adoption through Romans 8:12-17.*

2. *The memory verses are Romans 8:15-16. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *How does being a child of God negate our former slavery to fear?*

4. *What does it mean to cry, "Abba, Father"?*

Why is this something that only a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit can say?

5. *What does Paul mean when he writes that "the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children"?*

6. *When have you experienced a little of what it feels like to be God's child?*

7. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

These passages describe the process and privilege of becoming God's adopted children.

1. *Read Galatians 3:26—4:7. On what basis are we all equal in Christ (3:26-29)?*

2. *In 4:1-3 Paul describes the status of those who are still under the law. How does Paul use the analogy of a child who is an heir to convey his relationship to the law?*

3. *Why was Jesus sent (4:4-5)?*

4. *What is the evidence that we are adopted children of God (4:6)?*

5. *What does it mean to be an heir? How does this make you feel?*

6. *Read 1 John 3:1-2. What privilege does being children of God bestow on us?*

7. *What can we look forward to becoming as children of God?*

8. *What questions do these passages raise?*

9. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



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Reading: Abba's Child

Do you know who you are? Do you know who

and pray for her before she went to sleep. He

you were designed to be? Do you know the Fa—

would then place his hand gently on her face

ther's intent for your life? You are meant to

and say, "Sleep well, Corrie. I love you." She

hear in your spirit the same thing Jesus heard

would remain very still because she wanted to

when he came out of the waters of baptism at

feel the touch of his hand as she fell asleep.

the beginning of his ministry: "You are my

Years later in the concentration camp she reSon, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"

membered the feel of her father's hand on her

(Mark 1:11).

face. When lying on a wretched, dirty mattress

Romans 8:15-16 attests to the highest privi—

she would say, “O Lord, let me feel Your hand

lege of the Christian life and the deepest long—

upon me.”2

ing of our hearts: knowing God as our perfect

Some argue that if we had an inadequate

Father. “For you did not receive a spirit that

human father who lacked wisdom or the ability

makes you a slave again to fear, but you received

to show affection, or who abandoned or abused

the spirit of sonship [adoption]. And by him we

us, we can’t see God as a loving Father. But the

cry, ‘ Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies good news is that our relationship with God as

with our spirit that we are God’s children.”

Father is not limited to our experience with

J. I. Packer puts it simply. “What is a Chris—

our parents. God is a Father who is faithful in

tian? The question can be answered in many

love and care, generous and thoughtful, inter—

ways, but the richest answer I know is that a

ested in all we do, skillful in training, wise in

Christian is one who has God for his Father."1

guidance, always available, helpful in teaching

In other words, we are designed to live in a

us maturity and integrity—no matter what our

family. Our highest privilege and deepest need

earthly fathers were like.

is to experience the holy God as our loving Father, to approach him without fear and to be

OUR DAD

assured of his fatherly care and concern.

Scripture teaches that our Father can be the

same one Jesus had. Paul tells us that the ind-

GOD AND OUR EARTHLY FATHERS

welling Holy Spirit causes us to cry out, "Abba,

It has been observed that our first impressions

Father," words spoken by Jesus. In the garden

of God are derived from the model of our par—

of Gethsemane just hours before his crucifix—

ents. Our ability to trust God, to become inti—

ion, Jesus poured out his soul to his Father.

mate and self-revealing with him comes from

Mark tells us that Jesus threw himself to the

the model for good or for ill that we have in

ground not far from his dozing disciples. In evour parents.

ident pain he cried out, "Abba, Father. . . . Take Corrie ten Boom, the great Dutch Chris-this cup from me [the cup of his sacrificial tian, tells how she learned to trust God when

death]. Yet not what I will, but what you will"

she was in a German concentration camp be-

(Mark 14:36). What is unusual here is the way

cause of the model of her father. As a child she

Jesus addresses God. Abba is an Aramaic word

would call out in the evening, "Papa, I'm ready

that expresses an intimate family relationship,

for bed." Her father would come to her room

a word used by a completely trusting and de-

pendent child wholly secure in the loving arms

ADOPTED CHILDREN OF GOD

of a father. "Dearest Father" is an equivalent

When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in

expression in English. Old Testament scholar

our lives, we too can cry, “Abba, Father.” The

Joachim Jeremias thoroughly searched litera—

same Spirit that proceeds from the relation—

ture leading up to New Testament times to see

ship between the Father and the Son is im—

if anyone had dared address God in such famil—

planted in us. The difference between us and

iar terms, and he found no previous usage. It

Jesus is that he is the natural Son of the Fa—

would have been scandalous to address the

ther, whereas we are adopted into the family

Holy One this way, the One whose name was so

through his sacrifice.

sacred that it was not even spoken, yet Jesus

We are all spiritual orphans. Our rebel—

was on a first-name basis with the God of the

lious and sinful nature cut us off from God

universe.3

the Father. The Bible says quite clearly that

How did the Father feel about his Son? At

we are not born children of God and therefore

the beginning of his public ministry Jesus pre—

must go through an adoption process. The

sented himself for baptism to John the Baptist.

price of our adoption was the death of God's

As Jesus came out of the water, a dove repre—

Son. C. S. Lewis wrote, "The Son of God be—

senting the Holy Spirit descended on him, and

came a man to enable men to become the

a voice spoke from the heavens. Matthew

sons of God."4

records this as an announcement of God's

The good news is that when we recognize

pleasure with his Son: "This is my son, whom

that we are spiritual orphans in need of the FaI love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew

ther, we can go through the Son. When we ac—

3:17). Mark records the message as a more per—

knowledge that our sin has severed the rela—

sonal statement from Father to Son: "You are

tionship with the Father, that Jesus is the

my Son, whom I love; with you I am well

gracious payment for our sin and then accept

pleased" (Mark 1:11).

the gift of forgiveness offered by inviting the

Every parent knows on a human level what

Spirit of Jesus into our life, then we can cry,

the great God of the universe felt toward his

"Abba, Father." We are at home at last, wel—

eternal Son. When our daughter went to col—

comed into God's family.

lege, my wife and I certainly had heightened

As adopted children we can enjoy the same

feelings of pride and protection. As we walked

favor that Jesus has with the Father. We too are

back to the car to leave her in her new environ—

the apple of God's eye, the pleasure of his love,

ment, I wanted to turn to the campus and say,

the delight of his focus. And if we didn't get all

"Do you know who I have delivered here? The

that we wanted or needed in our human fa—

most precious person in my life." The Father

thers, we are invited even more deeply into the

knew the danger into which he was sending

pleasure that the Father of heaven and earth

his Son. He knew that his life would end in tor—

takes in his Son, and us. We have been in—

ture on the cross and that when faced with the

cluded in the family and hear the Father say,

separation that the cross would bring, Jesus

"You are my child, whom I love; with you I am

needed to know that his Father took pleasure,

well pleased." We now have the Father we al—

delight and pride in him.

ways needed and wanted.

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OUR RICH INHERITANCE

Father bestows on the Son. As Jesus prayed

But that's not where the text ends. If we are

moments before his arrest, he made our inher—

full-fledged members of the family, there is an

itance with him plain: “Father, I want those

inheritance waiting for us. “If we are children,

you have given me to be with me where I am,

then we are heirs—heirs of God and coheirs

and to see my glory, the glory you have given

with Christ” (Romans 8:17). We have been in—

me because you loved me before the creation

cluded in the will and stand to inherit such

of the world” (John 17:24). Jesus wraps up his

things as resurrection bodies that do not de—

prayer by asking the Father to bestow on us

cay, and a new heaven and new earth, for start—

the same love that he has for Jesus: “I have

ers. The will also mentions that we’ll have a

made you known to them . . . in order that the

family to spend eternity with, in a life free of

love you have for me may be in them and that

pain, crying, disease and death. But that’s still

I myself may be in them” (v. 26).

not the best part. The best part is that we are

We are drawn into the family circle and get

heirs of God. The will reads: "I, God, bequeath

to enjoy the spillover of the Father's love for

myself to you for all eternity."

the Son. As we bring this section on the mes—

We are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ,

sage of Christ to a close, we end where we

and therefore we get in on all that Jesus inher—

started. We began examining the meaning of

its. When Jesus was in the upper room before

being created in the image of God and discov—

going to the cross, he longed to return to the

ered that this meant we were created for rela—

presence of his Father. He prayed in John 17:5,

tionship. To be adopted into God's family is to

"Father, glorify me in your presence with the

be restored to paradise lost. God sent Jesus as

glory I had with you before the world began."

the image of the invisible God (Colossians

Jesus was looking forward to the joy on the

1:15) to restore the image of God in us. We find

other side of the cross. The writer of Hebrews

our way home only when the Holy Spirit

says that "for the joy set before him [Jesus] encomes to take residence in us and we cry out,

dured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). As coheirs

"Abba, Father." Welcome home!

with Jesus we get to share in the glory that the

1J. I. Packer , Knowing God (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 181.

2David Seamands , Healing Grace (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1998), p. 50.

3Joachim Jeremias , The Central Message of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), quoted in Michael Green , I Believe in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 54.

4C. S. Lewis, quoted in Hymns for the Family of God (Nashville: Paragon, 1976), p. 167.

Reading Study Guide

1. *What is the fundamental definition of what a Christian is?*

2. *What points stood out to you in the discussion of our concept of God coming from our parents?*

3. *What does being able to call God Abba and Father convey about the nature of our relationship with him?*

4. *The Father has the same view of us as he has of his Son since we are his adopted children. Is it difficult for you to believe that God takes pleasure in, is proud of and delights in you? Why or why not?*

5. *What does Paul mean when he calls us "heirs of God and coheirs with Christ"?*

6. *How does this study on adoption bring us full circle to what it means to be created in the image of God?*

7. *What questions do you have about this reading?*

8. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Packer, J. I. "Sons of God." Chap. 19 in Knowing God. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973.

Part Three

BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

The words of C. S. Lewis serve as an excellent transition from the previous section: "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."1 God acted in Christ to restore our relationship with the Father, which in turn restores God's image in us. What God is after is new people who reflect his life in them.

The new life in us is the Holy Spirit (chapters fourteen and fifteen), sent to indwell us. The first two chapters of this section complete the trinitarian structure that began in chapter seven, "The Three-Person God." Chapters seven and eight focused on the sovereign God whose likeness we share. As God is a being in fellowship, so we were made for relationships. Chapters eleven through thirteen focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. We begin this third section, "Becoming Like Christ," by focusing on the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is what makes us Christians. Chaper fourteen introduces what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, whose primary role is to point to Jesus Christ, and chapter fifteen describes the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The amazing truth Christians celebrate is that the life of Christ lives within us: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

Chapter sixteen reminds us that the place where we entered our relationship with

Christ is the place from which we continue. Paul exhorted the Galatians not to start in faith and end in self-effort (Galatians 3:3). Another word for faith is trust. Trust is inseparable from obedience. In trust we follow the God of adventure wherever he leads us. Trust means having confidence in our promise-keeping God.

The quintessential quality that defines a disciple of Jesus is love (chapter seventeen). What Francis Schaeffer called "the mark of a Christian" is a powerful call to the church to exhibit "observable love." Jesus has given the world the right to judge whether we are Christians based on the love the world sees among Jesus' followers.

Love with a social conscience turns our hearts to the poor and needy (chapter eighteen). Biblical justice is combination of addressing the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of society's vulnerable ones, as well as exposing the injustice and exploitation in oppressive societal structures.

Finally, witness must also be in words, as well as deeds, for it is proclaiming the gospel that is the

"power of God for . . . salvation" (Romans 1:16). God has entrusted us with his message to break down the strongholds of sin in people's hearts and reconcile them to himself (chapter nineteen).

1C. S. Lewis, quoted in Hymns for the Family of God (Nashville: Paragon, 1977), p. 167.



14 / Filled with the Holy Spirit

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Ephesians 5:18-20*

BIBLE STUDY: *John 14:15-18; 16:5-15*

READING: *The Intimate Presence*

Core Truth

How are we empowered by God to want to follow Jesus?

Jesus promised that he would not leave us alone but would send the Counselor, who would come alongside to help. This Counselor, known as the Holy Spirit, is free to work in us as we empty ourselves of known sin and seek to be continuously filled with his indwelling power.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Memory Verse Study Guide

Paul urges the Ephesians to imitate God by being filled with the Holy Spirit, always giving thanks and praising the One who sent his Spirit to be with us.

1. *Putting it in context: Read Ephesians 5:1-20. Make a list of Paul's exhortations in Ephesians 5:1-17. What general impression do you get from these exhortations?*

2. *The memory verses are Ephesians 5:18-20. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *What is Paul's point in contrasting being filled with the Spirit with getting drunk with wine (see Acts 2:13-17)?*

4. *What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit"?*

5. *In verses 19 and 20 Paul lists three characteristics of those who are filled with the Spirit. What are they?*

Why are they evidence of the Spirit's filling?

6. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Though Jesus had spoken of the Holy Spirit at other times in his ministry, the Holy Spirit takes center stage on the eve of Jesus' departure. On the night before his crucifixion Jesus gathers with his disciples in the upper room (John 13—17). He says to them, "My children, I will be with you only a little longer" (John 13:33). He then assures them that it was to their advantage that he go away, for he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them and live in them.

1. *Read John 14:15-18; 16:5-15. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit "another Counselor" (John 14:16).*

What does this tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit? (Read this verse in different translations. What different words for "Counselor" do you find?) ***2.*** *What does Jesus teach us about the Holy Spirit in John 14:15-18?*

3. *How could it possibly be to the disciples' advantage that Jesus go away (16:7)?*

4. *What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit (16:8-13)?*

5. *What is the Spirit's relationship to Jesus (16:14-15)?*

6. *What questions do these passages raise for you?*

7. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Reading: The Intimate Presence

Darrell Johnson

John 14—16 is a record of the last words our

made the disciples shudder and threw them

Lord spoke to his disciples the night before he

into profound confusion. For three wonderful

was crucified. Picture yourself in that context,

years they had enjoyed his company. They had

in the place called the Upper Room. You are re—

come to depend on his intimate companion—

clining on the floor around a large table. The

ship. When they were with Jesus they felt se—

food and drink of the Passover meal are spread

cure, they had hope, they were not as afraid,

over the table. Although there is much joy,

and they knew themselves to be loved uncon—

there is also a feeling of heaviness in the room.

ditionally. “I am going away”: they shuddered

As the evening progresses, Jesus does a

at those words, and their hearts were filled

number of surprising things. He begins by

with fear, the fear of being left alone, of having

changing the prescribed order of the Passover

to face the rest of life without this trusted commeal at two places. He takes a loaf of bread, and

panion.

after saying the traditional blessing he breaks

What startles the disciples then, and us

it and hands it to you, saying, “This is my

now, is what Jesus says in John 16:7: “But I tell

body.” He then takes a cup of wine, and after

you the truth: It is for your good that I am go—

saying another traditional blessing he offers it

ing away.”

to you, saying, “This cup is the new covenant

How could that be? How could it possibly be

in my blood.”

to the disciples’ advantage to live in the ab—

Then he gets up from the table, takes off his

sence of Jesus’ physical presence?

outer garments, wraps a towel around his

Jesus continues: “Unless I go away, the

waist, gets down on his knees and begins wash—

Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I

ing your feet. After doing this for everyone in

will send him to you” (16:7).

the room he returns to his place around the ta—

The word translated “Counselor” is notori—

ble. And then comes the biggest surprise of all:

ously difficult to render with one English

devastating news. “Children,” he says, “I will

word, which is why different translations of

be with you only a little longer” (John 13:33).

the Bible use different terms. The King James

And for the rest of the evening Jesus prepares

Version translates it "Comforter." The NIV and

you and the others to go on living in the ab—

RSV have "Counselor." The New English Bible,

sence of his physical presence. "I am going to

New Jerusalem Bible and NRSV have "Advo—

him who sent me" (John 16:5).

cate." The NASB has "Helper." J. B. Phillips uses

the phrase "Someone to stand by you." Al-

A TROUBLING REVELATION

though that is a mouthful, the latter is proba—

No wonder Jesus begins by saying, "Do not let

bly the best. The verb form of the word for the

your hearts be troubled" (John 14:1). The word

Spirit has a wide variety of meanings: to call in,

for troubled used here is a strong, emotional

send for, exhort, encourage, comfort,

feeling-word. It means to shudder, to be

strengthen, console, connect, convince. In

thrown into confusion. Jesus' announcement

classical Greek the word is a legal term. It re-

Filled with the Holy Spirit

fers to someone called in as a representative

from it. But when the Spirit is thought of as

and advocate to plead another's case.

"he," we have to decide how we are going to re—

John uses the term in the "advocate" sense

spond to him.

in 1 John 2:1 where he writes: "My dear chil—

We find the personhood of the Spirit cele—

dren, I write this to you so that you will not

brated in the book of Acts. Luke tells us that

sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who

the Spirit

speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus

• speaks (1:16; 8:29; 10:19)

Christ, the Righteous One." Jesus, sent from

• is lied to (5:3)

the Father to the world, returns to the Father

• is tempted (5:9)

to be our advocate, representing us and plead-

• bears witness (5:32)

ing our case.

In the upper room Jesus claims that it is for

• is resisted (7:51)

the good of all of his disciples that he go away

• snatches (8:39)

physically. Unless he goes, the Spirit will not

• gives orders (13:2)

come. But if he goes he will send "One called

• sends (13:4)

in alongside." The disciples and we will not be

• thinks (15:28)

alone in Jesus' physical absence.

• forbids (16:6)

Why is this better than Jesus' physical presence? Jesus says:

• prevents (16:7)

• appoints (20:28)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give

you another Counselor to be with you

The personhood of the Spirit is also af—

forever—the Spirit of truth. The world

firmed in the New Testament letters. The

cannot accept him, because it neither

Spirit helps us pray (Romans 8:16), searches sees him nor knows him. But you know

our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10), teaches (1

him, for he lives with you and will be in

Corinthians 2:13), leads (Romans 8:14; Gala—

you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will

tians 5:18), speaks (1 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews

come to you. (John 14:16-18)

3:7; 10:15), predicts (1 Peter 1:11), is grieved (Ephesians 4:30).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRIT

■ ***Another Like Jesus***

What is the Spirit like? Following are four key

characteristics.

The passage says that the Holy Spirit is "a second of the same kind and not of a different

■ ***A Person***

kind." Who is the first Counselor of whom the

The word for "spirit" is a neuter noun, neither

Spirit is the same kind? Jesus of Nazareth. He

male nor female. John breaks all the rules of

is the first one called in alongside as comforter,

Greek grammar when he refers to the Spirit

counselor, helper, advocate. He promises that

with masculine personal pronouns! The point

when he goes away physically, he will send in

is that the Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Spirit

another of the same kind. In Jesus' physical abis not an impersonal force or influence. This is

sence "another", just like Jesus, comes in

important because as long as the Spirit is

alongside, which is why Jesus says to the disci—

thought of as "it," we can distance ourselves

ples, "You know him." The "another" has been

abiding in Jesus all along. The "another" is

[Counselor] will dwell in them."2 Because of

stamped with the very personality of Jesus.

the coming of the Spirit, our bodies, mortal

When the Spirit comes, we disciples do not

and sinful though they are, have become the

meet a stranger.

Holy of Holies, the sacred dwelling place of the

Thus the rest of the New Testament speaks

living One!

of the presence of the Spirit and the presence of

Christ in the same breath. They cannot be sep-

arated. To be "in Christ" is to be "in the Spirit";

Jesus refers to the "Holy Spirit" and the "Spirit

to be "indwelt by Christ" is to be "indwelt by the

of truth." We say the word holy so often we for—

Spirit"; to have Christ "make intercession for

get that it means "wholly other," "distinct,"

us" is to have the Spirit "make intercession for

"pure." The Spirit dwelling alongside and

us" (see Romans 8:9-10; 8:26, 34).

within us is pure and is working to purify us,

to cleanse us, to free us from all that displeases

■ ***With Us Always***

God.

At Jesus' first coming his presence was re—

The indwelling Spirit is fulfilling God's

stricted by geography and time. If Jesus was in

Word: "Be holy, because I, the LORD your God,

Capernaum and the disciples were in Jerusa—

am holy" (Leviticus 19:2; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

lem, he could not be with them. In the coming

That is why, even though the presence of the

of "another Counselor" the presence of Jesus is

Spirit comforts, it also disturbs. The Spirit cre—

no longer restricted. Michael Green writes, "In

ates a holy discontent with the way things are

the days of His flesh Jesus was limited by space

in ourselves and in the world. The Spirit will

and time. His physical departure made possi—

not rest, nor let us rest, until we become like

ble the coming of the Spirit, . . . and there

the One who sent him.

would be no barriers of space and time to pre-

"Spirit of truth" will teach and guide into all

vent disciples being in intimate contact with

truth (John 14:26; 16:13). The indwelling pres—

Him."1

ence teaches us the truth about ourselves,

In the coming of the Holy Spirit Jesus ful—

about the world and about God. We should not

fills his promise: "And surely I am with you al—

be surprised, therefore, that the rest of the

ways" (Matthew 28:20). In the presence of the

New Testament puts such an emphasis on

Spirit the reality of Jesus as Immanuel, God

knowing, doing and speaking the truth. In—

with us, is realized. That is why it is to our addeed, not speaking the truth grieves the Spirit

vantage that Jesus went away physically!

of God (Ephesians 4:25-30). When we find ourselves having to hide, deny or stretch the

■ ***Dwells in Us***

truth, we can be sure that we are not being

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you an—

guided by the Spirit. The uneasiness we feel

other Counselor. . . . He lives with you and will

when we exaggerate or lie or otherwise play

be in you" (John 14:16-17). The disciples

with the truth is not simply the result of com—

would now “find the relationship even closer
promising our own conscience; the uneasiness
than companionship with Jesus in the days of
is due to the Spirit’s disappointment.
His flesh. . . . He has dwelt with them, but the
The good news is that the Spirit is at work
one whom He promises as another Paraclete
wooing, pulling, pushing, leading us into
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truth. He is constantly leading us to Jesus
Bruner says. He constantly turns the spotlight
Christ, who is the truth incarnate (John
off himself and shines it on the God-man. Any
14:6). As the apostle Paul says, in Christ “all
moving of the Spirit, therefore, that does not
the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are
lead people to Christ is not the moving of the
hidden (Colossians 2:3). The great passion of
Spirit of God. The passion of the Spirit of God
the Spirit is that human beings know Christ

is to make the living Christ the center of our

in all his fullness and then evaluate every—

lives.

thing in light of him. The Spirit is radically

It is to our advantage that Jesus goes away

Christ-centered.

physically. When Jesus goes he sends another,

a Person of the same kind as himself who con-

"HE WILL GLORIFY ME"

tinues Jesus' presence with us, who comes to

"He will bring glory to me," says Jesus of the

live in us, slowly, but surely, making us more

Spirit of truth (John 16:14). The Holy Spirit is

like the Holy One and helping us see all of life

the "shy member of the Trinity," as Dale

in light of the One who is the Truth.

1Michael Green , I Believe in the Holy Spirit (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 42-43.

2Ibid., p. 43.

Reading Study Guide

1. *Describe in your own words the setting in which Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit.*

2. *Why is it to our advantage that Jesus sent his Holy Spirit?*

3. *What new insights about the person and work of the Holy Spirit did you receive as a result of this study?*

4. *What misconceptions about the Holy Spirit were clarified as a result of this study?*

5. *How do you view the purpose of the Holy Spirit in your life?*

6. *What questions do you have about the reading?*

7. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Watson, David. "Life in the Spirit." Chap. 5 in Called and Committed: World-Changing Discipleship. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.



15 / Fruit of the Holy Spirit

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Galatians 5:22-23*

BIBLE STUDY: *Galatians 5:16-26*

READING: *The Fruit of Christ's Character*

Core Truth

What is the role of the Holy Spirit in transforming us into the image of Christ?

The Spirit is holy, for he produces the character of Christ in those in whom he dwells. These character qualities are known as the fruit of the Spirit.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Memory Verse Study Guide

We are called to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, which is listed in Galatians 5:22-23.

1. *Putting it in context: We will examine the larger context in our study on Galatians 5:16-26.*

Simply note at this point the principal force in opposition to the fruit of the Spirit.

2. *The memory verses are Galatians 5:22-23. Copy these verses verbatim.*

3. *Why is fruit in the singular instead of the plural?*

4. *Does fruit in the singular mean that all of these characteristics are equally present in our lives?*

Why or why not?

5. *What does Paul mean by the phrase "against such things there is no law"?*

6. *Where do you sense Jesus is stretching your character to be more like him?*



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Inductive Bible Study Guide

The teaching on the fruit of the Spirit is set within the context of the battle raging inside of us between our old and new natures.

1. *Read Galatians 5:16-26. Put in your own words the nature of the battle between the Spirit and the flesh.*

2. *What does Paul mean by "the desires of the sinful nature"?*

3. *Paul indicates that we have the ability to exercise our will. What is the nature of our choice?*

4. *As you read the list of the acts of the sinful nature, what still needs to be put to death in you and replaced by the fruit of the Spirit?*

5. *Why is one who is led by the Spirit not under the law?*

6. *What does it mean to have crucified the sinful nature (v. 24)? How then does God produce his life in us?*

7. *What questions does this passage raise for you?*

8. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Reading: The Fruit of Christ's Character

A little girl and her mother were talking as

rious use of the singular fruit. Paul writes,

they walked out of church. The mother asked

"But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . , " when we

her daughter how she liked church that day.

might expect the plural, "The fruits of the

The girl replied that she thought it was good,

Spirit are . . . " (Galatians 5:22). This is because

but she was a little confused. She said, "The

the fruit is the multifaceted character of one

pastor said that God was bigger than we are. Is

person, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the

that true?" Her mother responded that it was

Spirit of Christ. The image of the vine and

true. "He also said that God lives inside us. Is

branches describes the fruit of the Spirit as be—

that true, Mommy?" "Yes." "Well then," said

ing like a cluster of grapes. There is a single

the girl, "if God is bigger than we are, and if he

stem attached to a vine, from which a cluster

lives inside us, then shouldn't some of him

grows. Each grape in the cluster is a character—

show through?"

istic of Jesus.

This cute story points to the heart of what it

Let's take a look at the grapes in this cluster,

means to be a Christian. A Christian is one in

one at a time. Then we will examine how they

whom Christ dwells. One of Paul's favorite

are grown in us.

shorthand phrases that captures this is "Christ

in you." Earlier in his letter to the Galatians

LOVE: UNCONQUERABLE BENEVOLENCE

Paul portrayed himself as a midwife vicari—

Heading the list is the definitive quality that

ously experiencing labor pains on behalf of the

shines through Jesus and is to mark his follow—
Galatians, who are going through the birth
ers. Jesus said, “By this all men will know that
process. “My dear children, for whom I am
you are my disciples, if you love one another”
again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is
(John 13:35). To love your enemies and forgive
formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).
those who intend your destruction is a love
As the living Christ takes over more and
that comes from above.
more of our will, we will give off the scent of
The story of a Korean couple illustrate this
Christ. This is how Paul describes himself and
kind of love. Their son, Ho Ho, had graduated
his companions: “But thanks be to God, who
with honors from Eastern College and was
. . . through us spreads everywhere the fragrance
completing his medical degree at the Univer—
of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the
sity of Pennsylvania. While mailing a letter to

aroma of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14-15).

his family, Ho Ho was surrounded by a gang of

So whether we use the image of spreading

teenage hoods, robbed of his pocket change

the scent of Christ or of producing the succu—

and beaten to death. Ho's parents sat through

lent fruit of Christ, Christ is to be manifest

the entire trial saying nothing. Only after the

through our personality. Galatians 5:16-23 re—

guilty verdict was announced were they given

minds us of Jesus' description of our relation—

the opportunity to speak. They stepped for—

ship to him as branches connected to a vine

ward and knelt in front of the judge's bench.

(John 15:1-11).

The crowd sat in stunned silence as the par—

What is the fruit we are to bear? The clue to

ents begged for mercy for their son's murder—

the nature of the fruit we are to bear is the cu—

ers. And not only that, but they asked the judge

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to release the teenagers so that they could give

it is signed for perpetuity. . . . When we sin,

these boys the home they never had. They told

God is displeased, and He will move to correct

the judge that they were Christians and there—

us and convict us of our sin. But He does not

fore wanted to show the same grace they had

go to war against us."1

received from God to those who had done this

The Hebrew word for peace is shalom. Sha—

grievous evil.

lom is not so much the absence of war but the

Love is God's unconquerable benevolence.

presence of a benevolent, just and honorable

king. Shalom reigned in the land of Israel

JOY: BASKING IN THE FATHER'S DELIGHT

when the people knew that their sovereign was

When we see ourselves as street urchins dea man of character. We live in peace knowing

serving punishment and yet are forgiven by

that our Sovereign, who has made peace with

the same one who should condemn us, joy is

us, sits on the throne of the universe, moving

the result. The prodigal son came home to a fa-

“all things . . . for the good of those who love

ther’s embrace and became the honored guest

him, who have been called according to his

at a party. Joy is living under the pleasure of

purpose” (Romans 8:28). It is serenity from se—

the Father’s delight in you. It is knowing that

curity.

we are the apple of his eye. Can you believe

that the Lord considers us his inheritance?

PATIENCE: LONGSUFFERING

What the Lord deems as his treasure for all

The word translated “patience” is a compound

eternity is us.

word meaning longsuffering. When the father

Joy transcends circumstances. We often

of the prodigal son waited for his son to return,

confuse happiness and joy. Happiness has to

he did so with an open heart. He was living

do with "everything going my way," whereas

with the open wound of rejection. The father

joy can coexist with suffering and grief. Joy is

could have cauterized the open wound by dis—

stable, because it is rooted in hope. Jesus said,

owning his son with a furious dismissal, yet in-

"Take heart! I have overcome the world"

stead he displayed one of the ingredients of pa-

(John 16:33). Hope grounded in Christ's

tience: being slow to anger.

death and resurrection is knowing how the

We often do not extend the same patience to

story ends. Joy is that we know there is a

others that we want God to have with us. I try

happy ending.

to remember the following story when my patience has run out for those who are not living

PEACE: SERENITY FROM SECURITY

up to my expectations. A medieval peasant

"Therefore, since we have been justified

woman happened upon a Benedictine monk.

through faith, we have peace with God

She fell down before him and blurted out,

through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans

"Please tell me, holy father, what do you men

5:1). Our peace is a result of God's making his

of God do up there in the monastery on the

peace with us. The Holy God, whose very be—

hill?" The monk answered wisely, "I will tell

ing is at war with our sinful character, recon—

you, my child: We fall down and we get up! We

ciled us to himself by putting forward Jesus

fall down and we get up! We fall down and we

Christ as the peace offering for our sin. R. C.

get up!" If God suffers when I stumble, can't I

Sproul says, "When God signs a peace treaty,

wait in suffering for others?

heart of his character. Two altars were erected.

Simple kindness is often missing in our world. On each sat half the carcasses of a bull, a goat, We live in an “in your face” culture marked by a ram and two birds. Passing between these belligerence, intimidation and incivility. We two altars were the symbols of God in the form get what we want through bullying and bois— of a blazing torch and a smoking pot. It was as terousness. The level of public hostility has if the Lord were saying to Abraham, “May I be reached frightening proportions. cut in two like these animals if I fail to keep my Jesus was no pushover and displayed firm— covenant to make of you a great nation” (see ness and righteous anger toward the religious Genesis 15). establishment, but to the vulnerable and hurt— Lewis Smedes said, “We are most like God ing he was tender. A woman was caught in the when we keep our covenants.” We keep the act of adultery by the self-righteous elite who

covenants we make. Integrity must be our

wanted to bury her under a mound of stones.

middle name. Jesus said, "Let your yes be yes,

Jesus said, "He who is without sin, cast the

and your no, no" (Matthew 5:37). May it be said

first stone" (see John 8:7). When they all

of us, "If she said she would do it, you can

walked away in self-condemnation, Jesus said

count on it."

to the ashamed woman, "Neither do I condemn you. . . . Go now and leave your life of

GENTLENESS: POWER UNDER CONTROL

sin" (John 8:11). The Spirit speaks a gentle

Jesus said of himself, "I am gentle and humble

word through us to other bruised people, a

in heart" (Matthew 11:29). Gentle is also trans—

healing salve in a hostile world.

lated as "meek," yet "meek" does not carry positive connotations. But Jesus said, "Blessed are

GOODNESS: LOVE FOR THE HOLY,

the meek, for they will inherit the earth" (Mat-

MAGNANIMITY OF SPIRIT

thew 5:5). It was said of Moses that he was the

Jonathan Edwards, the eighteenth-century

meekest man in all the earth. This is the same

Puritan preacher, wrote, "Holiness is the most

one who took on the potentate of the age, the

amiable and sweet thing that is to be found in

pharaoh, and led his people from captivity.

heaven or earth." The psalmist says, "Taste and

Meek has nothing to do with being weak. It is

see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8).

the same word used to describe a snorting stal—

One of the definitions of goodness is a love

lion whose power has been harnessed and

for the holy. Goodness can also mean a gener—

brought under the control of the bit. Submis—

osity or magnanimity of spirit. We live in a

sion to the power of God is what gentleness

world full of hurts, bumps and bruises. To get

conveys.

through this life we need a big heart. We need

a generosity of spirit to survive with grace.

SELF-CONTROL: DISCIPLINE AND DIRECT

OUR ENERGIES WISELY

FAITHFULNESS: KEEP OUR PROMISES

Self-control means not allowing our passions

God is a covenant maker and a covenant

to run wild but harnessing them in the direc—

keeper. The first covenant the Lord made with

tion God would have them go. It's as if we were

Abraham was sealed in such a dramatic way

orchestra conductors with powerful players

that it shows us that keeping promises is at the

down in the pit of our lives—passions, desires,

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anger, sex drives, terrifying memories. Any one

there was now a battle waging in him for su—

of these could take off and ruin the symphony.

premacy that he had not faced before. The stu—

But the Holy Spirit gives us the power to stop

dent described to a Christian counselor what

these from destroying us. Take lust, for exam—

he was experiencing: “It’s like there is a mutt

ple. Lust is born when we allow a simple

and a pedigreed dog inside my life, and they

awareness of another person’s attractiveness

are fighting all the time.” The counselor asked

to become a sexual fantasy. We lose control

him which dog was winning. The student

when we dwell on sexual thoughts so that they

thought for a moment and replied, “I guess the

are fanned into a flame of passion. Luther said,

one I feed the most.”

“We cannot help it if birds fly over our heads.

We cannot pit our will against our sinful na—

It is another thing if we invite them to build

ture, but we must submit our will to the Spirit.

nests in our hair.” Self-control is keeping the

Feeding the purebred dog means to submit to

birds out of our hair.

the rule of God in our lives. Life will flow

through us when we know that apart from

HOW ARE THESE QUALITIES PRODUCED

Christ we can do nothing. When we come to

IN US?

terms with the inability to change ourselves,

We have described our Lord when we group to—

then we allow the Lord to be our source.

gether the qualities of love, joy, peace, pa—

Trying to see the fruit that God has pro—

tience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gen—

duced in us is like trying to look at our eyes.

tleness and self-control. Since the Spirit

You can't see that which you see through. The

indwells believers, these are the qualities that

Holy Spirit is like our eyes. But others can see

emerge as we abide in the vine.

the evidence of the Spirit in our lives in a way

In this age of self-improvement programs,

we can't. As an exercise to close my small

self-help books and makeovers, we may think

group, the members affirmed the fruit of the

we can grow the fruit of the Spirit through

Spirit by declaring what we saw in each other.

sheer willpower and personal discipline: grit

We delighted in telling each other of the evi—

your teeth and out pops patience. We can try to

dent ways that Christ's character was finding

act out the qualities that we think make up

expression through our lives. I found myself

love, joy or peace, but this will be artificial

saying, "Really? You see that in me? Thanks,

fruit.

Lord, for being at work in transforming me

To think we can produce fruit through self—

into your image and likeness even though I

effort is failing to see that the Christian life is

can't see it myself." We dragged our weary bod—

a battle. Our old nature, though defeated, is

ies into the meeting and walked out flying

not dead, and it holds on and fights against the

high. What a joy to know that God isn't fin—

new nature of the Spirit. A university student

ished with us yet!

who became a Christian soon discovered that

1R. C. Sproul , The Holiness of God (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1985), p. 197.

Reading Study Guide

1. *What is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian?*

2. *What does the singular use of the word fruit in Galatians 5:22-23 indicate?*

3. *Write a one-sentence definition of your understanding of each one of the fruit of the Spirit.*

love

joy

peace

patience

kindness

goodness

faithfulness

gentleness

self-control

4. *From this list, pick one quality where you have seen growth in your own life and another quality where you need God's grace for growth.*

5. *As an exercise in affirmation, focus on each person in your group and identify the fruit of the Spirit that you see showing through. What Christlike qualities mark your lives?*

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

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6. *What questions do you have about this reading?*

7. *Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Take the list of the fruit of the Spirit and find examples in the Gospels of each of these qualities displayed in Christ's life.



16 / Trust

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Proverbs 3:5-6*

BIBLE STUDY: *Hebrews 11*

READING: *God Works Everything Together for Good*

Core Truth

How are we to grow in the knowledge of Christ?

Paul exhorts the Colossians, "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him" (Colossians 2:6). By faith in God, who is absolutely good, we plug in to the power of the Holy Spirit and set off on a risky adventure to follow wherever Jesus Christ leads.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



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Memory Verse Study Guide

These memory verses focus our attention on the source of wisdom and insight for our life. Because these verses are life directional, they are some of the most memorized.

1. *Putting it in context: Examine the setting of the command and promise of Proverbs 3:5-6 by reading Proverbs 3:1-10. What themes do you discover?*

2. *The memory verses are Proverbs 3:5-6. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *In order to trust in God with all our heart, what must be true about the Lord?*

4. *We are told to "lean not on your own understanding" (v. 5). What does that mean? Does this imply that Christians are not to use reason? Explain.*

5. *What is the importance of the qualifier "in all your ways acknowledge him" (v. 6)?*

6. *What is the promised outcome? What does this mean?*

7. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Hebrews 11 is often called the Hall of Fame of Faith because it catalogs the faithfulness of the great ones who have gone before us. Allow their sense of adventure in following wherever God would lead to enhance your sense of anticipation and risk.

1. *Read Hebrews 11. Rewrite in your own words the definition of faith (v. 1).*

2. *"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (v. 6). Why is faith necessary to please God?*

3. *What are the common elements in the faith of the heroes listed?*

4. *With which of these heroes of faith can you most identify? Why?*

5. *How are you challenged by the faith of these heroes?*

6. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

7. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Reading: God Works Everything Together for Good

The test of faith is the ability to trust God when

Some translations say, "We know that in

life is at its worst. But on what is that trust

everything God cooperates for good." In other

based? The promise on which all the promises

words, our willing and free submission to

of God rest is: "And we know that in all things

God's plan is the way that God moves all things

God works for the good of those who love him,

after his will. One person put the intent of the

who have been called according to his pur—

condition of our love like this: "If a person

pose" (Romans 8:28).

loves God and trusts God and accepts God, if a

We might miss the depth of this verse be—

person feels and knows and is convinced that

cause of its familiarity, and we might also miss

God is an all-wise and all-loving Father, then

its hope because of the flippant manner in

he can humbly accept all that God sends to

which it is tossed around as a superficial cli—

him. Without trusting the grace of God to

ché within the Christian community. We

bring good out of any situation, we will fight

throw this verse at people's trauma like a doc—

God's plan and purpose and then end in bitter—

tor who doesn't want to be bothered by an af—

ness." Our love for God is our statement to

ter-hours call: "Take this verse and call me in

God that we will cooperate with his larger will.

the morning."

The second condition we must meet so that

Paul does not write this to make light of the

in all things God will work for our good is to be

depth of sorrow that we face. He is saying that

"called according to his purpose." To be called

everything that happens to us in this world can

is to be summoned, to hear and respond to

be viewed from the standpoint of our good

Jesus' "follow me." It is to submit ourselves to

God, who rules this world with sovereign

the training of Jesus Christ, whose purpose is

power and therefore moves everything after

to conform us to his image. We can't claim

the benevolence of his will.

God's promise of working all things together

Let's explore the depth of this verse by first

for good unless we have responded and en—

stating what Paul is not saying.

trusted our lives to a God who is good.

THIS PROMISE IS FOR EVERYONE

PAUL IS NOT MAKING LIGHT OF EVIL

There are two conditions that must be met for

In the summer of 1993, while speaking at

this promise to apply to someone's life. The

Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington, it

first condition is emphatic in the Greek struc—

was my privilege to meet a remarkable man,

ture of this verse. Our English translations

Jerry Sittser. Jerry told my wife and me of an

tend to tack on "to those who love God" to the

unspeakable tragedy that occurred in the fall

phrase “in all things God works for the good.”

of 1991. Jerry, along with his mother, wife and

The phrase “to those who love God” in the

four children, were returning home in their

Greek text precedes the promise “in all things

minivan from an outing. It was dusk as they

God works for the good.” It is clear that to be

headed down the winding mountain road.

able to stand under the protection of God we

Coming from the other direction was a car

must evidence a love for God. To love God is to

whose erratic headlights signaled trouble.

obey him.

Jerry noticed the random, zigzag reflection off

the mountain on his side of the road. Before he

of incorporating the mistake into the pattern

could maneuver out of the way the drunk

so that it blends in.

driver collided head-on with his minivan. In

Time gives us perspective. Time transforms

the space of a few moments Jerry lost three

the meaning of events in our life. Much of

generations of women in his family: his

what happens in this world will not be clear or

mother, wife and four-year-old daughter lay

even completed until Christ comes in his king—

dead on the side of the road.

dom and makes all the wrongs right and set—

What took place was evil, the result of the

tles the score of justice. Jerry Sittser will go to

sinful nature of humanity. A person chose to

the grave without knowing the full meaning of

drink and turned his car into a lethal weapon.

the loss of his family, but even in the short five—

Before Jerry could get to the point of truly be—

and-a-half-years since this tragedy, time is

lieving that "in all things God works for good,"

bringing perspective to Jerry, and the good

he had to go through the rage he felt toward

from the tragedy is starting to emerge. He has

the driver and toward God, the sense of mean—

written a wonderful book, A Grace Disguised. 2

inglessness, as well as summoning the

It takes the perspective of time to begin to see

strength to go on while assuming the duties

the events of our life in the broader plan of

and responsibilities of a single father for three

God's purpose.

very traumatized children. Did the knowledge

Life is not arbitrary and capricious. Yet

of God's goodness keep Jerry from sorrow? No.

when you look at some of life's events, you

Believing that God is good is not being pro—

wonder if there is a plan. Larry Crabb has writtected from life's tragedies.

ten, "No one will conclude that God is good by

So what did Paul intend to affirm about this

studying life."3 Jerry Sittser writes, "One of the

wondrous promise, that in everything God

worst aspects of my experience of loss has been

works for the good?

this sense of sheer randomness. The event was

completely outside my control—an 'accident,'

NOT EVERYTHING IS GOOD, BUT GOD

as we say. The threat of anomie was and still is

WORKS FOR THE GOOD IN EVERYTHING

almost unbearable to me. I began to look with

The promise is that even out of that which is

cynicism on the absurdity of life. Maybe, I

evil, God in his sovereign way brings good.

thought, there really is no God and no mean—

Let's look at a number of implications of this

ing to life. I was tormented by an inability to

truth.

discover any explanation that made sense of

God incorporates our detours into his road

this tragedy."4

map. Our cul-de-sacs become his open high—

Tragedy is far more bearable if we can come

ways. Nothing is wasted in God's kingdom.

up with some larger purpose for it. Paul

John Piper puts it like this, "Specifically, the

grounds the truth that God works everything

glorious might of God that we need to see and

for good in the conviction that there is a sov—

trust is the power of God to turn all of our de—

ereign God who sees the expanse of time and

tours and obstacles into glorious outcomes."1

moves all things in accordance with his pur—

One of the characteristics of Persian rugs is

pose. Paul moves from the trenches of time in

that they are full of mistakes, but when the rug

Romans 8:28 to the foundation of the eternal

maker notices a mistake he has a creative way

purpose in verses 29 and 30. Verse 28 is true

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because it rests on the foundation of verses 29

call of God is his eternal summons on our life.

and 30.

We are invited by name to respond to the claim

We live looking at the underside of the fab—

of Jesus on our life. Some have named this

ric on the weaver's loom. What we see from the

God's effectual calling. In other words, God's

underside are dangling threads and random

call effects the desired result. Can we resist the

patterns. Paul moves from the underside of the

call of God? Never. But we can respond will—

weaver's loom to the perch where the weaver

ingly.

sits. He pulls back to a heavenly perspective by

Those he called, he also justified. To be

scanning God's view of eternity. He describes

called is to be made right with God. All the define unbreakable links in a chain moving from

mands of the law have been met when we place

God's plan before time to his culmination in

our faith in Jesus Christ alone for our salva—

the glory of eternity. In everything God works

tion.

for good because he has a purpose for us before

Those he justified, he also glorified. So as—

we were created and sets about to accomplish

sured is Paul that God will bring his people

it while incorporating our free will in the pro—

home that he makes it a completed past action,

cess. "For those God foreknew he also predes-

"glorified." Many have noticed the absence of

tined to be conformed to the likeness of his

the step of sanctification. Paul does not say,

Son, that he might be the firstborn among

"Those he justified, he also sanctified." So sure many brothers. And those he predestined, he

is Paul of God's goodness that once we have

also called; those he called; he also justified; been declared right before God, future glorifi-those he justified, he also glorified " (vv. 29-30).

cation is finished.

Let's look at the links in this unbreakable

chain.

HISTORY TELLS THE TALE

For those God foreknew. To foreknow is to

This leads us to the ultimate event of history

know beforehand. Some view foreknowledge

that showcases the goodness of God. If we

as God's seeing ahead those who will exercise

would not conclude by looking at the events of

faith in him and, based on that decision, pick—

life that the goodness of God will triumph,

ing those who will choose. But knowing in

where can we look? The historical demonstra—

Scripture is a personal knowing, not God scan—

tion that in everything God works for good is

ning time at a distance. To know is to regard,

the cross.

to know with a particular interest, delight and

If we had been present the day of Jesus'

affection. Of all the people on Earth, God fore—

death, would we have seen anything other

knew Israel as his special people. To foreknow

than an act of gratuitous violence? If we had

is to "forelove." For a reason known only to

been followers of Jesus, would we have walked

God he bestows his love on some.

away in despair, saying, "What was the purpose

Those God forknew he also predestined.

of that? Why did he have to die?" At best we

Predestined means that God decreed in ad—

might have concluded that the cross served to

vance that our purpose is to be conformed to

unmask the evil that lurks in the human heart.

the image of his Son, something that does not

But evil triumphed. What else could one con—

happen without considerable trial.

clude?

Those he predestined, he also called. The

Yet to quote Joseph in Genesis 50:20, "You

intended to harm me, but God intended it for

good to them that love God and are

good." Joseph had been left by his brothers for

called according to His purpose. Not just

dead, yet God preserved him to become second

some things but all things! Every single

in command to Pharaoh to further the pur—

thing that happens to us expresses God's

poses of God's chosen people. The cross, that

love for us, and comes to us for the fur—

which was intended for evil, was—in the plan

thering of God's purpose for us. Thus so

and foreknowledge of God—the means to re—

far as we are concerned, God is love to

deem lost humanity. If God can bring good out

us—holy, omnipotent love—at every

of the crucifixion of his Son, then he can bring

moment and in every event of every day's

good from any horror that befalls his children.

life. Even when we cannot see the why

J. I. Packer brings the implication of the

and the wherefore of God's dealing, we

cross home.

know there is love in and behind them;

As believers we find in the cross of Christ

and so we can rejoice always, even when,

assurance that we, as individuals, are be—

humanly speaking, things are going

loved of God; the Son of God . . . loves me

wrong. We know that the true story of

and gave himself for me. Knowing this

our life, when known, will prove to be, as

we are able to apply to ourselves the

the hymn says, "mercy from first to last,

promise that all things work together for

and we are content."5

1John Piper , Future Grace (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1995), p. 173.

2Gerald Sittser , A Grace Disguised (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

3Larry Crabb , Finding God (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), p. 104.

4Sittser , Grace Disguised, p. 97.

5J. I. Packer , Knowing God (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 111.

Reading Study Guide

1. *How has the promise that "God works all things for good" been misused?*

2. *Why would the promise that God works everything together for good be limited to "those who love him" and "have been called according to his purpose"?*

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3. *How does the knowledge of God's goodness address Jerry Sittser's tragedy?*

4. *Share a story from your life in which you have gained perspective.*

• Detours turning into open highways

• *Time bringing a new vantage point*

• *Gaining a sense of purpose over time*

5. *How does verse 28 rest on the foundation of verses 29 and 30?*

6. *What comfort do you find for yourself in the closing quote from J. I. Packer?*

7. *What questions do you have about this reading?*

8. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Lewis, C. S. "The Three Parts of Morality," and "The 'Cardinal Virtues.'" In Mere Christianity. New York: Macmillan, 1981.

Action Page

REVIEWING YOUR COVENANT

Once you have established a covenant, it is important to periodically review its expectations and renew your commitment. As with any relationship we can become lax in our attentiveness to what makes it work. These questions will lead you to refine the covenant and recommit your energies to its accomplishment.

1. *Review your most recent covenant. On a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being highest, rate yourself on your accomplishment of each of the elements in the covenant. Share your rating and explain its meaning to each other.*

2. *As you reflect on the discipling process, what have been the benefits for your growth in Christ up to this point?*

3. *What have been the disappointments or the unfulfilled expectations?*

How might these be overcome?

4. *What changes would you like to make in the disciple's covenant of commitment?*

5. *To what do you need to recommit yourself in order to be faithful to the covenant?*



17 / Love

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *John 13:34-35*

BIBLE STUDY: *John 17:20-26*

READING: *People of the Basin and Towel*

Core Truth

What is the authenticating mark to the unbelieving world that we are followers of Jesus Christ?

Sacrificial love as exemplified in Jesus' voluntary death on the cross is to be reflected in the way Christians relate to each other. This kind of love is so out of step with the world's way that unbe-lievers will take notice.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Memory Verse Study Guide

This lesson connects two passages from Jesus' final words to his disciples in the upper room. The memory verses focus on love as demonstrated in service. The second passage, which is our Bible study, is Christ's call to unity. Love and unity seem to be inseparable.

1. *Putting it in context: The overall setting for Jesus' command to love one another is the last meal with his disciples. How does the footwashing and prediction of betrayal provide the context for this command (John 13:1-35)?*

2. *The memory verses are John 13:34-35. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *Jesus commands, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." How does the word as affect the meaning of the phrase?*

4. *Why is love the authenticating sign to the world that we are disciples of Jesus?*

5. *What would others observe when watching you interact with your Christian friends?*

6. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Love is the sign to the world that we are followers of Jesus, whereas unity is the sign that Jesus was sent from God. Love and unity are what Francis Schaeffer calls the "final apologetic." The defense to the world of the authenticity of our faith is not right belief, but right behavior.

1. *Read John 17:20-26. What does Jesus pray about for us (vv. 20-21)?*

2. *On what is our oneness based (vv. 21-23)?*

3. *What will our oneness prove to the world (v. 23)? Why?*

4. *What attitudes and values do you think characterize oneness?*

5. *What do we as believers allow to divide us from one another?*

6. *In what current relationship do you need to experience reconciliation?*

7. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

8. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Reading: People of the Basin and Towel

What is the mark of a Christian? A fish on the

pall of Jesus' death hangs over this last meal

back of a car? A cross worn around the neck?

with his disciples.

The right theology?

2. Satan makes his move. If this were a cos—

How easy it is to look in the wrong places

mic chess match, Satan is about to declare

for the sign of authenticity! Jesus told us

checkmate. He has one final pawn to move

plainly about the distinguishing mark of a

into place. "The evening meal was being

Christian. He raises one quality above all oth—

served, and the devil had already prompted Ju—

ers: "By this all men will know that you are my

das Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus"

disciples, if you love one another" (John

(John 13:2). Jesus is aware that in a few hours

13:35).

one of his trusted followers will betray him

But what does this love look like? Jesus was

with a kiss in a garden, the sign for blood—

concerned to leave an indelible, visual image

thirsty men to arrest him.

in the minds of his disciples of what it means

3. In spite of impending death and betrayal,

to love one another. He models servant-love by

Jesus is fully cognizant of who he is. He is in washing the disciples' feet.

absolute control. Events of history may appear

to be out of control. The mounting forces of

THE SECURITY OF A SERVANT

evil are a gathering darkness on the horizon,

John 13 introduces a climactic moment cap—

but Jesus has already declared checkmate.

tured in John 13—17, known as the up-

"Jesus knew that the Father had put all things

per-room discourse. John lets us know that

under his power, and that he had come from

Jesus is fully conscious of the importance of

God and was returning to God" (John 13:3).

the moment. John gives us three insights into

Jesus knew where he had come from and

Jesus' self-awareness.

where he was going.

1. Jesus knew that the time had come for

him to leave this world and go to the Father. A ***THE FOOTWASHING***

favorite phrase in John's Gospel is "his hour

With his worth established in his relationship

had not yet come." Jesus operated out of the

with the Father, Jesus was able to assume a

awareness of a divine timetable. Jesus was a

lowly role: "So he got up from the meal, took

man born to die. At one point Jesus' brothers

off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel

wanted him to go to Jerusalem to make a name

around his waist. After that, he poured water

for himself, but he responded, "For me the

into a basin and began to wash his disciples'

right time has not yet come" (John 7:8), for it

feet, drying them with the towel that was

was in Jerusalem that his appointment with

wrapped around him" (John 13:4-5).

death awaited him. On another occasion the

None of the disciples had the humility or

religious leaders wanted to arrest him for what

the courage to play the role of a household

they thought was a blasphemous statement,

slave. Luke's Gospel tells us that they entered

but John writes, "No one laid a hand on him,

the meal debating among themselves who was

because his time had not yet come" (John

the greatest. In Jewish culture footwashing

7:30). But in John 13 "the time had come." The

was such a menial task that it was listed as a

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duty that a Jewish servant should not perform;

vice; it begins with the readiness to receive it."

footwashing was reserved for Gentile slaves,

Peter had to learn to receive before he was

women and children.

ready to give.

When it's time to have his feet washed,Peter

Perhaps the third reason for Peter's resis—

can only sputter and stammer out his objectance was that Jesus came down from the ped—

tion: "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

estal and began to meddle in the dirt of real

(John 13:6). Jesus says something about Pe—

life. We want to keep Jesus polished and on a

ter's not understanding the meaning of what

mantle reserved for religious times. We don't

he is doing now, but that he will understand in

want a Jesus who mucks around in the rough—

the future, but none of this sinks in. Peter is

and-tumble of real life.

too caught up in his own revulsion. "No, . . .

George MacLeod put it powerfully: "I am re—

you shall never wash my feet!" (John 13:8).

covering the claim that Jesus was not crucified

in a Cathedral between two candles, but on a

PETER'S REACTION

cross between two thieves; on the town gar—

What was going on with Peter? Why the in—

bage heap . . . at the kind of place where cynics

tense resistance?

talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gam—

Jesus' action violated the entire way that

ble. Because that is where He died. And that is

Peter had learned to understand value and

what He died about. And that this is where

worth. The lesser serves the greater; this is the

churchmen should be."1

way it is. Peter has been in a competitive discussion with his fellow disciples as to who

LESSONS OF FOOTWASHING

would receive the position of greatest honor

Jesus explains the meaning of the footwashing.

when Jesus sat on the throne. Who would get

He points to the deeper meaning of the symbol

the seat nearest to the center of glory and

and then the importance of his model of hu—

power? Now the greater is acting like the

mility.

lesser. Peter had no frame of reference to un-

Footwashing foreshadows the cross. Taking

derstand this.

up this shameful role points to Jesus' death on

Second, being served by his Lord was a blow

the cross. The footwashing foreshadows the
to Peter's pride and self-sufficiency. To be on
self-degradation of this hideous means of
the receiving end is to be put in a vulnerable
death. Jesus speaks in a way that gets Peter's
position. We want to be in control. It is much
attention: "Unless I wash you, you have no part
easier to condescendingly give to another in
with me" (John 13:8). He is emphatic that he
need. We get our strokes from being there for
must do the washing. Dirty feet are a symbol of
others. We love to hear, "I couldn't have gotten
the need for the deeper cleansing of the cross.
through that illness or grief or loss without
The image of baptism merges with the image
you." We become addicted to the need to be
of the cross. In the waters of baptism our sins
needed. But to be on the receiving end of help
are washed away, but only because the shed
displays weakness that is a blow to our self—
blood of Christ is the way God has provided for

control.

the cleansing of the guilt of our sin.

Archbishop William Temple said, "Man's

Peter remains true to his character to the

humility does not begin with the giving of ser—

end. In typical overreaction Peter displays his

lack of understanding in his resistance and in

You need me here." His eyes were on the look—

his exuberance. Peter says to Jesus, "Then,

out for how he could be helpful. A servant

Lord, . . . not just my feet but my hands and my

doesn't wait to be asked but restlessly looks for

head as well" (John 13:9). In response to Peter

unmet needs.

Jesus essentially says, "Peter, it is not the

A servant focuses far more on the needs of

washing of your body that is the issue here. It

others than on his or her own. A story illus—

is the deeper washing of your guilt that I came

trates this: “Two brothers shared a field and a

to deal with. Only I can do that.”

mill. Each night they divided evenly the grain

Jesus is the model of servant love. After

they had ground together during the day. One

Jesus had bent down before every disciple, in—

brother lived alone; the other had a wife and

cluding Judas, he resumed his position at the

large family. Now the single brother thought

table and took on the role of teacher. He asked

to himself, ‘It isn’t really fair that we divide the

the disciples a question and then answered it

grain evenly. I have only myself to care for, but

himself: “Do you understand what I have done

my brother has children to feed.’ So each night

for you? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and

he secretly took some of his grain to his

rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I,

brother’s granary to see that he was never

your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,

without. But the married brother said to him—

you also should wash one another's feet. I have

self one day, 'It really isn't fair that we divide

set you an example that you should do as I have

the grain evenly, because I have children to

done for you" (John 13:12-15).

provide for me in my old age, but my brother

What does this servant-love look like? Mary

has no one. What will he do when he is old?' So

Rutan tells of meeting one such servant. Her

every night he secretly took some of his grain

church in Alaska was hosting missionaries

to his brother's granary. As a result, both of

who were to live in the homes of the parishio—

them always found their supply of grain mys—

ners and rotate among the churches. Just be—

teriously replenished each morning."2

fore their house guest was to arrive, the flu arThis story illustrates the brothers' willing—

rived first. Her whole family was ill. Before

ness to see the other's need, and also that mu—

they had time to make other housing arrange—

tual servanthood leads to having our own

ments, there was a knock on the door. Mary's

needs met. I have observed, especially in mar—

husband was the only one well enough to stag—

riage, how destructive it is to dwell on one's

ger to the door. He explained the situation and

own needs. How easy it is to get into the self—

suggested that it would be best for the mis—

pitying mindset that says, "My needs are not

sionary to stay elsewhere. The man's face be—

being met. I am putting out more in this rela—

came serious with concern, but not for him—

tionship than she is." Such thinking is a dead—

self. He didn't just step through the door, but

end street, because we often distort the truth

he strode in with a firm, "Oh, no! You need me

and make ourselves look more heroic than we

here!" To their amazement he put down his

actually are.

luggage, took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves

Service requires self-sacrifice. Servant—

and began to wash the dishes. Mary said she

hood is death to self. Being a servant is con—

had heard many sermons on servanthood but

trary to our nature, requiring personal cruci—

none so eloquent as those six words, "Oh, no!

fixion. Being a servant is the opposite of being

Love

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full of self. The disciples did not have the ser—

needing to receive attention for good deeds. In

vanthood mindset because they were so busy

other words, servants are not self-absorbed but

looking out for themselves. They were too

others-absorbed.

busy jockeying for their position in the king—

So with the backdrop of the footwashing,

dom. In our society the highest value is look—

Jesus makes the most important point in his

ing and feeling good. In Robert Bellah's study

speech: "A new command I give you: Love one

of character recorded in Habits of the Heart,

another. As I have loved you, so you must love

he says we are allergic to words like sacrifice

one another" (John 13: 34). And then he says

and self-denial. "Since the only measure of

this startling thing, "By this all men will know

good is what is good for the self, something

that you are my disciples, if you love one an—

that is really a burden to the self cannot be a

other" (v. 35). It is as if Jesus turns away from

part of love." He concludes, "It was hard for

the disciples to an imaginary audience made

people to find a way to say why genuine attach—

up of the unbelieving world. Jesus is saying to

ment to others might require the risk of hurt,

the not-yet followers of Christ, "I give you the

loss, or sacrifice."3

right to judge whether these are disciples of

In a biblical sense, anything worthy of the

mine based on the observable love you see

name of servanthood will require some sacri—

among them." If the unbelieving world says to

fice on the part of the server. It means doing

us, “Why should I believe in your God based on

the thankless job: cleaning up after an event,

the way I see you treating each other?” we

spending the night at a family shelter, having

must realize that Jesus has given that right to

the comfortable routines of life interrupted for

the world. German philosopher Friedrich

needs that don’t fit into the preplanned sched—

Nietzsche challenged the church by saying, “If

ule, making lifestyle changes to release more

you want me to believe in your redeemer, you

resources for others and fewer for self, not

have to look a little more redeemed.”

1George MacLeod , Only One Way Left (Glasgow: Iona, 1956), p. 33.

2 Christian Century, December 16, 1981.

3Robert Bellah et al., Habits of the Heart (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 109.

Reading Study Guide

1. *Why does John reveal what Jesus "knew" as backdrop for washing the disciples' feet?*

2. *If you were in a position to have Jesus wash your feet, what do you think your reaction would be?*

3. *How does the footwashing foreshadow the cross?*

4. *Servant love implies three things. Explain each.*

a. restless eyes

b. focus on the needs of others, above self

c. self-sacrifice

5. *Where do you need grace to grow in servant love?*

6. *What questions do you have about this reading?*

7. *Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?*

Going Deeper

Schaeffer, Francis. The Mark of the Christian. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1970. This is a prophetic word to the church about the need for visible unity in the body of Christ based on forgiveness.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: *Isaiah 58:6-7*

BIBLE STUDY: *Matthew 25:31-46*

READING: *God Loves the Poor*

Core Truth

How is sacrificial love expressed among those broken by the world?

When love intersects broken lives, Christ's disciples are called to stand for justice. Biblical justice means lifting the bonds of oppression, identifying with the cause of the poor and meeting the needs of the downtrodden.

1. *Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.*

2. *Restate the core truth in your own words.*

3. *What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?*



Memory Verse Study Guide

1. *Putting it in context: Isaiah 58:1-12 is the setting for God's call to repent with a fast. According to verses 1-5, how have the people corrupted the practice of fasting?*

What are the promised results of a true fast, according to verses 8-12?

2. *The memory verses are Isaiah 58:6-7. Copy the verses verbatim.*

3. *What is the evidence of a true fast?*

4. *What common threads do you observe in the acts of a true fast? (What are we required to do?)* ***5.*** *What do these verses tell us about the heart of God?*

6. *How have these verses spoken to you this week?*



Justice

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Inductive Bible Study Guide

There is a healthy tension in Scripture between deeds done for salvation and deeds done as evidence of salvation. It is clear that we cannot earn a righteous standing before a holy and perfect God, yet it is also clear that if we do not show evidence of a changed heart through our deeds of compassion, the reality of our salvation can be questioned. In the following passage Jesus is not saying that we must earn our salvation but rather that we will be judged on the basis of the evidence for it.

1. *Read Matthew 25:31-46. Who is the Son of Man, and what is the context of his appearance?*

2. *On what basis will the sheep be welcomed into the kingdom?*

3. *Think and pray over the people with whom Jesus identifies: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoners. Where do you see each of these in your community?*

4. *What is Jesus' relationship with the downtrodden?*

5. *On what basis will the goats be excluded from the kingdom?*

What will be their end?

6. *Does the message of this passage disturb you? Explain.*

7. *What questions do you have about this passage?*

8. *What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.*



Reading: God Loves the Poor

Economics is one of the most frequent topics

among all the people of the East" (Job 1:3). In—

discussed in Scripture, second only to idolatry

stantaneously all that he had was taken from

in the sheer number of verses. In the New Tes—

him.

tament alone five hundred verses, one out of

3. Poverty is the result of sin or laziness.

every sixteen, address material matters. And

Sinful behavior, such as drunkenness, can cost

when it comes to the first three Gospels, the

a job, family and relationships. Others are poor

ratio increases to one in ten verses that discuss

because they lack industry and drive. Paul in

wealth and poverty. If we were to focus on

his second letter to the Thessalonians casti—

Luke's Gospel alone, which is most concerned

gates "some among you [who] are idle" (2

about the physical implications of Jesus' king—

Thessalonians 3:11). He goes on to say, "'If a

dom, the ratio is one in seven verses.

man will not work, he shall not eat.' . . . Such

The Bible's view of the poor and the use of

people we command and urge in the Lord

material resources is at the heart of our disci—

Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread

pleship. After all, Jesus said, "Where your trea—

they eat" (vv. 10-12).

sure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew

4. Poverty is a consequence of oppression

6:21).

by the powerful. Injustice is by far the predominate reason for poverty. Most poor people in

WHO ARE THE POOR?

the world are poor because they are exploited

Who are the poor? And why are they poor?

by economic and political manipulators. The

There are four categories into which the poor

Bible concerns itself overwhelmingly with this

fall in the Bible.

group, using the terms needy, poor, oppressed,

1. Poverty is chosen for righteousness'

widows, orphans and sojourners (or strang-sake. Some have a spiritual gift of being able to ers). What these people have in common is rid themselves of all but the bare necessities.

that they can easily have their rights taken

By their own choice they devote themselves

away from them. They are the exploitable,

solely to Christ and identify with his poor. The

weak and defenseless. They are open to abuse

apostle Paul in the love chapter speaks of those

and are the prey of the powerful.

who "give all [they] possess to the poor" (1

Corinthians 13:3). Those who enter Roman

BIBLICAL JUSTICE

Catholic orders take a vow of poverty, best ilIn the Bible the needy are often equated with

lustrated by Mother Teresa, who identified

the "innocent" and "righteous." Note the par—

with the destitute, diseased and dying.

allel construction in Amos 5:12 that inter-

2. Poverty is a result of calamity. A natural

changes righteous and poor: "You oppress the disaster sometimes wipes out all physical pos-righteous, . . . and you *deprive* the *poor* of jus-sessions and means of livelihood. The obvious tice in the courts" (emphasis added).

biblical example is Job, a man blessed by God

The righteous in a legal dispute are the in—

with seven thousand sheep, three thousand

nocent who should have justice rendered in

camels, and a family of seven sons and three

their favor. There is an important difference

daughters. This man was "the greatest man

between biblical justice and our societal view

Justice

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of justice. The symbol of justice in our society
Land there was an equal distribution among
is a blindfolded woman, indicating that justice
families and tribes. All Israel enjoyed a simi—
is blind. The fair judge is dispassionately objec—
lar standard of living. This was still true in
tive, free from bias, who rationally decides
the tenth century B.C., but two hundred years
what is right before an impersonal law. On the
later, archaeologists have discovered, there
other hand, the role of the judge and justice in
were bigger, better-built homes in one area
Israel was to actively and redemptively seek to
and poor houses crowded together in an—
protect the poor from the wiles of the rich and
other. The poor in Amos's day no longer
powerful. So strong was the skepticism toward
owned their own land but worked as tenant

the powerful that the poor in the courts were

farmers for the landowners, who took as

often viewed collectively as the innocent and

their payment exactions of wheat far beyond

righteous. The law in Exodus 23:6-8 reads, “Do

what was reasonable.

not deny justice to your *poor* people in their

In Amos we see that poverty is not the re—

lawsuits. Have nothing to do with a false

sult of laziness but because of the unjust dis—

charge, and do not put an *innocent* or *honest* tribution of wealth and power into the hands

person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

of a few. John Perkins, an African American

Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those

and native of Mississippi, tells how he came to

who see and twists the words of the *righteous*”

understand this system of inequality. In the

(emphasis added).

1940s, when he was eleven, he was away from

It is the subversion of the justice system

home visiting relatives. He decided to make
that is on the prophet Amos's heart: "You hate
some money in order to buy a gift for his fam—
the one who reproves in court and despise him
ily, so he hired himself out to a white farmer as
who tells the truth" (Amos 5:10). The court
a day laborer. At the end of the twelve-hour day
was an enclosure just inside the walled city
he was handed his pay: fifteen cents. The
where the elders gathered to render decisions
farmer owned the plow, the land and all the
related to the life and property of the citizens
means of production. All John had was his la—
according to the law. The rendering of just de—
bor. He also knew that the last black man to
cisions was the basis for a righteous order un—
talk back had been chained to the back of a car
der the rule of God. But the wealthy and pow—
and dragged through the streets of the town
erful had taken over the courts, buying justice
on Saturday afternoon. He learned what the

for themselves.

Bible teaches: exploitation and oppression are

The picture in Amos is one of marked dis—

the primary reasons for poverty.1

parity between rich and poor. “You trample

on the poor and force him to give you grain.

GOD’S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE POOR

Therefore, though you have built stone man—

What is God’s attitude toward the poor? Theolo—

sions, you will not live in them; though you

gian Karl Barth summarized it provocatively:

have planted lush vineyards, you will not

“God in no wise takes up a neutral position be—

drink their wine” (Amos 5:11). Archaeolo—

tween the poor person and the rich person. The

gists have confirmed Amos’s picture of

rich may take care of their own future; He is on

shocking extremes of wealth and poverty. In

the side of the poor. . . . Thus the Bible is on the

early Jewish settlements of the Promised

side of the poor and the destitute. He who the

Bible calls God is on the side of the poor.”2
and save the children of the needy;
God’s compassion is evidenced in his hear—
he will crush the oppressor.
ing the cries of the poor and delivering them
(Psalm 72:1-2, 4)
from oppression. The nation of Israel was
God is the defense attorney for the poor.
formed from a slave people. For four hundred
God will be the spokesperson for the poor if
years the Hebrew people labored under the
there’s no one else. He will plead their cause
whip of the economic tyranny of the Egyptian
and trumpet justice on their behalf. If nobody
overlords. They cried out to God as their backs
hears the cries of the poor, God will stand with
broke under the burdens they bore. Scripture
them. God raised up prophetic voices like
records God’s heart for his people, “The LORD

Amos, Isaiah and Micah to make clear that he said, ‘I have indeed seen the misery of my peo— was not a detached observer.

ple in Egypt. I have heard them crying out be— If justice for the poor means mercy and re— cause of their slave drivers, and I am con— demption, then justice for the powerful means cerned about their suffering. So I have come judgment and being brought low. During the down to rescue them” (Exodus 3:7-8). God brief period of Amos’s prophesy in 760 B.C. chooses a people who know the chains of op— there were three sins the prophet railed pression. After the exodus God instructed this against, the poor were being economically ex— new nation never to turn their backs on the ploited; the wealthy hoarded for themselves destitute, weak and widows, for this was their without concern for the plight of others; and origin. “Do not mistreat an alien or oppress the court system had become a tool of the pow—

him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Exodus
erful rather than a protector of the weak. Yet
22:21). And if Israel treats the defenseless as
the people of Israel continued their practices
Egypt treated the Hebrews, God will hear their
of worship and offering sacrifices for sins in
cries, for his ear is especially tuned to the
the temple. Amos states in the strongest terms
downtrodden. "For I am compassionate," says
that God will not abide with worship that does
the Lord God (Exodus 22:27).
not issue in justice: "I hate, I despise your reli—
God shows that he is partial to the poor
gious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies"
when he executes justice to redeem the down-
(Amos 5:21). Worship that does not lead to
trodden and to crush the oppressor. When
righteousness, defined here as concern for the
Scripture applies the justice of God to the poor
poor, is a stench in the nostrils of God. Enough
and needy, we see God showing mercy to the

of this outward show. “But let justice roll on
downtrodden and bringing down the powerful.
like a river, righteousness like a never-failing
Endow the king with your justice,
stream” (Amos 5:24). Treat the poor with eq—
O God,
uity, have compassion on the lowly, feed the
the royal son with your
hungry, clothe the naked, and then I will re—
righteousness.
ceive your worship, says the Lord.
He will judge your people in
How does God respond to the needy? His
righteousness,
heart accompanies them in compassion, for he
your afflicted ones with justice. . . .
hears their agony. As a defense attorney he
He will defend the afflicted among
takes up their cause and executes justice by re—
the people
deeming the needy and judging the powerful.

sionate lifestyle look like? A young woman in

After peering into the heart of God and seeing

her fourth year of medical school completes

what is important to him, what are we individ—

her work so that she can live among and serve

ually and collectively to do in regard to the

the poor. Others simplify their lifestyle, reduce

poor?

their overhead and live on less in order to re—

Our first act must be to repent of our dis—

lease resources. A very practical step toward

dain and disgust toward the poor. We must ac—

implementing a compassionate lifestyle and

knowledge our self-righteousness that views

putting a governor on our greed is to obey God

all poor as welfare cheats and lazy indigents.

by tithing at least 10 percent of our income to

We must confess that our prejudice toward dif—

the Lord’s work. What resources could be un—
ferent classes of the poor, such as illegal immi—
leashed for world mission and for those who
grants, is a selfish disguise for not wanting to
live on the edge of survival!
have our standard of living disrupted. We must
Our fourth response to God’s heart for the
remember that the poor are poor because of
poor is to preach the gospel to them. Jesus in—
systematic racial prejudice, repressive political
augurated his ministry with a quote from the
regimes and economic exploitation. Most of us
prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of the Lord is on
have what we have by privilege of birth alone.
me, . . . to preach the good news to the poor”
Secondly, we are called to identify with and
(Luke 4:18). Throughout history it often is
stand for the poor, because the One we claim to
among the poor that the gospel has found re—
follow as Lord did so. Jesus was born in a
ceptivity. Historians credit the Great Awaken—

small, insignificant province of the Roman
ing with heading off a growing spirit of rebel—
Empire. The first visitors at his birth were poor
lion among the poor. John Wesley was a key
shepherds, the rogues of society. His parents,
figure in taking the gospel from the estab—
too poor to bring the normal offering for puri—
lished church to the streets. He was initially
fication, offered two pigeons in sacrifice in—
resistant to going beyond the “orthodox” ways
stead of a lamb. Jesus was a refugee from polit—
of getting out the good news. He recorded in
ical oppression; his family fled to Egypt and
his journal, “In the evening I reached Bristol,
then migrated back to Galilee. As a rabbi he re—
and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce
ceived no fees for his teaching and had no reg—
reconcile myself at first to this strange way of
ular means of income. Having no home of his
preaching in the fields, of which he set me an
own, he said, “Foxes have holes and birds of

example on Sunday; having been all my life

the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no

(until very lately) so tenacious of every point

place to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). So com—

relating to decency and order, that I should

plete was his identification with those on the

have thought the saving of souls almost a sin if

fringes of life that he said to his followers,

it had not been done in the church."3

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these

As we look at the world today, where is the

brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew

gospel finding receptivity and spreading like

25:40).

wildfire? Traditional Western Christendom is

Third, our response to God's heart for the

in shambles. In North America faith has been

poor will cause us to examine how we can lead

privatized and marginalized. Europe is spiritua compassionate lifestyle. What does a compas—

ally dead. The West, comfortable in its afflu-

ence, is spiritually powerless. But in Latin
poor, commit ourselves to a compassionate lif—
America, Africa and Asia the gospel is spread—
estyle, and use our financial and human re—
ing at twice the rate of the population growth.
sources to aid the spread of the gospel among
Soon 60 percent of all Christians will reside in
the poor. A number of years ago Mark Hatfield,
these three areas. “Has not God chosen those
a disciple of Jesus Christ and a retired senator
who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich
from Oregon, spoke these words at a presiden—
in faith?” (James 2:5).
tial prayer breakfast: “We sit here today as the
At the heart of our discipleship is a call to
wealthy and powerful, but let us not forget that
minister to the poor. We are to be where our
those who follow Christ will more often find
Lord’s heart is. We must repent of our disdain

themselves not with the comfortable majori—

for the poor, identify with and stand for the

ties but with the miserable minorities."

1John Perkins , *Let Justice Roll Down* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1976), pp. 47-48.

2Karl Barth, "The Call to Discipleship," in *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1969), 4:543-55.

3Garth Lean , *Strangely Warmed: The Amazing Life of John Wesley* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1964), p. 47.

Reading Study Guide

1. Why do you think so much of the Bible focuses on economic issues?

2. What are the four reasons for poverty?

What is the predominant emphasis in the Bible? Does this surprise you? Explain.

3. What view of justice is behind the equation of the poor with the innocent and righteous?

4. What is God's attitude toward the poor?

How does the Lord show it?

5. Consider the four suggestions given for responding to the poor. How are you moved to respond?

6. What questions do you have about the reading?

7. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Perkins, John. *Let Justice Roll Down.* Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2006.

Sider, Ronald J. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger.* Dallas: Word, 1997.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Acts 1:8

BIBLE STUDY: Acts 4:1-30

READING: Sharing Our Faith with Our Friends

Core Truth

How does the world come to know the love and justice of Jesus Christ?

Jesus Christ has entrusted to his followers the message of the gospel, which contains the power of God unto salvation. The authority to share the good news comes through the Holy Spirit, who makes us witnesses. A witness is one who declares on the basis of personal experience what he or she knows to be true about Christ.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Witness

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Memory Verse Study Guide

1. *Putting it in context:* Examine Acts 1:1-14. How does Jesus redirect the focus of the disciples to their task ahead?

2. The memory verse is *Acts 1:8.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. What do you suppose is the nature of the power we receive when the Holy Spirit comes on us?

4. Being a witness appears to be the inevitable consequence of receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. What does this teach us about how we are motivated for this call?

5. Put in your own words what it means to be a witness.

6. What is the extent of Jesus' vision for our witness?

7. How has this verse spoken to you this week?



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D i s c i p l e s h i p E s s e n t i a l s

Inductive Bible Study

The story of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well serves as a model for how we are to share our faith. Notice how Jesus piques the woman's interest on the way to the ultimate goal of revealing his identity.

1. *Read John 4:1-30.* What words or phrases are used to describe the person of Christ throughout the passage?

2. What barriers were between Jesus and the woman?

How did Jesus overcome them?

3. In the conversation with the woman, Jesus mentions living water. What is it (vv. 7-15)?

What is Jesus revealing about himself?

4. In the discussion on the proper place of worship, Jesus says, "True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Why does Jesus interject this truth in the discussion (vv. 20-24)?

5. Why did Jesus have this conversation with the woman?

6. How did Jesus reveal his identity to the woman?

7. What can we learn about witnessing from observing Jesus in this passage?

8. What questions does this passage raise for you?

9. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Witness

Reading: Sharing Our Faith with Our Friends

Is there anything that produces more anxiety
sure for the time being.
than the pressure we experience in our call to
Contained in John 1:35-42 are six anxiety—
be witnesses? Rebecca Pippert conveys our ex—
reducing principles that free us to witness in
perience when she describes her anxieties
the context of authentic friendship.
about witnessing in her book *Out of the Salt-*
shaker and into the World. She was laboring at
REDUCE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AND
that time under a view of witnessing that could
INCREASE GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS
be summarized as “offending people for Jesus’
Our anxiety is heightened when we are so self—
sake.” She had gotten the impression that wit—
conscious that we are afraid what we might say
nessing was where she trapped an unsuspect—
will reflect badly on us. If we are too concerned
ing victim who was forced to listen to her

with what people will think of us, then we will
speech about Jesus. With this image of wit—
be tied up in knots. We need to lose ourselves
nessing she writes, “The result was that I
in the joy of Jesus.
would put off witnessing as long as possible.
What we want is to become like John the
Whenever the guilt became too great to bear, I
Baptist, who was not concerned about his own
overpowered the nearest non-Christian with a
reputation but about the reputation of Jesus.
nonstop running monolog and then dashed
What is impressive about John the Baptist is
away thinking, ‘Whew! Well, I did it. It’s spring
his willingness to let his disciples follow Jesus.
. . . and hopefully the guilt won’t overcome me
“The next day John was there again with two of
again till winter.’” The next potential victim
his disciples. When he saw Jesus passing by, he
was hoping the same.1
said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God!’ When the two

To be effective witnesses we need anxiety re—
disciples heard him say this, they followed
duction. How can we lower the anxiety level so
Jesus” (John 1:35-37).
that we can allow a natural joy to flow from our
One of the hardest things to do is to take
lives with the belief that we have the best news
second place, especially if you are in first place.
to offer? There is nothing like anxiety to block
John had acquired his group of followers. Now
authenticity. In order for our witness to be
there was one on the scene who eclipsed him,
compelling it must be experienced as congru—
and John willingly pointed his followers to
ent with who we are. The last thing people
Jesus.
want is to be our project, someone we are
John’s lack of pride is remarkable. Pride is
working on.
competitive at its root. It is an unnatural act of
The most effective witness occurs in the

the sinful heart to exalt someone else's glory
context of authentic, caring relationships. Re—
and diminish our own. So much of our worth
lationships built over time with trust have
is derived from comparing how we are doing to
earned us the right to share the difference that
how others are doing. When pastors get to—
Jesus Christ makes in our lives. We don't want
gether the undercurrent is comparing how
witnessing pressure to build in us to such an
their churches are doing, especially whether
extent that we regurgitate the gospel over
they are growing. We are naturally inclined to
some hapless victim merely to relieve the pres—
want recognition. I am ashamed to say how

much I feed off people's comments about my
the one hundred points along the scale. We
effect on their lives. And as much as I like to
may be the one who destroys someone's nega—

take pleasure in shining the spotlight on oth—

tive stereotypes of what it means to be a Chris—

ers, I still twinge with the desire for recognitian. A member of my congregation told me

tion, especially when I am feeling overlooked

that his son paid me the highest complement.

or underappreciated.

“What was it?” I asked. He said, “You don’t act

How liberating it would be to be free of self—

like a pastor.” Given this young man’s negative

consciousness, as John the Baptist was. Hu—

association with pastors, I had given him hope

mility is an anxiety reducer. “People with hu—

that things could be different. Every life is in

mility don’t think less of themselves, they just

process, and we intersect somewhere along the

think of themselves less.” Jim Elliot defined

way.

witnessing as “a bunch of nobodies trying to

Anxiety comes by putting pressure on our—

exalt Somebody.” Thomas Merton caps this de—

selves to be the one who takes a person from

crease in self-absorption when he writes,

one to one hundred. We think that we must

“When humility delivers a person from attach—

plant the seed, water it, nurture it to maturity

ment to their own works and reputation, they

and bring in the harvest. Even Paul didn’t put

discover true joy is only possible when we have

that kind of pressure on himself. Paul wrote to

completely forgotten ourselves.”2

the Corinthians, “I planted the seed, Apollos

watered it, but God made it grow. So neither

OUR WITNESS IS ONLY ONE OF MANY

he who plants nor he who waters is anything,

INFLUENCES

but only God, who makes things grow” (1

The two disciples who responded to John’s des—

Corinthians 3:6-7). May our prayer be simply

ignation of Jesus as Lamb of God were fully

that God would use us to help every person we

prepared to follow him. We meet them at the

know to take that next step in their journey to—
very end of a long process of preparation that
ward the decision to follow Jesus.
got them to this point of openness. What we
don’t see are the many people and influences

LISTEN BY ASKING PROBING QUESTIONS

that the Spirit used to get them there. I have
“Turning around, Jesus saw [the two disciples]
been privileged to pray with people to receive
following and asked, ‘What do you want?’”
Jesus in their lives, knowing that I did nothing
(John 1:38). To our ears that question sounds
to get them to that point. I have often visual—
more rude and abrupt than is meant. The NRSV
ized myself with a basket in my hand, standing
better captures the tone and intent of Jesus:
under a tree of ripened fruit, waiting for it to
“What are you looking for?”
fall into my basket. Later they tell me the story
Jesus was the master at guiding the discov—
of the friends, family and life situations that

eries of the heart with great questions. Telling
brought them to this point over a long period
people something they are not ready to hear
of time.
only raises their defenses. Compassionately
Think of conversion as a journey from one
asked questions are like the Trojan horse that
to one hundred. We may intersect someone’s
gets through the gate. Good questions are
life at the beginning, middle or end of that
used by the Holy Spirit to crack open a heart
journey, but we most likely will be only five of
that can lead to a full-fledged quest.

I am convinced that if our witness consisted
have a tendency to be
of becoming caring listeners who attend to the
driven and anxious and guilt-ridden
needs of those around us, there would be no
perhaps we should

end of the opportunities to share Christ. On

read the directions again

the surface people may not evidence much

and pour a cup of hot coffee

spiritual hunger, but I believe that hunger

and listen

lurks just below the surface. In our secular age

in His name.

we don’t usually pepper polite conversation

(Anonymous)

with questions such as “What is the meaning

of life? What is your purpose for breathing the

ASK PEOPLE TO INVESTIGATE JESUS

air on this planet? What kind of God do you beIn response to Jesus’ question, the two disci—

lieve in?” But if we listen to people’s self—

ples responded with a question that conveyed

doubts—about their jobs, the challenges of

what they were looking for. “They said, ‘Rabbi’

raising kids—we will get below the surface to

(which means Teacher), ‘where are you stay—

spiritual matters. Our message of hope will be

ing?' 'Come,' he replied, 'and you will see.' So

pertinent to the needs people are expressing.

they went and saw where he was staying, and

A poem, "Cold Water, Hot Coffee," expresses

spent that day with him. It was about the tenth

the challenge to listen.

hour" (John 1:38-39). The disciples didn't

Sometimes that cup of cold water,

want a casual and brief conversation with

turns out to be a cup of hot coffee,

Jesus in the streets, but they wanted to spend

and what we're asked to do is

some substantial time with Jesus, checking

to pour it . . . and to listen.

out his authenticity.

Sometimes we Christians

Eventually any genuine spiritual quest

in our enthusiasm

must center on an investigation of Jesus. What

think we were asked

I love about the Gospel of John is that every

to save the world,

passage we study in this book leads us to ask

when what we were asked to do

the question, “Who does this Jesus think he is,

is to go into it

anyway?”

and tell God’s story

Jesus is the destination. The journey and

to people in need of

search end with Jesus, but in many people’s

some good news.

minds Jesus is just another way station in life’s

Anxious activists forget

journey. There is no destination, no place to

that just listening is an act

arrive. All truth is personal or individual. Feel—

of compassion.

ings tell us the truth that is personally de—

Driven disciples forget

signed to work for us. A campus Christian

that just listening is an act

worker made one of the great spiritual obser—

of faithfulness.

vations of our day when he said, “It is all right

Guilty givers forget

today to search for truth, as long as you don’t

that just listening is an act

find it.” It is the quest that counts. Be on the

of stewardship.

journey, but don’t arrive. Yet as we understand

Since we church people

Jesus’ truth claim, he is not just another point

along the way. He is the One where the quest

nothing like contagious joy to share our faith

stops.

with our friends.

At some point we must ask people to examine Jesus. Ask people to read John or Mark and

THEIR BEST SELVES AWAIT THEM

ask, “What are your impressions of this per—

To know that Christ turns us into what we

son? What do you say about him?” Ultimately

were designed by God to fully be is to offer the

that is the key question.

best gift to someone. Peter discovered his potential in his first encounter with Christ. “And

SHARE OUT OF JOY

he [Andrew] brought him [Peter] to Jesus.

Witness at its best is contagious joy. Andrew,

Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon

the brother of Peter, embodies sharing his

son of John. You will be called Cephas’ (which,

faith with his friends. For Andrew being a wit—

when translated, is Peter)” (John 1:42). *Cephas*

ness was natural. “Andrew, Simon Peter’s

means “rock.” Jesus certainly didn’t get that

brother, was one of the two who heard what

name for Peter by looking at who he was at

John had said and who had followed Jesus. The

that moment. *Rock* is about the last word you

first thing Andrew did was to find his brother

would use to describe Peter's personality and

Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Mes—

temperament; instead words like *impulsive*,

siah' (that is, the Christ)" (John 1:40-41). An-

volatile and *unreliable* come to mind. But drew couldn't contain the joy of his discovery.

John says that Jesus "looked at him," meaning

He had to tell his brother what he had found.

he saw beyond the surface into Peter's heart.

I pray that I would be like the Christians

Jesus saw Peter for what he would become, not

who influenced the lives of Sheldon and Davy

for what he was at the moment. Our best self

Vanauken. Sheldon describes one of the early

awaits us in Jesus.

points in his process of coming to faith in

Am I a better person on the way to becom—

Christ. It was the quality of Christians he and

ing my best because of Jesus? You had better

his wife, Davy, met at Oxford University that

believe it. I've got a long way to go, but you
caused them to consider following Christ. A
don't know how far I've come. Has Christ made
group of five Christians became their closest
a difference in my life? Without a doubt. He
friends. "These were our first friends, close
took a guy full of fear and transformed him
friends. More to the point, perhaps, all five
into one with risk-taking confidence; he freed
were keen, deeply committed Christians. But
me as a father to give affection, though I had a
we liked them so much that we forgave them
father who did not know how to do that; he
for it. We began, hardly knowing we were do—
filled me with a passion to see his people mo—
ing it, to revise our opinions, not of Christian—
bilized for ministry. Would my life be different
ity but of Christians. Our fundamental as—
without Christ? I shudder to think of what I
sumption had been that all Christians were
would be like. So when I offer Jesus to some—

necessarily stuffy, hide-bound, or stupid—peo—

one, I am giving them the opportunity to disple to keep one's distance from. Then the as—

cover their best self, which awaits them in

tonishing fact sank home: our contemporaries

Christ.

could be at once highly intelligent, civilized,

Are you stopped in your tracks with anxiety

witty, fun to be with—and Christian."3 There is

when it comes to being a witness for Jesus? My

prayer is that you have discovered in this pas—

then the anxiety will recede and in a relaxed,

sage one or more truths that allows you to

caring way Jesus will authentically make him—

transform witness from an anxiety-ridden,

self known through you.

guilty ineptitude to a joyful privilege. Perhaps

1Rebecca Manley Pippert , *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 16.

2Thomas Merton, quoted in Tim Hansel , *Through the Wilderness of Loneliness*

(Elgin, Ill.: Cook, 1991), p. 123.

3Sheldon Vanauken , *A Severe Mercy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), p. 77.

Reading Study Guide

1. Are you anxious when it comes to being a witness for Christ? If yes, describe the nature of that anxiety. If no, why do you think that is not your experience?

2. Put in your own words each of the six anxiety-reducing principles.

3. Which of the anxiety-reducing principles spoke most pointedly to your needs and why?

4. Pray for a burden of love for people in your sphere of influence. Who are the people the Lord would have you touch?

5. What questions do you have about this reading?

6. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Take some time to write the story of your own witness. To develop your testimony, answer the following questions.

• What was your life like prior to coming to Christ?

• How did you come to commit your life to Christ?

• How is your life different now that Christ is in it?

Recommended Reading

Pippert, Rebecca Manley. *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999.

Watson, David. “Evangelism.” Chap. 9 in *Called & Committed: World-Changing Discipleship.*

Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.

Part Four

SERVING CHRIST

The previous section, “Becoming like Christ,” focused on the qualities and responsibilities of individual disciples. This section, “Serving Christ,” stresses that an individual cannot and should not be separated or even attempt to live out discipleship apart from the body of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the individual and the life source of the church. God is not only about re-creating individuals in his image but also about forming a new corporate humanity.

The nature of *the church* and its ministry is the subject of chapters twenty and twenty-one.

Paul’s image of the church as the body of Christ emphasizes the organic and living reality of the church as a people indwelt by Christ. Just as each part of the human body contributes to the health of the whole, so each member of the church through the exercise of unique *ministry gifts* builds up the body of Christ. This chapter explores the process of understanding what spiritual gifts are and how to discover what gifts you have been assigned by God.

Martin Luther summarized our enemies as being the world, the flesh and the devil. We will examine the last two in reverse order. Chapter twenty-two on *spiritual warfare* looks at the reality of our enemy, the devil, and his various schemes to exploit our weaknesses. Chapter twenty-three pinpoints the habits that have become a part of our ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are not God-honoring and shows us what *walking in obedience* is all about. God requires our obedience because he desires our happiness.

At chapter twenty-four, *sharing the wealth*, the pilgrimage with your discipling partner(s) comes to a conclusion, while a new journey is just beginning. Take some time to reflect on what this time together has meant. Think back to where you were spiritually when you started this covenant. What have been some significant landmarks along the way? Were there big insights, turning points, tender moments, deepened convictions, new life directions that came as a result

of this time? Share and celebrate these together. Then pray for each other and for those who will be your relational partners on the next leg.

It is my sincere prayer that through this process you have caught a vision and have the deep and abiding conviction that discipling is a lifestyle issue. Wherever you are may you seek out those you can invite into relationship with yourself for the purpose of growing toward maturity in Christ.



20 / The Church

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13

BIBLE STUDY: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

READING: A Living Organism

Core Truth

How does Jesus continue to make himself known?

Jesus continues to live out his life on earth through his corporate body, the church. The "body of Christ" is not just a figure of speech but conveys the reality that Christ lives through his people.

Together God's people extend the life of Jesus to the world.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

1. *Putting it in context:* Examine 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. What is the subject matter that serves as the backdrop to the church as the body of Christ, and why is this an appropriate introduction?

2. The memory verses are *1 Corinthians 12:12-13.* Copy these verses verbatim.

3. Paul surprisingly concludes verse 12 with the phrase "so it is with Christ." What does this tell us about the relationship between Christ and his body, the church?

4. What are the two key points that Paul is making about the nature of a body in verse 12?

5. What is the means of entrance to the body of Christ?

6. What is Paul implying with the phrase "whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free"?

7. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Here Paul plays with the image of the church as the body of Christ. He describes body parts having a conversation with each other.

1. *Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.* How is the human body an appropriate comparison to the church?

2. In what terms is the body's diversity described?

3. What two harmful attitudes undermine the body's proper functioning (see 1 Corinthians 12:15, 16, 21)?

How do you see these in yourself?

in the church?

4. Paul seems to be saying that celebrating our diversity in Christ leads to unity. Why might this be?

5. Whom do you suppose Paul had in mind when referring to the "weaker" and "less honorable"

in verses 22-26?

To what rhythm of relationship is Paul calling us?

6. What is the balance that we need to strike, according to verse 27?

7. What questions do you have about this passage?

8. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: A Living Organism

The body of Christ is the fundamental biblical

of Christ" is not just a metaphor or a helpful

image for the church. In all, ninety-six word

word picture, but it also points to the reality

pictures have been identified in the New Testa—

that Jesus dwells among his people and gives

ment that convey various aspects and angles of

his life to them.

the place of the church in God's plan, but the

In other words the church is not a human

one that dominates the New Testament and

organization that has contracted by common

truly defines who we are is the image of the

consent to keep alive the memory of a great

body of Christ. By this we understand the

historical figure. On the contrary, the church

church to be a living organism.

is a divine organism mystically fused to the living and reigning Christ, who continues to re-

WHAT IS CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE

veal himself in his people. Ray Stedman put it

CHURCH?

this way, "The life of Jesus is still being mani—

The apostle Paul ingeniously selected the im—

fest among people, but now no longer through

age of the human body to convey the organic

an individual physical body, limited to one

manner in which the church is to function. We

place on earth, but through a complex, corpo—

can look at the human body from two stand—

rate body called the church."1

points. First, we see the body as a functional

Paul understood the church as a organism

whole with all its part under the central coor—

from the moment of his initial encounter with

dination of the head. But on closer examina—

Christ. Saul, the firebrand and self-righteous

tion we notice that the whole is made up of di—

protector of the Hebrew law, was on his way to

verse parts, each with a distinctive, unique

Damascus, having received authority to arrest
function. The hands are for grasping, the eyes
and bring Christians to Jerusalem, but his
for seeing, the feet for walking and so on. The
plans were dramatically altered. A blinding
body is the prototype of unity in diversity.
light filled the sky and engulfed his field of vi—
Paul uses the human body analogy to con—
sion. Thrown to the ground, he heard a voice,
vey Christ's relationship to the church in an
"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul
arresting and even shocking fashion. Note the
replied, "Who are you, Lord?" The heavenly
startling conclusion to 1 Corinthians 12:12:
voice responded, "I am Jesus, whom you are
"The body is a unit, though it is made up of
persecuting" (Acts 9:4-6). But wait! Saul was
many parts; and though all its parts are many,
not persecuting Jesus but those who claimed
they form one body. So it is with Christ." Is
to be his followers.

this the way we expect the verse to conclude? What does this incident tell us about the re— We expect Paul to write: “So it is with the lationship between Jesus and his followers? church.” In fact we tend to read right over Jesus indwells them. If you touch a Christian, Paul’s actual words and supply the previous you have touched Christ. Christians are a sac— phrase. Paul must mean that the church is ramental people. A sacrament is a means of like a human body made up of diverse parts grace, a symbol that mysteriously bears the and coordinated under its head. But Paul is presence of Christ and through which believ— saying far more than that. For Paul “the body ers encounter Christ.

Thomas Oden summarizes Christ’s rela— up in love, as each part does its work.” tionship to the church.

Whoever heard of a body growing into its

Christianity is distinctive as a religious

head? Paul has exhorted the Ephesians to “be—

faith in that it understands itself to be

come mature,” to attain “the whole measure of

living as a continuing community

the fullness of Christ” and to “no longer be in—

through the living Christ. . . . Its unique—

fants.” Paul reminded the Ephesians that the

ness lies in its particular relationship

only way to become spiritual adults is to recog—

with its founder. . . . It is the resurrected

nize their absolute reliance on Jesus to supply

presence of the living Lord that contin—

their life and that his likeness is the goal toues to be the sole basis of the present reward which they are growing. So Jesus is the

ality of the church. Jesus is not merely

head into whom and from whom we grow.

the one who founded the community

Second, for Jesus to be head means that the

and left it, but rather the one who is

church is under his direct authority. The

present to the community now and in

church’s relationship to Christ means accept—

each historical period as the vital es—

ing obediently and fulfilling faithfully the parsence of the church.2

ticular role that God has assigned to each of us

through the Holy Spirit. The most basic con-

WHAT IS THE CHURCH’S RELATIONSHIP

fession of the church is “Jesus is Lord” (1

TO CHRIST?

Corinthians 12:3), but this is far more than re—

The church is absolutely dependent on its

citing a creed. Paul intends this truth to be a

head, Jesus Christ. Max Thurian captures both

functional, operational reality.

Christ’s relationship to the church and our re—

Jesus as head of the church means that he

lationship to Christ: “Jesus does nothing inde—

arranges life in the body. Each member is di—

pendently of the church nor can the church do

rectly connected to the head and therefore is

anything independently of Christ."3 The na—
able to receive signals from the head. Paul
ture of the church's relationship to Christ is
Stevens says this well,
implicit in the phrase that Jesus is "head over
There is a direct and living connection
everything for the church" (Ephesians 1:22).
between the Head and every member of
The word *head* has two meanings in the Bi—
the body. . . . No church leader in the
ble: "life source" and "ultimate authority." In
New Testament is ever called the head of
our society *head* usually connotes authority,
a local body. That title is reserved for
the one in charge, but in the original Greek
Jesus. The head does not tell the hand to
head could equally mean "source" or "origin."
tell the foot what to do. The head is di—
The source of a river is called the headwaters.
rectly connected to the foot. Therefore
When you think of head as the life source, then

people find their ministries not by being
Paul’s use of head in Ephesians 4:15 and 16
directed by the leaders but by being mo—
makes sense. “Instead, speaking the truth in
tivated and equipped . . . by the Head
love, we will in all things grow up into him
himself.4
who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the
The church functions as an organism when
whole body, joined and held together by every
those who make up the body of Christ obedi—
supporting ligament, grows and builds itself
ently seek to fulfill the role God has assigned to

them. We return to the analogy of the human
the body parts and puts them in conversation
body to understand how the church can func—
with each other. The extremities speak first: “If
tion as a living organism. The human body
the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand,

functions beautifully when each part operates
I do not belong to the body,' it would not make
according to its design. The central command
it any less a part of the body." Then the senses
post, the head, sends forth the signals through
compete with each other: "If the ear should
the nervous system, which activates the body
say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong
parts. These body parts have no will of their
to the body,' that would not make it any less a
own. The hands and feet, for example, function
part of the body" (1 Cor 12:15-16 NRSV).
only in response to the head. If the hand could
The Corinthians suffered from the same
act independently of the head, there would be
malady we do today. They exalted some gifts
chaos in the body. When people in the body
higher than others. They placed gradations of
takes responsibility before the Head to know
value on gifts. The church today is sick in part
and exercise their assigned functions, the

because we have so exalted preaching that no church becomes a living organism.

other gift can match that level of importance.

Hear this statement from Martin Luther as the

WHAT IS OUR RELATIONSHIP TO EACH

legacy of the importance of the preacher in the

OTHER?

body of Christ: “A Christian preacher is a min—

We need each other. According to Paul’s body

ister of God who is set apart, yea, he is an angel

image, all the parts are interdependent and

of God, a very bishop sent by God, a savior of

necessary for the health of the whole. Robert

many people, a king and a prince in the King—

Banks says, “God has so designed things that

dom of Christ and among the people of God, a

the involvement of every person with his spe—

teacher, a light of the world. There is nothing

cial contribution is necessary for the proper

more precious or nobler on earth and in this

functioning of the community.”5 The underly—

life than a true, faithful parson or preacher.”6

ing message of 1 Corinthians 12 is that every—

As soon as a hierarchy of gifts in the body is

one is valuable. God in his wisdom designed us

set up, two things happen:

not as well-rounded, multitalented, thor-

We compare our gifts to others and declare

oughly complete and independent people. He

ourselves deficient. We play the “if only” game: made it so that we need each other and that

if only I could be like so-and-so, then I would

each of us brings something of value. We are

have significance and value. When we secretly

not self-sufficient. As one person put it, “We

envy the gifts of others, we denigrate ourselves

don’t have it all together, but together we have

and the unique design God has placed in us.

it all.”

Instead the Lord would have us believe what

When we forget this, the body ceases to

Gordon Cosby writes:

function according to its design. Paul identi—

Christ makes each of us something unfies two devaluing attitudes that undercut the

like any other creation fashioned by

proper functioning of the body.

God—something wonderful, exciting,

First, Paul mentions the attitude of *inferi-*

unique; something specifically needed in

ority, or low self-esteem, as detrimental to a the total body of Christ. This unique-healthy body. To capture this Paul personifies ness, this very self that is so hard to de-

scribe, this charismatic person is the gift

looking down on the lower: eye over hand,

of the Holy Spirit. It is the primary gift

head over feet. “The eye cannot say to the

we bring to the body, and without it the

hand, ‘I don’t need you!’ And the head cannot

body is immeasurably impoverished. 7

say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you!’” (1 Corin—

We copy those we admire. Instead of being

thians 12:21).

ourselves we mimic others and cease to be the

Independence and self-reliance are enemies

unique creation we were made to be. This is il—

of community. Without vulnerability and an

lustrated through a story from Native Ameri—

awareness of need there is no basis for com—

can lore. An Indian brave found an egg that

munity. Unfortunately it is often in the church

had been laid by an eagle. Unable to return the

that we find the façade of having it all together.

egg to the eagle's nest, he put the egg in the

Keith Miller writes of the average church,

nest of a prairie chicken. In due time the little

"Our churches are filled with people who out—

eaglet was hatched alongside the prairie chick—

wardly look contented and at peace but inens. This little eagle, thinking it was a prairie

wardly are crying out for someone to love

chicken, did what prairie chickens do:

them . . . just as they are—confused, frus—

scratched the dirt for seeds and insects to eat,
trated, often frightened, guilty, and often un—
clucked and cackled, flew only a few feet off of
able to communicate even within their own
the ground.
families. But the other people in the church
One day the eagle saw a magnificent bird
look so happy and contented that one seldom
flying overhead, floating with graceful majesty
has the courage to admit his own deep needs
on the powerful currents. “What a beautiful
before such a self-sufficient group as the aver—
bird,” he said to his fellow prairie chickens.
age church meeting appears to be.”8 Vulnera-
“What is it?” “That’s an eagle,” they replied,
bility is a gift to the community that says, “I
“the chief of the birds. But don’t give it a sec—
need you. I welcome you into my life. I want
ond thought. You could never be like him.”
you to be a part of me.”
Not knowing he was an eagle, he imitated the

Paul is telling us to value the gifts of one an—
prairie chickens and never soared to the
other. The actress Celeste Holm spoke for us
heights he could have.
all when she said, “We live by encouragement
Copying is a sin against ourselves and
and we die without it; slowly, sadly, angrily.”
against God. It was the Lord who designed us
Yet we so often devalue others in the body be—
just the way we are so that we are needed in the
cause they don’t think as we do or have the
body of Christ. “All these [gifts] are the work of
personal tastes we do. Practice this personal
one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to
exercise: Picture those in the body toward
each one, just as he determines” (1 Corin—
whom your attitude is “I have no need of you.”
thians 12:11). To copy someone else is to be a
As an act of repentance place these people be—
pale imitation of yourself and to miss seeing
fore God and say, *I need you. I benefit because*

the unique way God has designed you. You are

of you. You have gifts and a perspective that I

needed as you are.

don't have.

The second disruptive attitude is *devaluing*

Instead of inferiority or superiority, we need

other members of the body by superiority. In

an attitude of interreliance. Interreliance

verse 21 Paul sees the upper parts of the body

means you are incomplete without me and I

am incomplete without you. You need me and

mary, "Now you are the body of Christ, and

I need you. "We don't have it all together, but

each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians

together we have it all." Or to use Paul's sum—

12:27).

1Ray Stedman , *Body Life* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal, 1972), p. 37.

2Thomas Oden , *Agenda for Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979), pp. 117-18.

3Max Thurian, quoted in Arnold Bittlinger , *Gifts & Graces: A Commentary on 1 Corinthians 12—14* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967).

4R. Paul Stevens , *Liberating the Laity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1985), p. 36.

5Robert Banks , *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 64.

6Martin Luther, quoted in *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), p. 115.

7Gordon Cosby , *Handbook for Mission Groups* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1975), p. 72.

8Keith Miller , *The Taste of New Wine* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1965), p. 22.

Reading Study Guide

1. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12, what is the surprising reality conveyed in the phrase "so it is with Christ"?

What is Christ's relationship with the church?

2. The church's relationship to Christ is captured by the image of "life source" and "authority."

Put in your own words what you understand the relationship to be.

life source

authority

3. How does the confession "Jesus is Lord" become an operational reality in the church?

4. Do a personal inventory. How have you devalued yourself through comparison or copying?

5. The attitude of superiority expresses itself by not valuing the contributions of others. Do an inventory of those in the body of Christ whom you discount, then thank God for them as people you need in your life to be complete.

6. What questions do you have about this reading?

7. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Ogden, Greg. *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990.

Action Page

INVITING OTHERS TO JOIN US

What criteria should we use while making the decision to invite others to join us on the next leg of this discipleship journey? We should look for the same qualities in people that Jesus looked for in those he called to be among the original twelve.

Jesus did not seem to be in a hurry to issue his invitation. On the eve of his selection of the twelve, Jesus spent the night in prayer (Luke 6:12-16). Jesus knew that the entire future of his work rested upon the quality of those he chose. As Jesus was praying, what qualities was he seeking in those he chose?

LOYALTY

Jesus made Peter a successful fisherman and then called him to leave his big catch to follow him (Luke 5:1-11). All Jesus had to say to the twelve was, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mark 1:17), and they left their trade, families and familiar surroundings to be a part of the troupe. The apostles

were appointed to their position only after they demonstrated their willingness to be sold out to him.

A disciple responds to the gracious call of Jesus Christ to follow him as Lord. John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He must increase but I must decrease”(John 3:30 NRSV). We are seeking those who demonstrate a desire to place Jesus above all else in their lives. This is evidenced by a willingness to change in character and lifestyle, an openness to self-examination and a hunger to place themselves at Jesus’ disposal in order to discover how their lives can count for him.

TEACHABILITY

Jesus chose the disciples for what they would become, not for what they were at the moment of summons. From a worldly standpoint the disciples did not have much to commend themselves.

They were not influential people in key positions who could get the word to the “right” people.

They did not have any authority, so they could not throw their weight around. None belonged to the Levitical priesthood, nor were they in high positions in the synagogue. They did not have any academic degrees nor worldly credentials that would make them credible to the populace. None had recognizable names worth printing on a letterhead. In fact, in the book of Acts they were described by the religious leaders as “unschooled, common men” (Acts 4:13).

We must therefore be careful not to be molded by a worldly agenda when it comes to forming our list of candidates. Neither natural leadership ability nor outgoing personality, neither a respected vocation nor advanced academic degrees, neither influential positions nor public notori-ety were the criteria that Jesus used. Instead look for a hunger to know the Lord and a willingness *The Church*

to pay whatever price is necessary to become God’s person.

In terms of character, the disciples left much to be desired. James and John were unpredictably impulsive, ready to call down fire from heaven on the first unbelieving town. They were temperamental. They fought among themselves

and jealously jockeyed for positions of greatness (Mark 10:35-41). They reflected the prejudice of their day, seeing women as second-class citizens (John 4:27). But Jesus noticed in them what they could become over a long period of investment. And these men placed themselves as clay in the potter's hand.

SELECTING FUTURE DISCIPLING PARTNERS

As you are looking toward the completion of your discipleship journey with your current partners, it is time to begin praying about who will join you on the next leg. The topic of "selecting future partners" is placed here so that you can assist one another. Allow the following questions to guide your process.

1. How are you feeling about making an investment in the next generation? Explain.

2. Put in your own words the qualities that Jesus was looking for in those whom he selected to be his disciples.

3. How can these criteria guide you in your selection?

4. The discipling dynamic is most effective when you sense a personal call or leading to give yourself to those whom the Lord especially places on your heart. Over the next few weeks as you pray, begin to record names of people who come to mind.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Corinthians 12:7

BIBLE STUDY: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11-12;1 Peter 4:10-11

READING: You Are Gifted!

Core Truth

How can we know what our part is in the body of Christ?

The Holy Spirit graciously gives ministry abilities, "spiritual gifts," so that every Christian can make a valued contribution to the health of the whole body. The church actually operates as the body of Christ when each person seeks to know and function in accord with their role assigned by God.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Ministry Gifts

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Memory Verse Study Guide

First Corinthians 12 is the classic New Testament passage on the subject of spiritual gifts and the church as the body of Christ. Paul begins this chapter by introducing his topic in the same pattern that he has throughout the book: "Now about spiritual gifts" (v. 1).

1. *Putting it in context:* What misunderstanding about what it means to be spiritual is Paul addressing in 1 Corinthians 12:1-3?

2. The memory verse is *1 Corinthians 12:7.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. What is the extent of the distribution of spiritual gifts in the body?

4. What does the word *manifestation* tell us about spiritual gifts?

5. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

6. How has this verse spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Four New Testament passages discuss spiritual gifts for ministry. Some teachers look to the seven gifts identified in Romans 12:6-8 as the “motivational” gifts. One of these seven motivations is seen as dominant for every believer. The gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are then “manifestations”

of these motivations, while the four gifts associated with equipping are “offices.” I view the gifts that Paul lists as illustrative of the variety of ways that the Holy Spirit works through us. The four categories for the gifts are for descriptive purposes only, as a way to see the variety.

1 *Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, 27-31; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Peter 4:10-11*. Paul lists four synonyms for gifts. Write down your own definitions of these terms.

gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4)

service (1 Corinthians 12:5)

working (1 Corinthians 12:6)

function (Romans 12:4)

2. After reviewing these synonyms, write your own definition of a spiritual gift.

3. Identify the gifts that are listed in the passages and place them in one of the following categories. Under each gift write your own choice for a synonym.

support

speaking

sign

service

(Ephesians 4:11)

(use the tongue)

4. Paul intertwines what we might humanly distinguish as supernatural (for example, healing) and natural (for example, administration) gifts. What does this teach us?

5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Paul intended to give us an exhaustive or complete list of all the spiritual gifts. Explain.

6. What questions do these passages raise for you?

7. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: You Are Gifted!

My first ministry position with college stu—

thians 12:1). One of the reasons we get into po—
dents ended on a high. The ministry in Pitts—
sitions for which we are not suited is that we
burgh had grown to three hundred students
are ignorant of our abilities.
on Wednesday nights, a core of forty small—
group leaders and weekly reports of students

SPIRITUAL GIFTS EXPLAINED

coming to Christ. From that position I blew
What is meant by *spiritual gifts?* In 1 Corin—
like a whirlwind into a sleepy, declining
thians 12:4-7 Paul establishes a vocabulary for
church with the attitude “I can get this place
spiritual gifts that gives us an insight into
up and humming.” As I look back on my late
what he means by this term. Before we exam—
twenties, my naive conviction was that the
ine Paul’s glossary for spiritual gifts, we need
context in which one serves doesn’t matter, be—
to remove the cultural debris surrounding this
cause God can use a person anywhere. To the

phrase. The words *gifted* or *gift* are used in a contrary, I found that context mattered a great different way in the Scriptures than they are in

deal. During that seven-year pastorate I felt

everyday speech. A gifted person is one who ex—

like an eight-cylinder car running on two cyl—

cels in a particular field. Carl Lewis is a gifted

inders. The setting allowed for only a small

track star because he can run faster and jump

range of my gifts to be used. I was constricted

farther than any other human being. A gifted

and lost motivation.

student is one with above-average intelligence.

Sometimes we lose motivation because we

We hear people say someone has a gift for fix—

don’t feel competent to do the job or fulfill the

ing cars or making cherry pies, or he or she

role. The position calls for skills that are not

has the gift of gab. The way we use *gifted* or *gift* natural to us, or we are asked to give our en-generally falls into the category of natural tal-ergy to something we don’t care about. When ents that God, out of his bounty, gives to Chris—

my daughter was little, she had a toy sphere

tians and non-Christians alike; whereas spiri—

into which were cut various geometric shapes.
tual gifts are possessed by Christians, with the
Her objective was to slide a round cylinder
purpose of building and strengthening fellow
through the circle on the sphere. But invari—
Christians and extending the influence of the
ably I would find the cylinder wedged tightly in
church to an unbelieving world. Spiritual gifts
the square-shaped opening. Round pegs in
are only for those indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
square holes: they just don't fit. When this oc—
Let's examine the synonyms used in our
curs we find our energy and motivation dissi—
passage to build a picture of what we mean by
pating.
spiritual gifts.
The body of Christ is designed in such a way
There are different kinds of *gifts*, but the
that each of us has a valued role particularly
same Spirit. There are different kinds of
suited for us, but the problem is that we don't

service, but the same Lord. There are dif—

always know what it is. It’s no wonder that

ferent kinds of *working,* but the same

Paul begins his teaching on spiritual gifts in

God works all of them in all men. Now to

this manner: “Now about spiritual gifts, broth—

each one the *manifestation* of the Spirit

ers, I do not want you to be ignorant” (1 Corin-

is given for the common good. (1 Corin—

ourselves but to build up the community. In

thians 12:4-7, emphasis added)

verse 7 Paul says that the gifts are “for the common good.” As much as the gifts help us know

Each of us has one body with many

our value, their purpose is to serve others.

members, and these members do not all

In saying this Paul was addressing a prob—

have the same *function.* (Romans 12:4)

lem in Corinth that can be found in any age.

The first thing we notice is a repeated word,

When the Corinthians came together as a

different, which serves as the common charac—

group, the flashy gifts of speaking in tongues

teristic of spiritual gifts. Variety is an expres—

and healing took center stage. People were ussion of the one God who is three persons. The

ing the community as a platform for show—

source of the gifts in verse 4 is the Spirit, in

and-tell. Yet the nature of gifts is that God dis—

verse 5 the Lord Jesus, and in verse 6 God the

tributes them, but it is up to us to use them in

Father. Paul is saying that the variety of moti—

the right spirit. Gifts can be and are abused

vations in the church is an expression of the

when people turn them into a means of self—

diversity within the Godhead. As our God is

aggrandizement.

one being who is three persons, so the church

Service also has to do with the sphere in

is like the God it worships.

which your gifts are used. Do you function best

Different means distribution, diversity, alin a large group, small group or one-on-one?

lotment, apportionment. The Spirit is in

The gift of teaching can be exercised in an au—

charge of the distribution system. The empha—

ditorium, classroom, living room or face to

sis is that God is the distributor of the gifts,

face. To whom are you drawn in ministry: chil—

and we are the receivers.

dren, the elderly, women, men? Your call is

Now let's look at Paul's words for *gifts.*

where the compassion of Christ in you inter—

1. "There are different kinds of *gifts*" (v. 4,

sects with a need in the world. It is as that

emphasis added). The Greek word here is a

point of intersection that we find why God has

compound word meaning "grace-gift." Not

made us.

only are we saved solely by grace, but given to

3. "There are different kinds of *working*" (v.

us with our salvation package is a capacity and

6, emphasis added). The word *working* comes

motivation to serve others in a way that is par—

from a Greek word whose root means “en—

ticular to us.

ergy.” Other translations give the idea of differ—

Deep within us is a basic need. We all have

ent kinds of “effects” or “different kinds of ima desire to make a contribution, to make a dif—

pacts.” Each gift leaves its own imprint. If you

ference, to be valued because we have left a

have the gift of teaching, people should be

positive imprint on others. The gifts are our

transformed by the truth of the Word. If you

observable contribution to the health of the

have the gift of evangelism, people should be

body of Christ.

coming to know Christ. If you have the gift of

2. “There are different kinds of *service*” (v. 5, mercy, then the sick and hurting should be

emphasis added). The word *service* captures

comforted.

the spirit in which our gifts are offered to the
Using our gifts is like drinking from the
body of Christ. Paul makes it clear that the pur—
well of refreshing waters of God's Spirit. Some—
pose of the gifts is not to attract attention to
where along the way, service got a bum rap.

Many have been taught that true service must
our gifts. It is a lifelong quest.
be sacrificial drudgery. Service is doing what
we don't want to do. Ray Stedman has written,

BURYING OUR GIFTS

"Somewhere this idea found deep entrench—
The primary reason we bury our gifts is fear.
ment in Christian circles that doing what God
This fear comes in a number of forms.
wants you to do is always unpleasant; that
Fear of failure or taking risk. Paul writes to
Christians must make choices between doing
Timothy, who was shrinking from the exercise

what they want to do and being happy, and do—

of his gift of evangelism: “For this reason I re—

ing what God wants them to do and being mis—

mind you to fan into flame the gift of God,

erable.”1 But when we operate within our gift—

which is in you through the laying on of my

edness, we are being carried along in a current

hands” (2 Timothy 1:6). Timothy’s gift was dor—

of love that says, “You were made for this.”

mant. When our gifts are not used, they atro—

4. “Just as each of us has one body with

phy like unused parts of the body. Why did

many members, . . . these members do not all

Timothy not use his gift? He was afraid of tak—

have the same *function*” (Romans 12:4, eming the risk for fear of what might happen.

phasis added). From the word *function* we de—

Paul continues, “For God did not give us a

rive the English word “practice.” In other

spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love

places in Scripture the word is translated

and of self-discipline" (v. 7). The fear that locks

"good deeds," but here it refers to our way of

you up inside yourself does not come from

acting, our particular way of doing things that

God. The spirit of God thrusts us out into new

feels comfortable to us. Members of the body

possibilities.

can say, "I am a teacher, a prophet, an admin-

Fear of confronting pain. Some of us are

istrator, a server," because these roles describe

frustrated because we seem not to know what

who we are inside.

our gifts are. When we try to get an accurate

Putting this all together, spiritual gifts can

mirror image of ourselves, the reflection is disbe defined as follows: spiritual gifts are our

torted. For many people the reason for the dis—

ministry capacity or abilities given by the

tortion is that some painful past experience

Spirit that express our unique motivation for

left a spiritual wound and shut off part of our

building up the body of Christ.

inner world. There is a desire to embrace God's

What is our responsibility? To discover and

best, but there is an inner wall we can't seem

use the gifts that God has given to us. The Lord

to break through. Only when we get at the root

is going to ask us to give an account one day

of the problem will we break through what is

for the stewardship and multiplication of the

holding us back.

gifts we have been given. In the parable of the

Fear of commitment. Sometimes we claim

talents the Lord says that the one who was

ignorance of our gifts because it is safer. We

given five talents went out and multiplied

know intuitively that to name our gifts makes

them into five more. To this servant the Lord

us responsible for using them. Denying that we

said, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" To

know what our gifts are gives us a reason not to

the one who buried his talent the Lord said,

use them, but as soon as we identify our gifts,
“You wicked, lazy servant!” (see Matthew
we are accountable. Elizabeth O’Connor has
25:14-30). It is not an easy process to unearth
written, “I would rather be committed to God in

the abstract than be committed to him at the
Paul’s list of gifts are descriptive, not defin—
point of my gifts.”2 We prefer life as a smorgas—
itive. He was not giving an exhaustive list. His
bord, where we can sample here and taste there.
lists seem to have little concern for uniformity
As soon as we name our gifts we have narrowed
of terminology. The biblical lists give us a good
our choices. We have to give up straddling the
starting point for identifying the shape that
fence and keeping our options open.
God’s grace takes.
Those who have broken through the fear of
failure, the fear of confronting personal pain

SUPPORT GIFTS

and the fear of commitment have stepped into
Those who have support gifts have the respon—
liberated joy. The energized and fulfilled people
sibility to prepare the rest of the members of
have discerned their ministry capacity and are
the body in the exercise of their ministry gifts
applying themselves to a need they care about.
(Ephesians 4:11-13). The one thing that apos—
There is a story about Michelangelo push—
tles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers
ing a huge piece of rock down a street. A curi—
have in common is the use of the Word as their
ous neighbor sitting lazily on the porch of his
tool. Ray Stedman uses a life-support analogy
house called to him. “Hey, Mike, why are you
for each of the support gifts to define their role
laboring so over an old piece of stone?” Michel—
in the health of the body. Apostles are the skel—
angelo reportedly answered, “Because there is
etal structure, for it is revelatory truth that

an angel in that rock that wants to come out.”

serves as the body’s frame; prophets are analo—

You are invited to break free and join the

gous to the nervous system, for messages are

treasure hunt. What discoveries await you!

sent from the head through the nerves to activate the body parts; evangelists are like the di-

SPIRITUAL GIFTS CATEGORIZED

gestive system that takes in nutrients, breaks

Here is a descriptive way of categorizing the

them down and sends energy to keep the body

spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10,

alive; and pastor-teachers are like the circula—

28-31; Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-12 and

tory system that distributes the food of the

1 Peter 4:9-11. Picture them in four groups, as

Word and cleans out the waste.3

in the table below.

Apostle (missionary). One who exerts influ-

Spiritual Gifts Categories

Support

Speaking

Signs

Service

apostle

teaching (Rom 12:7;

healing (1 Cor 12:9)

faith (1 Cor 12:9)

prophet

1 Cor 12:28)

miracles (1 Cor 12:10)

helps (1 Cor 12:28)

evangelist

encouragement (Rom 12:8)

tongues (1 Cor 12:10)

administration (1 Cor 12:28)

pastor-teacher (Eph 4:11)

wisdom (1 Cor 12:8)

interpretation of tongues

service (Rom 12:7)

knowledge (1 Cor 12:8)

(1 Cor 12:10)

giving (Rom 12:8)

leadership (Rom 12:8)

mercy (Rom 12:8)

hospitality (1 Pet 4:9)

distinguishing between

spirits (1 Cor 12:10)

Ministry Gifts

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ence or authority over others to establish new

and *revelation*— the capacity to receive knowl—

local churches or to enhance the spread of

edge directly from God that was not passed on

Christianity into new areas. This gift is espe—

through human channels.

cially needed for foundational stages.

Prophet. One who discerns and expresses

SIGN GIFTS

truth from God in order to exhort, edify and

For two reasons it may appear unfortunate, at

comfort the church or to convince nonbeliev—

first glance, to separate the sign gifts into their

ers of the truth.

own category. First, it may appear that these

Evangelist. One with a passion to tell the

gifts are more “supernatural” than other gifts,

overwhelming grace of God and the overpow—

like administration. Yet what is impressive in

ering love of a heavenly Father either individ—

Paul’s writing is that he commingles what we

ually or publicly so that people take the initial

may consider the miraculous and nonmiracu—

steps in Christian discipleship.

lous. This means that in his mind all the gifts

Pastor-teacher. One who has a particular

of the Spirit, no matter how ordinary, function

concern for the long-term spiritual welfare of

under the supernatural empowerment of the

a flock and who teaches the Word of God as the

Spirit.

primary means to feed, nurture and shepherd.

Secondly, by simply listing these gifts we

are drawing attention to the fact that some

SPEAKING GIFTS

schools of thought do not consider these gifts
The distinguishing characteristics of the speak—
valid for today. This author has included them
ing gifts is not at all profound. The primary part
as normative for today for the following rea—
of the body used for those with speaking gifts is
sons: (1) Paul intersperses the natural and su—
the tongue. The support gifts use the tongue as
pernatural, thus erasing our categories. (2)
well, but they are united by their equipping
Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that
role within the body and therefore are worthy
these gifts will cease once the apostolic era has
of a separate descriptive category. The book of
ended. (3) The Holy Spirit continues the direct
James reminds us that there must be careful
presence of Jesus in and through his people in
governance on the tongue because of its capac—
accord with Jesus' promise of "greater things
ity for abuse (James 3).

than these [shall you do], because I am going

Teaching. The ability to acquire, organize

to the Father" (John 14:12).

and communicate God's truth effectively so

Miracles. The ability to perform supernat—

that there is life transformation in Christ.

ural acts of God that interrupt the natural laws

Encouragement. The capacity to motivate

of the universe in a way that brings glory to

individuals or a group through comfort, chal—

God and authenticates the authority of the ser—

lenge, exhortation or rebuke.

vant of God.

Wisdom. The capacity to apply insight from

Healing. The ability to intervene in a su—

the Holy Spirit to specific needs.

pernatural way through faith as an instrument

Knowledge. Depending on your tradition,

of God for the curing of physical, emotional or

there are two very different definitions: *schol-*

spiritual illness.

arship— the capacity to research, systematize

Tongues and interpretation. The ability to

and accumulate facts to help upbuild the body;

supernaturally speak in a human or angelic

language given for the purpose of extolling

STEPS IN SPIRITUAL GIFT DISCOVERY

God or interceding for something for which

There is no clear process of how to discover

you do not know how to pray.

your spiritual gifts. To get a clear picture of

yourself, you need to come at the discovery

SERVICE GIFTS

process from a number of angles.

This final category is somewhat of a catchall

Explore the possibilities. Be aware of the

and is a reminder to us of the spirit in which

biblical definition of the different gifts so you

these gifts should be offered to the body. With

can compare your behavior and motivation

the exception of leadership and administra—

with their characteristics.

tion, these gifts might be the least noticed.

Discern your motivation. When you oper—

Those who exercise these gifts tend to have the

ate in accord with your gifts, you should feel

lowest need for recognition. Yet their quiet

that you are doing what you have been specifi—

faithfulness is the glue that holds the body to—

cally designed by God to do, which will lead to

gether. They are the sinews and ligaments that

inner satisfaction and fulfillment.

make for fluid motion in the body.

Seek feedback from the body. Those who

Service. The ability to perform any task or

know you best and have observed you are the

responsibility with joy, benefiting others and

best candidates for giving you their evaluation

meeting practical or material needs.

of your giftedness. Spiritual gifts have an effect

Helps. The ability to serve by aiding someon others and builds them up. Affirm

others by

one in their ministry, by performing duties

sharing how their gifts have strengthened

that release another to pursue their main call.

your walk in Christ.

Mercy. The ability to work joyfully with

Test the options. Often spiritual gift discov—

those whom the majority ignores.

ery means taking risks, trying new things.

Giver. The ability to give material goods or

Face the fear that would bind you and try

resources with joy, delighting in the benefit it

something that stretches you beyond where

will be to the recipient.

you have been before. Evaluate past areas of

Hospitality. The ability to entertain guests

service and attempt to determine which were

in your home, with joy and affection.

fulfilling and which were unsatisfactory.

Leadership faith. The ability to discern

Explore critical feelings. A clue to your gift—

clearly God’s dreams for a particular body of

edness may be indicated by what you criticize

believers and to empower them to fulfill these

in others. Often there is an inner voice that

dreams.

says, “I can do that better than they can.” This

Administration. The ability to organize a

could be an indication of giftedness because

group of people to accomplish goals.

you have identified something in another that

Discernment (NRSV). The ability to judge or

you feel capable of doing yourself. It could also

determine whether forces acting on a person

mean that you simply have a critical spirit and

are from God, Satan or the human spirit.

are in need of repentance.

1Ray Stedman , *Body Life* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1972), p. 54.

2Elizabeth O’Connor , *Eighth Day of Creation* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1971), p. 42.

3Stedman , *Body Life,* p. 70ff.

Reading Study Guide

For the purpose of discipleship we will focus on steps one, two and three in the discovery process.

Complete the following:

1. Fill out the Subjective Inventory of Gifts, and after reviewing your answers prayerfully make an estimation of what you believe your gift mix to be. A part of the group exercise can be sharing the insights received and patterns discovered from the subjective inventory.

2. Follow the directions under the heading “Affirming Our Spiritual Gifts.”

SUBJECTIVE INVENTORY OF GIFTS

On a piece of paper, complete the following statements as quickly as possible with your first impression.

1. In my work or church ministry I find myself most fulfilled when . . .

2. Others have told me I am most helpful when . . .

3. I am often asked to . . . (e.g., teach or clarify a difficult concept) **4.** As a Christian, I most often picture myself as . . . (e.g., a coach) **5.** I believe God has given me the responsibility of _____ in my congregation.

6. My biggest concern for this church is . . .

7. If I could be assured of not failing in ministry I would . . .

After reviewing my answers I think I have the gifts of . . . (list as many as you like) **AFFIRMING OUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

1. List the names of the people in your group and next to them write down as many spiritual gifts as you have experienced through them.

a.

b.

c.

2. Choose a group member. Focus on that person and bombard him or her with the gifts you have identified on your chart. After everyone is finished, go to the next person. There should be no discussion at this point.

Gifts others have identified

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The three gifts identified from the subjective inventory: 1.

2.

3.

3. Go around the group again and have each person react to the relationship between the gifts identified by the group and those discovered through the subjective evaluation.

a. Do they coincide? What can you accept? What can't you relate to?

b. What new insights have you received?

c. Affirm what you see in each other and clarify the way you see the gifts functioning in a person's life.

Going Deeper

Bugbee, Bruce. *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. This is a helpful workbook that takes you through exercises to help you discover your gifts; it includes a temperament profile so that the ministry you choose will be consistent with the person God has designed.



LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Ephesians 6:14-18

BIBLE STUDY: Ephesians 6:10-20

READING: Our Struggle Is Not Against Flesh and Blood **Core Truth**

What opposition can a disciple expect, and what resources are available to combat this opposition?

Disciples have an enemy, Satan, who will oppose every step of growth into the sufficiency of Jesus Christ. Disciples must arm themselves for spiritual battle against the ploys of the evil one by putting on the whole armor of God.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

Christians are to put on the armor of faith when they go and do battle with the forces of the enemy.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Ephesians 6:14-18, and list each part of the armor and its value as an offensive or defensive weapon.

2. The memory verses are *Ephesians 6:14-18.* Copy the verses verbatim.

3. How do we put on the whole armor of God?

4. Which part of your equipment is lacking?

5. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Spiritual Warfare

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Inductive Bible Study Guide

1 . *Read Ephesians 6:10-20.* What are we commanded to do? Why?

2. What are the “schemes” of the devil?

To which particular “schemes” are you susceptible?

3. Ephesians 6:12 portrays a struggle that is beyond flesh and blood. How would you describe this struggle in your own words?

4. What is your reaction to Paul’s description of a battle against “rulers, . . . authorities, . . . powers of this dark world and . . . spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”? (Are you skeptical about the reality of evil personified? Explain.) **5.** What is the objective of these evil forces?

6. What is your attitude toward the power of evil?

7. What place does prayer have in the battle?

8. What questions do you have about this passage?

9. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: Our Struggle Is Not Against Flesh and Blood

How do we account for the heinous evil of

pulled the young field officer aside with this

ethnic cleansing carried out by the Serbians

advice, “Mr. Westmoreland, look back at that

against the Muslims in Bosnia? How do we ex—

hill. Look at it from the standpoint of the en—

plain the number of pastors who have sacri—

emy. It is fundamental to put yourself in the

ficed their call to the temptation of sexual in—

position of the enemy.”

fidelity? How do we understand the disunity

and dissension in many churches who are

WE HAVE AN ENEMY

bringing shame on the name of the Christ

Paul asserts without embarrassment that

they follow? How do we make sense of the

standing behind the human face of sin, bro—

rapid disintegration of marriages, where the

kenness and evil are unseen spiritual forces.

divorce rate has escalated from 11 percent in

Paul says that there are powers in our dark

the 1950s to over 50 percent today? How do

world. *Powers* was a term used commonly in

we justify our own self-destructive behavior

astrology for the alignment of the planets,

when we violate our own beliefs about what is

which was thought to control human fate.

right, decent and virtuous?

Paul takes that familiar word and fills it with

Scripture says we have an unseen enemy

his own content. By describing these powers as

who will defeat us if he's not taken seriously.

evil Paul means that they are destructive, un-

"For our struggle is not against flesh and

scrupulous, ruthless and in pursuit of mali—

blood, but against the rulers, against the aucious designs. Peter wrote, "Your enemy the

thorities, against the powers of this dark world

devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking
and against the spiritual forces of evil in the
for someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).
heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). If we seek
Though Paul assumed the reality of a per—
human solutions to problems whose origin is
sonified evil, we cannot. C. S. Lewis said that
supernatural evil, we will fail because we will
we make two opposite yet equally destructive
not have correctly assessed the strength of the
errors regarding the devil. In his preface to
enemy. Education and support groups might
Screwtape Letters Lewis writes, "One is to dis—
help to a limited extent, but they are human
believe in their existence. The other is to be—
solutions to spiritual problems.
lieve, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy
In his autobiography, *A General's Life,* Gen—
interest in them."1
eral Omar Bradley writes of his first meeting
Regarding the first error, we disbelieve in

with the young William Westmoreland, who
the devil because in our scientific age the idea
would later become commander of the Ameri—
of a supernatural being who is the enemy of
can forces in Vietnam. At the time, Westmore—
God is viewed as a product of primitive times.
land was a cadet first captain in the West Point
Now that we have come of age, we have a
class of 1936. During the summer war games
cause-effect explanation for everything. These
Westmoreland commanded a battalion defend—
notions seem foolish. Skeptical theologian Ru—
ing a hill. He performed so poorly in this mock
dolf Bultmann expressed this attitude, “It is
battle that the hill was overrun. Bradley, a ma—
impossible to use electric lights and the wire—
jor at the time, observed the exercise. He
less, and to avail ourselves of the modern med-

ical and surgical discoveries, and at the same

of a personified evil, but it has no practical ef—

time believe in the New Testament world of defect in our lives. For example, when illness or

mons and spirits.”2

depression occur, our means of handling

Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theo—

them may be limited to medical or psychological Seminary, took the opportunity to

logical services. Though we say there is an

visit a tenured professor at a major university

evil one, we operate out of the scientific

who had recently become a Christian. The

worldview that asserts that all problems have

conversation began in a strained, awkward

a natural cause and therefore a natural solu—

fashion until this new believer admitted his

tion. The truth is that transformation and

nervousness about the conversation. “This

change, the dislodging of sin and evil from

may seem strange to you, but you are the first

our lives, is an act of the Holy Spirit displac—

Christian academic I’ve ever talked with

ing and confronting the powers of evil and
about my faith." Concerned that his ques—
sin. It is easy to be seduced into thinking that
tions were too fundamental, he was afraid to
we can produce fruit in *our* efforts when in
ask them. One of the topics concerned the
fact we are being called to enter into a realm
devil. "Before I became a Christian I thought
of spiritual warfare that is not fought with
a belief in Satan was a leftover from the Dark
human weapons.
Ages—something you found today only on
We have an enemy, and the enemy engages
the lunatic fringe. But now as I look back on
us in battle. Paul writes, "For our struggle is
my own pre-Christian days, I sense that I was
not against flesh and blood." The word *strug-*
held in the grip of a power that tried to dom-
gle literally means "wrestle" and is taken from
inate my thoughts. Becoming a Christian
the world of athletic competition or hand-to—

meant being released from that stranglehold.

hand combat. Paul is indicating that the battle

In Christ I am now free to see things in a dif—

is now “up close and personal.” Just as a wres—

ferent way.”3

tler needs to know the moves of the opponent

The second mistake that we make regardin order to pin him, so we must know the

ing Satan, Lewis says, is “to feel an excessive

moves of the one who wants to destroy us. We

and unhealthy interest” in him.4 Some Chris—

are to put on the whole armor of God that we

tians are marked by excesses when they see de—

may be able to stand against the devil’s

mons as the cause of all problems. If one has

schemes.

an addiction to tobacco or sex, the reasoning

There are four basic strategies that the evil

goes, a demon of tobacco or sex has entered

one uses against individuals, the church and

one’s body and must be removed. Excessive in—

the world. We must not think of the work of
terest can be a reason for not accepting re—
the evil one as purely personal. Christians have
sponsibility for one’s own sin. Comedian Flip
often failed to see that not only is Satan want—
Wilson’s old line applies: “The devil made me
ing to neutralize us individually, but his strat—
do it.”
egies relate to destroying the church of Christ
In addition to disbelief and excessive in—
and throwing a blanket of darkness over whole
terest, there is a third problem that may be
cultures.
more prevalent and damaging than the first
What are the common strategies of the
two. We can say that we believe in the reality
devil?

TEMPTATION

body, for we could unwittingly become a

When Jesus launched his public ministry, the
wedge, causing disunity.
first act of the Holy Spirit was to lead him
Another way we experience accusation is
into the wilderness to face “the tempter”
the inner voice of self-condemnation and de-
(Matthew 4:1). A primary strategy of the evil
spair. Christians often fail to discern the differ—
one is to be a beguiling serpent whose
ence between the conviction of the Holy Spirit
method is to sow seeds of distrust and doubt
and the accusations of the evil one. How can
about God, whether he has our best interest
we know the difference? In the results. Satan
at heart. The primary tool in the devil’s box is
has the capacity to create in our minds a
the wedge. When we go back to the Garden of
frighteningly accurate picture of our sins and
Eden, Satan appears to Eve in the form of a
weaknesses. His intent is to lead us into de—
serpent. God had promised the original cou—

spair. But the conviction of the Holy Spirit is
ple abundance of life, the only restriction be—
sweet release. Under it we see with incisive
ing not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of
clarity the guilt and horror of our sin, but we
good and evil. So what does the serpent do?
are lead to the refreshing waters of God’s
He raises a question meant to create doubt
mercy.
about God’s goodness: “Did God really say,
‘You must not eat from any tree in the gar-

DECEPTION

den?’” (Genesis 3:1).
Satan masks himself as an angel of light. The
Temptation is to sow disbelief that God’s
Ephesian believers were acquainted with Sa—
way is the most satisfying way for us to live.
tan’s attempts to transform himself into a be—
Though James tells us that temptation origi—
nevolent power. Ephesus was a center for
nates from within (James 1:13-15), Satan is

magic and occult practices. The temple of Ar—
there also fanning the flames of those desires,
temis contained a cultic zodiac that could sup—
creating pictures in our minds and wooing us
posedly manipulate the cosmic forces. When
to do what is contrary to God's intent. The
there was a great turning to Christ in the city,
tempter promises satisfaction, but it is hollow
"Many of those who believed now came and
and harmful.
openly confessed their evil deeds. A number
who had practiced sorcery brought their

ACCUSATION

scrolls together and burned them publicly"
In Revelation 12:10 Satan is called the "ac-
(Acts 19:18-19).
cuser of our brothers." Satan wants nothing
Johanna Michaelsen tells the story of how
more than to tear apart the church from
she was sucked into the world of occult power
within. Satan's ultimate goal is to attack the

through what appeared to be the good of psy—

glory of God and strike a blow against God's

chic healing. Her story is titled *The Beautiful*

Son. What better way to do that than to sow

Side of Evil. Satan exercises the power of heal-dissension within the people of God, who are

ing and even attempts to co-opt the name of

to reflect the glory of God? If Satan can get

Jesus, but it is his way of taking hold. People

God's people fighting among themselves, the

innocently dabble in things such as astrology,

battle is over. We must beware of how we talk

graphology and palm reading, thinking that

about our leaders or other members of the

these things are harmless, but they are the evil

one's point of entry. The lure of the occult is

darkness. The power that raised Jesus is avail—

twofold. There is the desire for supernatural

able to us. That is why Paul prayed for the

knowledge of the future and the desire for ac—
Ephesians, “That the eyes of your heart may
quiring power to manipulate spiritual forces
be enlightened in order that you may know
for our own benefit.
. . . his incomparably great power for us who
Satan doesn’t come primarily through
believe, . . . which he exerted in Christ when
the occult. He is much more effective in
he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians
throwing a blanket of darkness over an en—
1:18-20).
tire culture. Satan deceives whole people
groups to buy in to worldviews that become

dominant thought patterns and assump—
Tony Campolo dramatizes the power of the
tions. The acceptance of relativism, for in—
cross and resurrection through a Good Friday
stance, is an ingenious and insidious ma—
sermon. On this particular Good Friday Cam—

neuver on the part of Satan. A recent poll

polo was the sixth of seven preachers at a Good

reveals that 67 percent of Americans be—

Friday service.

lieved there is no such thing as absolute

Campolo was hot. After preaching he sat

truth. People won’t even search for a truth

down next to the seventh preacher of the day,

outside themselves because they don’t think

leaned over and said, “Can you top that?” The

there is such a truth to be found.

man, his pastor, said, “Just you sit back and

watch.” For the next forty-five minutes this

DIRECT ATTACKS

preacher worked the congregation into a

When Satan gets bold he attacks directly. Our

lather, and it was all built around one line: “It’s

society is openly hostile toward Christians.

Friday. Sunday’s a coming!”

Christian belief is characterized by the media

He started off slowly and built to a creas narrow and even lunatic. We are living

in

scendo. “It’s Friday. Jesus is on the cross. He’s the rising tide of anti-Christianity. We must be dead. Gone. He’s no more. But that’s Friday. aware that the one who is driving the passions Sunday’s a coming.” He began to take off. “It’s and energizing the antagonism is none other Friday. Mary’s crying her eyes out. The disci— than the enemy whose target is the Lord Jesus ples are running in every direction. No hope in Christ. If he can’t get at Jesus directly, he will the world. That’s Friday. Sunday’s a coming.” do it through Jesus’ people.

“Keep going,” someone said.

We face a formidable enemy, but don’t lose “It’s Friday. Pilate’s washing his hands. The heart. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in Pharisees are calling the shots. The Roman his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10). As pow— soldiers are strutting around. But that’s Fri— erful as the evil one appears to be, we have the

day. Sunday’s a coming!”

right Man on our side. The head of our army

“Preach on, brother!”

is the One who hung on the cross, unmasking

“It’s Friday. Satan’s doing his little jig. He

and pronouncing judgment on the evil one

thinks he rules the world. Institutions are at

and his minions. When Satan thought he had

his command, governments do his bidding,

dealt the death blow to Jesus, God raised him

and businesses do his work. But that’s because

from the dead, triumphing over the power of

it’s Friday. Sunday’s a coming!”

He ended by yelling at the top of his lungs,

“Sunday’s a coming!”

“Friday!” And all 1500 people yelled back,

Take heart. Sunday has come.5

1C. S. Lewis , *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 3.

2Rudolf Bultmann , *Kerygma and Myth* (London: SPCK, 1953), pp. 4-5.

3Richard Mouw , *Distorted Truth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), p. 30.

4Lewis , *Screwtape Letters*, p. 3.

5Tony Campolo , *It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'* (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1984).

Reading Study Guide

1. What is your explanation for inordinate and heinous evil?

2. Explain why we don't fully appreciate the reality of the demonic.

3. The author identifies four strategies of the devil. Put each in your own words.

a. temptation

b. accusation

c. deception

d. direct attack

4. How can we best arm ourselves against each of these strategies?

5. Where are you most susceptible to Satan's attacks?

6. Where do you see the church being susceptible to Satan's strategies?

7. What are Satan's strategies regarding the culture in which we live?

8. What questions do you have about the reading?

9. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Watson, David. "Spiritual Warfare." Chap. 8 in *Called and Committed: World-*

Changing Discipleship. Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.



23 / Walking in Obedience

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSES: Ephesians 4:22-24

BIBLE STUDY: Ephesians 4:17-32

READING: The Principle of Replacement

Core Truth

How is a disciple transformed into the likeness of Christ?

Sinful behavior is the product of practiced patterns that become habits which sink their roots deep in us. Growing to Christlikeness involves a process of replacing old habits with God-pleasing ones.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Walking in Obedience

Memory Verse Study Guide

Paul uses a number of images in his letters to describe the process of transformation. He speaks of being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29), the fruit of the Spirit versus the deeds of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-26), and not being conformed to this world but being transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2). In our memory verses sanctification is pictured as taking off old, tattered garments and being redressed with clothing that is honoring to God.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Ephesians 4:17-32. How are verses 22-24 a transition point from the description of our former manner of life (vv. 17-21) to the new ways of life that replace it (vv.

25-32)?

2. The memory verses are *Ephesians 4:22-24.* Copy the verses verbatim.

3. Whereas Romans 12:2 speaks of the renewal of our minds, here Paul writes of the "attitude" of our minds (v. 23). To what is Paul referring?

4. What does Paul tell us to put off and put on?

5. How much is God responsible to change us, and how much are we responsible for our transformation?

6. How have these verses spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

Read Ephesians 4:17-32. Whereas Ephesians 4:17-24 describes the need for and the principle of replacement of the old with the new, Ephesians 4:25-32 illustrates the principle that transformation is never complete until the old way of life is replaced with habits empowered by and pleasing to the Lord.

1. One way of looking at sin is to think of it as addictive habits, not isolated, individual acts. Notice phrases in the passage that describe sin as settled habits.

2. In verses 22 and 24 Paul does not say simply to put off the old nature but to put on a new nature in its place. Why can't we simply stop bad behavior?

3. Notice how Paul illustrates the principle of replacement using the phrases "put off" and "put on" in verses 25-32. Record your observations below.

Put off

Put on

4. What questions does this passage raise for you?

5. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Reading: The Principle of Replacement

In *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader,"* the third

Then Aslan says, "You will have to let me

book in the Chronicles of Narnia, C. S. Lewis

undress you.” Even though Eustace is afraid of
tells the story of the transformation of the dif—
Aslan’s claws, he is desperate by now. Eustace
ficult little boy Eustace. Eustace is a passenger
lies on his back and allows Aslan to have his
on the *Dawn Treader,* which is sailing under
way.
the command of Prince Caspian. Being nasty,
The very first tear was so deep that I
a complainer and generally obnoxious, Eus—
thought he had gone right into my
tace alienates his fellow travelers. When the
heart. And when he began pulling the
ship docks on an island, the passengers get out
skin off, it hurt worse than anything I’ve
to explore. Eustace intentionally separates
ever felt. The only thing that made me
himself from the rest, sensing that he is not
able to bear it was just the pleasure of
welcome. He soon comes face to face with a
feeling that stuff peel off. After he peeled

frightful, fire-breathing dragon. Much to Eus—
off all the skin, I was as smooth and soft
tace's relief the dragon expires right in front of
as a peeled switch. He caught hold of me
him, but after a dream-filled night Eustace
and threw me into the water. At first it
awakes to find that he himself has become a
smarted, but then it became perfectly
green, scaly dragon. This was Lewis's way of
delicious. I'd turned into a boy again. . . .
saying that Eustace became on the outside
And after a bit the Lion took me out of
what he was on the inside.
the water and dressed me. New clothes
Eustace sobs when he realizes the meaning
and all.1
of the symbol. How can he rid himself of the
God intends to make us into new persons
scaly skin and be recognized and accepted by
who reflect his image. To do so he must re—
those he has estranged? Another night passes

move the old skin that represents our old way

full of dreams, or so he thinks. In his dream he

of life and clothe us with new skin made in

is approached by Aslan—a lion and the Christ

the likeness of him. The image of undressing

figure in the story. Aslan takes Eustace to a

and redressing serves as the frame for Paul's

bubbling well, shaped like a round bath with

teaching. "You were taught, with regard to

marble stairs descending into it. The water is

your former way of life, to put off your old

deliciously inviting, but Aslan says that before

self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful

Eustace can get into it he has to undress first.

desires . . . and to put on the new self, created

Eustace knows that this means he must reto be like God in true righteousness and ho—

move his scaly surface like a snake sheds its

liness" (Ephesians 4:22, 24). Paul is saying

skin. He strips off his skin as if peeling a ba—

that the Christian life is a lifelong process of

nana. He steps out of the skin and walks over to
taking off the soiled, tattered garments of
the edge of the pool, only to see that his reflec—
our sinful nature and being dressed with a
tion still shows the same rough and wrinkled
fresh set of clothes that will transform us
skin. Two more times he attempts to remove
into beings reflecting God's holiness and
his outer coat with the same results. No matter
righteousness.
how much he strips away, he does not change.

TRANSFORMATION

stark contrast to the dominant culture out of
Let's put the process of transformation in very
which we have come. In order for us to see the
practical terms. We are creatures of habit.
person we are to be, Paul in broad strokes
Habits are practiced ways of thinking, feeling
paints the picture of a pagan culture in rebel—

or acting. They become so much a part of us
lion against its Creator. Paul’s concern is con—
that they are second nature. For example, do
trast; he makes no effort to balance his de—
you button your blouse or shirt from top to
scription with noble qualities. He wants the
bottom or from bottom to top? So well in—
believers to see that they are to live a life that
grained are our habits that we can master
stands out in bold relief. “So I tell you this, and
complex behaviors and perform them without
insist on it in the Lord, that you must no
conscious thought. Do you remember when
longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of
you first sat behind the wheel of a car? There
their thinking. They are darkened in their un—
were so many things to think about—put the
derstanding and separated from the life of God
key in the ignition, fasten the seat belt, move
because of the ignorance that is in them due to
the seat into position, keep your eye on the

the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all

speedometer and the rearview and side mir—

sensitivity, they have given themselves over to

rors—just for starters. Everything was a con—

sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of im—

scious effort. But thousands of hours later we

purity, with a continual lust for more" (Ephe—

can slip into the car in the darkness, find the

sians 4:17-19). Paul notes three stages of de—

slot for the key and buckle the seat belt with—

scent into darkness.

out thinking.

1. Wrong-headedness. Paul says that dark—

Life is full of good and bad habits. We have

ness begins with faulty thinking. Notice the

habits of thinking, feeling and acting that both

three words in verses 17 and 18— *thinking,*

honor God and displease him. To follow Christ

understanding and *ignorance.* Paul says that is to commit ourselves to putting off the old

our entry into darkness occurs with the deci—

and putting on the new. The Lord desires to

sion to reject the proper starting point for all

build God-pleasing habits into our character.

of life.

The word “habits” is derived from the Latin

Paul uses three phrases to capture this

word *habitus.* A priest wears a *habitus*, a piece wrong-headedness. He speaks of the “futility of of clothing that represents a commitment to a

their thinking.” The word *futility* is related to holy life. We too are to put on habits that are

idolatry. Paul is saying that rejecting the true

formed in practice so that godliness is a built—

God doesn’t mean ceasing to have a god. If

in instinct.

one’s god is not the true God, then the Lord is

In Ephesians 4:17-24 Paul focuses on four

exchanged for a lie. Second, “futility of . . .

steps in the process of removing God-displeas—

thinking” leads to being “darkened in . . . uning habits and putting on those habits that re—

derstanding.” If we start with the wrong

flect God’s character.

premise, it makes no difference how impecca—

ble our logic might be, because we will always

KNOW THE OLD LIFE FROM WHICH YOU

come to the wrong conclusion. Finally, Paul

CAME

describes wrong-headedness as the “ignorance

According to Paul Christians are to live in

that is in them.” This is not innocent igno-

rance but a willful ignorance that leaves us acits, we must be able to recognize the soiled

countable to God. We are without excuse. God

garments which must be removed.

will hold us accountable for our ignorance because it is chosen blindness.

DON’T UNDERESTIMATE THE GRIP OF

The result of this wrong-headedness is that

THE OLD LIFE

we are “separated from the life of God.” Not

One of the reasons we fail in our attempts to

only are we cut off from the life source that

change bad habits is that we don’t respect the

made us, but we are also in rebellion against

power of a habit to hold us. It’s like removing

and at odds with our Maker.

a tree stump. We might say at first, “This isn’t

What form does this take in our society? A

a big job. I’ll have that out in an hour.” We

sign of our wrong-headedness is a rejection of

show up with our shovel and ax to cut the

absolutes. We worship the god of relativism.

roots. Three hours later we are ready to give up

The prevailing attitude is that we should be

because we have dug a five-foot trench around

faithful to whatever is true *for us.* This is the the tree and exposed the root system, which

cultural air we breathe.

was far larger than we ever imagined. We have

2. Hard-heartedness. The descent into

considerably underestimated the task.

darkness moves from wrong-headedness to

Endurance and discipline are key elements

hard-heartedness. Paul says that our thinking

in changing habits. Any new habit takes a minis wrong because our heart is calcified.

imum of three to six weeks to become part of

Wrong-headedness is “due to the hardening

our routine. Most of us get washed out long

of their hearts” (v. 18). The word for “hard—

before that time. We must know the strength

ness” is derived from the idea of stone that be—

of the battle that is ahead so we can call on the

comes harder than marble. It is comes from a

Lord’s grace for the change.

medical term that refers to deposits of cal—

cium between the joints that become harder

PRACTICE THE PRINCIPLE OF

than bone. They have lost all *sensitivity* (v.

REPLACEMENT

19), a word meaning “ceasing to care,” dulled

Paul gives us an often overlooked but neces—

to the point of making right and wrong indis—

sary step for changing a habit. Our usual ap—

tinguishable.

proach to change is to stop a habit of thinking,

3. Permissiveness. Paul writes that the Gen—

feeling or acting: we reduce our food intake,

tiles “have given themselves over to sensual—

we try to stop being critical, we try to stop

ity” (v. 19). The Greek word for “sensuality”

drinking. We do fine for a while. We may even

means shamelessness. When a society can no

think, *I have this licked.* But then our will

longer be shocked or no longer has a healthy

crumbles and the former behavior is back,

shame, it is at the point of Paul’s description.

stronger than ever. Jesus tells the story of the

The second phrase that captures permissive—

man who had a demon cast out of him. The de—

ness is to “indulge in every kind of impurity,”

mon finds no place to lodge, so it returns to

that irresistible desire to have what we have no

the place from which it was cast, bringing

right to have.

seven more demons along (Luke 11:24-26).

Paul goes into a detailed description of pa—

When you simply stop doing an old behavior

gan culture, for in order to practice godly hab—

without putting a God-pleasing one in its

place, you create a vacuum that is filled by an

We must be patient with the process. Rich—

even stronger version of the same problem.

ard Lovelace gives us good insight into the

Paul says that we must practice the princi—

process of sanctification: “God will proceed at

ple of replacement. When we “put off “ we

a rate and follow a course which is ideally

must “put on” as well. The first step is to iden—

suited to the individual, raising successive is—

tify the habit of thinking, feeling or acting

sues over the years and making a point of the

that needs to be put to death or nailed to the

need for growth in one area after another. He

cross. Then we must make a searching and
seldom shows us all of our needs at once; we
fearless moral inventory of ourselves and ad—
would be overwhelmed at the sight.”2 In other
mit to God, ourselves and other people the
words, there is no such thing as instant god—
nature of the wrong. Then we must prepare
liness. To live in a way that is contrary to so—
ourselves to remove all defects of character.
ciety, we need to commit ourselves to a life—
The Holy Spirit’s transformation will not be
time of change under the guidance of the
complete until we practice the principle of re—
Holy Spirit.
placement.
The Holy Spirit is God’s tailor: he is ready to
give us a new set of clothes and discard the old,

KEEP IN MIND GOD’S INTENTION

threadbare wardrobe. But the old way of life

FOR YOU

dies a slow, bitter, bloody death. It does not

God’s intent is for you to reflect his image:

want to give up its grip. Yet the new set of

“Put on the new self, created to be like God in

clothes are so much more becoming.

true righteousness and holiness” (v. 24). AthAs in Eustace’s story, it is the Lord who

letes often attain their goal by visualizing their

must be given the permission to dress us anew.

success. A high jumper sees the bar and her

We can’t remove the scales ourselves. Our

body safely flying over it. It is the completion

prayer should be, “Lord, do what it takes, reach

of the goal that motivates her toward what she

as deep as you need, go after the wrong thinkis to become. We are to see ourselves with the

ing, wrong feelings, wrong behaviors. Go

defects of character removed from our lives as

straight to the heart with whatever pain it will

Jesus shines through so that we are what God

take, because our desire is to be made over in

intends us to be.

the likeness of God.”

1C. S. Lewis , *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 90.

2Richard F. Lovelace , *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1980), p. 111.

Reading Study Guide

1. What point does C. S. Lewis illustrate through Eustace in *The Voyage of the "Dawn Treader"?*

2. Does Paul's description of society in rebellion against God seem overstated to you? Why or why not?

3. What habits have you tried to dislodge? If you failed, what do you suppose was the reason for the failure?

4. How would you put each of these steps to enact the principle of replacement into effect?

a. habit to be replaced

b. the biblical "instead of"

c. visualize what God intends you to be

5. What questions do you have about this reading?

6. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Watson, David. "Cost of Discipleship." Chap. 11 in *Called and Committed: World-Changing Discipleship.* Wheaton, Ill.: Harold Shaw, 2000.



24 / Sharing the Wealth

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: 2 Timothy 2:2

BIBLE STUDY: 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

READING: Paul's Strategy of Ministry

Core Truth

What is our role in discipling others?

Discipling is the process of allowing God to use us to be a part of helping another disciple to grow.

A sign of our maturity is the desire to pass on the "wealth" to the next generation.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Sharing the Wealth

Memory Verse Study Guide

Second Timothy is a motivational letter from Paul to his son in the faith, Timothy. Paul is at the end of his earthly ministry and deeply concerned that the gospel be transmitted intact to the next generation. Timothy is urged to be that link.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read 2 Timothy 1:1-18. How does Paul's admonition to Timothy, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1), address the fears that Paul identifies in 1 Timothy 1?

2. The memory verse is *2 Timothy 2:2.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. What is the ministry strategy contained in this verse?

4. Timothy is to look for those who are "reliable." What qualities should you look for in a future discipling partner?

Does this mean that some Christians are not suitable for a discipling relationship? Why or why not?

5. William Barclay has said that every Christian stands as a link between two generations. How do you feel about being in that link?

6. In what ways has this verse spoken to you this week?



Inductive Bible Study Guide

In the first chapter of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians he commends them for

many good qualities. He then goes on in the second chapter to describe the qualities that he exemplified as well as the methods he used to urge the Thessalonians to maturity.

1 . *Read 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12.* Read Acts 16:11-40 to see the treatment of Paul and Silas in Philippi, the community he visited just prior to going to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). What impresses you about Paul and Silas?

2. What character qualities does Paul exhibit that are worthy of imitation?

Which of these challenge you in your discipleship?

3. What was Paul's method of instilling these qualities in the Thessalonians (notice verses 7 and 11)?

4. How do these images instruct you in how to invest in others?

5. What questions do you have about this passage?

6. What verse or verses have particularly impacted you? Rewrite key verses in your own words.



Sharing the Wealth

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Reading: Paul's Strategy of Ministry

Paul saw himself as one to be imitated. In so

body and blood of Christ and greeting each

many words Paul said, "If you copy my life,

other with a holy kiss. Paul preached against

then you are following Christ." To the Corin—

the backdrop of the Greek mystery religions,

thians he could be so bold as to say, "I urge you

where temple prostitution was part of their

to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16). A key ele—

worship.

ment in teaching is modeling. What was there

Further, Paul's conduct was *above board.*

about Paul's life that was worth copying?

There was no intention to deceive or lead

astray, but he was open and honest, convinced

PAUL'S MODEL

of the truth of his message. He was not a crafty

From 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12 certain qualities

person with an intention to deceive.

stand out in Paul's life.

Paul spoke to please God, not people (v. 4).

Paul exhibited courage in the Lord (v. 2).

Paul lived with a sense of obligation because

Paul proclaimed the gospel in spite of the ophe had been entrusted with a message from

position he received in Philippi (Acts 16:11—
God. He therefore had no right to change its
40). Paul and Silas were cast into jail because
content or blunt its thrust. Paul refused to be
Paul had cast an evil spirit from a woman who
swayed by the need for human acceptance.
could divine the future. They demonstrated
Paul was not out for personal gain (v. 5).
trust in God's deliverance through prayer and
Paul never tried to derive financial gain from
singing hymns during a desperate situation.
his preaching. Paul worked as a tentmaker, so
When their resources were spent, God made
the accusation of greed could not be leveled at
his resources available, even though they had
him.
"been insulted," probably a reference to the
abuse of Paul's Roman citizenship.

PAUL'S METHOD

Paul's message and motives were true (v.
Paul's method was personal investment. The

3). His message was not based on error, even
only way to make disciples is to get involved
though his hearers thought it to be sheer de—
intimately in the lives of the people you are
lusion. To the Greeks his message of incarna—
trying to influence. God got involved with us
tion and resurrection was madness, a foolish—
in Jesus Christ, and he uses us to the extent
ness that did not accord with reality. The
that we give ourselves to others personally.
intimation was that Paul was a fraud, a wan—
Let's look as the way Paul gave himself to the
dering impostor and propagandist. But Paul
Thessalonians.
claims the source of his message to be from
1. "Like a mother caring for her little chil-
God and the foolishness is really God's means
dren" (v. 7). Paul knew the people under his
of salvation.
care, focused on their needs and carried them
The Greek word translated "impure mo—

along a path of growth. He was gentle because

tives" comes from an impurity related to sex—

his disciples were like babies—tender and unual matters. Stories were circulated to dis—

developed. He is like a mother who acts in the

credit Paul—that Christians were involved in

role of a nurse to bring each child to health.

secret immoral practices such as drinking the

2. "We . . . share with you not only the gos-

pel of God but our lives as well" (v. 8). Paul was often what occurs is that the bureaucrats

not an untouchable authority figure who kept

(committees, session, boards, etc.) devise a

himself at a distance. He got involved in the

system that people are herded through, and

lives of the Thessalonians to the extent that his

disciples are expected to be mass produced.

humanity was showing. Paul gave his whole

But programs by their nature are task—

self. He shared his life with them. The people

centered and not people-centered. They can—
knew that their welfare had become his wel—
not respond to the unique character of the in—
fare. Discipling is a process of investing one's
dividuals involved. Programs are the quick-fix
self in someone else for an extended period of
approach to disciplemaking.
time.

3. "As a father deals with his children" (v.

PAUL FOCUSED ON INDIVIDUALS

11). Again we see the emphasis on the unique—
In the opening line of Paul's first letter to the
ness of the individual. No human being is the
Thessalonians he writes, "Paul, Silas and Tim—
same, and no one is at the same point of
othy . . ." Paul's mention of two companions
growth and need. A father must foster the
gives us insight into his strategy. He was very
unique character of his children, and so must
conscious of his responsibility to pass on the
a discipler. A discipler encourages, comforts

faith. He chose people to be with him so that and urges his or her pupil toward more mature faith could be imparted in the context of real godliness.

life. And the investment in people's lives was over a long period. Paul was faithful to Christ.

PAUL'S STRATEGY OF MINISTRY VERSUS

He knew the character of God and the content

THE CHURCH'S

of the gospel, which he painstakingly trans—

Paul's style is the opposite of what we often at—

mitted to his people.

tempt in the church today. His ministry strat—

Coupled with this focus on individuals was

egy could be prioritized in this way: disciples,

the self-assurance that his life was worthy of

fellowship, program. He didn't start with pro—

copying. Because of this, Paul can sound arro—

grams but let programs develop from the

gant. Without apology he says, "You became

spontaneous context of disciplemaking and

imitators of us and of the Lord" (1 Thessalo—

disciples' fellowship with each other. He pro—

nians 1:6). Also, "You are witnesses, and so is

claimed the gospel; those who responded be—

God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we

came the object of his investment and were

were among you who believed" (1 Thessalo—

formed into a community of believers. From

nians 2:10). Paul's attitude was "I represent

this foundation his ministry grew.

Christ, and you should follow in my footsteps."

The church's ministry today is often the op—

Paul knew he had something to offer and did

posite of Paul's. We have a different order of

not drum up false humility to apologize for it.

priorities that often looks like this: organiza—

A discipler must feel he or she has something

tion, program, disciples. We think that making

to give.

disciples must be done through programs, defined here as a spectator-performer relation-

ship. In other words, a few people plan the ac-

tivities that are spoon-fed to the many. So

Paul did not select Timothy because he could

help carry the luggage. He saw in Timothy the

the next generation. William Barclay has said,

quality of faithfulness that would serve the fu-

"Every Christian must look on himself as a

ture church. We gain an insight into Paul's

link between two generations."1

long-range vision from 2 Timothy 2:1-2.

Paul was not concerned to pass on struc—

Paul transmitted his faith to Timothy be—

ture, organization or program. The test of his

fore many witnesses. Timothy was trained in a

ministry was whether disciples were being

public ministry, not as a member of a secret

produced for future generations. Paul identi—

sect. Paul raised Timothy in the faith just as a

fies his motivating passion when he says, “We

father would his child, teaching him his trade.

proclaim him, admonishing and teaching

Paul addresses Timothy as his son in the faith.

everyone with all wisdom, so that we may

Timothy is to continue to pass the faith on

present everyone perfect in Christ. To this

to reliable people. A faithful person is one who

end I labor, struggling with all his energy,

is loyal, faithful and dependable. Timothy

which so powerfully works in me” (Colossians

stood as a link between the apostolic age and

1:28-29).

1William Barclay , *The Letters to Timothy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 131.

Reading Study Guide

1. As you examine Paul’s model, what aspects of his character impress you?

2. Summarize Paul’s method.

3. How does Paul’s strategy of ministry contrast with the way we often operate in the church?

4. Paul puts himself forth as an intentional model. What was it he wanted others to imitate?

How can we follow his model?

5. Every Christian must look on him-or herself as a link between two generations. What must occur within you in order for this to be true?

6. What is your prayer as you look toward investing in others?

7. What questions do you have about the reading?

8. Does the reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Coleman, Robert. *The Master Plan of Evangelism.* Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1963.



BONUS SECTION

25 / Money

LOOKING AHEAD

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 6:24

BIBLE STUDY: Selected verses on the tithe

READING: “Living with Cheerful Abandon”

Core Truth

What attitude and practice should disciples have regarding money?

Disciples live with a healthy fear of the money god (mammon), knowing that it has the power to command devotion. A way to put limits on our greed and to laugh in the face of mammon is to begin our practice of giving with a minimum of a tithe of our resources to the Lord's work.

1. Identify key words or phrases in the question and answer above, and state their meaning in your own words.

2. Restate the core truth in your own words.

3. What questions or issues does the core truth raise for you?



Memory Verse Study Guide

Jesus was quite skeptical about the ability of humans to handle the allure of money. We tend to view money as simply a neutral means of exchange. It is the currency we use to transact business.

Conversely, Jesus viewed money as having the power to secure devotion. The pursuit of "mammon," the money god, can lead to idolatry. Our memory verse places us on notice and issues a strong warning of this danger.

1. *Putting it in context:* Read Matthew 6:19-34. How does the teaching before and after our memory verse, set up the choice that Jesus puts before us?

2. The memory verse is *Matthew 6:24.* Copy the verse verbatim.

3. What is the choice that Jesus puts before us?

4. Why can’t we serve two masters?

5. What is there about money that it has the power to become a god?

6. Where do you see evidence of money’s drawing power in your own life? Where are you susceptible to money becoming a god?

7. Does the power of money to become a god frighten you? Why or why not?

8. How has this verse spoken to you this week?



Money

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Inductive Bible Study Guide

Though giving a tithe to the Lord is largely an Old Testament practice, mentioned only sparingly by Jesus in the New Testament (Matthew 23:23-24), it is still the foundational starting point to guide our obedience in giving. The tithe has never been set aside and, in fact, Jesus supports its continued practice, as long as the more important matters of justice, mercy and faithfulness take precedence. Therefore, this study will introduce us to the meaning and importance of the tithe in three key Old Testament passages.

1. *Read Leviticus 27:30-33.* To what does the tithe apply and to whom does it belong?

2. Note the process for the selection of the animals to be tithed. Why do you suppose the Lord chose such a “mechanical” approach?

3. How might we fall into the practice of not giving our best to the Lord?

4. *Read Deuteronomy 14:22-29.* What are the various uses for the tithe identified in these instructions of Moses?

5. Who are the Levites and why are they singled out for special provision?

6. Why might the “aliens, fatherless and widows” be selected as beneficiaries of the tithe?

7. *Read Malachi 3:7-12.* The Lord through Malachi calls upon the people to return to him. In what way does the Lord require the people to “return”?

8. The Lord asked to be “tested.” What does the Lord promise for those who tithe?

9. Find yourself in this text: Place a check in the box(es) that applies and explain.

■ Robbed God: must honestly admit that I have withheld my giving

■ Ready to trust God: I am ready to tithe and in faith watch God provide

■ Am trusting God: living on the stretch in trust and have watched God come through



Reading: Giving with Cheerful Abandon

There is a stewardship principle built into

lac, to where he could believe God for a Rolls

God’s economy: *You get back, what you give.*

Royce, which was given to him as a gift. The

This phrase summarizes well the Apostle
Scripture does not teach that faith equals
Paul's motivational message in 2 Corinthians
riches. In fact, you could make a case from the
9:6-15.
New Testament that faith will actually lead to
Paul illustrates this principle through the
hardship, but that is another lesson.
practice of farming. "He who sows sparingly
An implication of the principle of sowing
will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows gen—
and reaping is that some people struggle finan—
erously will also reap generously" (2 Cor 9:6).
cially because they have not yet learned to
It is common knowledge among farmers that if
give. We read in Proverbs 11:24, "One man
you plant few seeds you will yield a meager
gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another
crop; but if you sow seeds with abandon you
withholds what he should give, and only suf—
will have a much greater chance of an abun—

fers want.”

dant harvest.

The Scripture unashamedly appeals to per-

THE PLAN

sonal reward as an incentive for living out the

A first step to getting one’s financial house in

Christian life. Sow to your own joy. Out of

order is develop the practice of giving. Bill Hy—

sheer self interest, the best way to live is to

bels proposes a simple plan for sound financial

give. Some purists might find this appeal to

management: (1) pay God; (2) pay yourself

personal reward to be troubling. One com-

(save); (3) pay your bills.

mentator wrote, “Nowhere does Scripture pro—

Hybels begins his discussion of motive by

pose the gaining of rewards as a motive for

honoring the individual choice that each per—

goodness.” Many of us were taught this as chil—

son must make regarding their financial re—

dren. However, Scripture consistently tells us

sources. “Each man should give what he has
to seek our own pleasure and how to find it. So,
decided in his heart to give” (2 Cor. 9:7). In
if you are at all concerned for your own happi—
other words, we should each pause and
ness, give; if you care about your quality of life,
thoughtfully consider before God what should
give. Principle: *The extent you give will be the*
be our practice for financial giving. This im-
extent to which you get back.
plies planned giving, versus a haphazard ap—
Please don’t misunderstand. This is not at
proach. We should not come to the end of the
all promoting the pursuit of financial reward
month and then say to ourselves, “What do I
as an end in itself, as some “health and wealth”
have left over to give?” We don’t wait until the
preachers would. Their teaching is that the
offering plate is passed down the aisle, then to
size of one’s faith is equal to the growth of
pull out our check book or wallet to see what

one’s financial capacity. The more faith you
we can afford to throw in. At the conclusion of
have the more material rewards you will at—
this article you will be given a process that you
tain. One such preacher told how his faith had
can go through to evaluate and plan your giv—
grown from believing that God could provide
ing with forethought.
an inexpensive car, to paying cash for a Cadil—
Paul undergirds the principle— *you get*

back what you give—with the appropriate
feller was asked, “How much is enough?” His
mindset. Let’s turn our attention to the atti—
answer: “A little bit more.” Enough is never
tude that will lead us to financial freedom. Be—
enough if anxiety is the underlying tension
fore Paul asserts the positive, he identifies two
and we seek our security in how much we
attitudes that must be rejected if we are to find

have. I am not arguing here against prudent

our way to joy.

planning. Remember our formula: (1) pay

First, “Each man should give what he has

God; (2) pay yourself (save); (3) pay your bills.

decided in his heart to give, *not reluctantly.* ”

There is a difference between prudent plan—

Literally, this word means “to give without

ning for the contingencies of life and being ob—

grief or regret.” Do not mourn the loss of

sessed and driven by anxiety over what might

money. If there is a phenomenon called

be. The only way to financial freedom, even if

“buyer’s remorse,” then there may be “giver’s

you are following the above principles, is to

remorse” as well.

find our security in the Lord. The only protec—

Why might we be reluctant to give? In order

tion we have against the future is the God who

to give we might have to cut back on our

rules the future. Stock markets rise and fall,

wants. Giving and greed cannot coexist. Giv—

only Jesus is the same yesterday, today and for—

ing means that there are things I might want

ever.

that I won’t be able to have. Greed is the insa—

We are reluctant to give because we bow be—

tiable desire for more. Greed is fueled by the

fore the twin gods of greed and security.

spirit of the age; it is the air that we breathe. In

Paul identifies a second attitude that can

a myriad of ways every day we are told, “We are

keep us from financial freedom.

what we have.” This is why Jesus called money,

“Each man should give what he has decided

mammon, the money god. Money is not just a

in his heart to give, not reluctantly *nor under*

neutral means of exchange, it has the power to

compulsion” (2 Cor 9:7). Under compulsion inspire devotion. Charlie Sheen, the Oscar

means “to give out of necessity, duty or under

winning actor, captured this truth in the com—

pressure.”

mon vernacular, when he honestly said,

We can be compelled to give out of guilt.

“Money is energy, man.”

Appeals to give in order to absolve of a guilty

The way to loose the grip of greed is to give.

conscience are commonplace. For example, we

In his book *Money, Sex, and Power,* Richard

are told that we wealthy Westerners absent—

Foster tells us how to dethrone money, “The

mindedly misplace about $100 a year, which is

powers that energize money cannot abide that

more in per capita income of many third world

most unnatural of acts, giving. Money is made

countries. I was at gathering where the

for taking, for bargaining, for manipulating,

speaker asked us to look at the manufacturer’s

but not for giving. This is exactly why giving

label inside our shirt collar. Where was it

has such an ability to defeat the powers of

made? We were then told that we live well off

money.”

of meagerly paid sweat workers who produce

In addition to greed being a reason for rein expensive goods. Message: Give because you

luctance to give, we are also stymied by fear.

are an exploitive Western consumer. The trou—

Money becomes a god when we find our secu—

ble with manipulating giving out of guilt is

rity in what we accumulate. John D. Rocke—

that it does not cultivate a spirit of generosity.

Another motivation that derives from com—

thians 9:8-15 and circle these words and note

pulsion is to give in order to look good in com—

the spirit of generosity and abundance that

parison to others. This was the sin of the infa—

marks Paul’s thought. Paul concludes this sec—

mous Ananias and Sapphira recorded in the

tion with, “Thanks be to God for his indescrib—

fifth chapter of the book of Acts. When they

able gift!” (2 Cor 9:15).

saw the generosity of others they too wanted to

Of what gift is Paul speaking here? The gift

have their faces on the Givers Hall of Fame.

of His Son Jesus Christ. Cheerful givers are

Ananias and Sapphira had sold a piece of prop—

those who hearts have been overwhelmed and

erty and gave part of the proceeds to the apos—

captured by undeserved grace. There is no

tles to be given to those in need. Their sin was

greater feeling in the world that gratitude.

deception. They acted as if they had given the

Dr. Lewis Smedes, like only he can do, put

whole amount. They wanted to look more gen—

into words the feelings of gratitude. Doris,

erous than they were. Peter made it crystal

Lewis’s wife, had found him lying on the floor,

clear that there were not *under compulsion* to

as he wrote, “looking quite dead.” He lay in the

give any more than their faith permitted. They

hospital for a couple of days, tilting heavily in

could give whatever they were led to give from

death’s direction, lungs filled with blood clots

the sale. It was their deception of false generas if they were buckshot. On the fourth day, his

osity that led to the judgment of God upon

physician of Norwegian extraction leaned over

them.

his bed and congratulated him on surviving

Neither reluctance nor compulsion are mothe twenty-to-one odds that medical statistics

tives that are honoring to God. What is the at—

had stacked up against him.

titude that leads to financial freedom? “Each

Lewis responded matter-of-factly, “Oh

man should give what he has decided in his

yeah? That’s terrific, doctor.”

heart to give, not reluctantly nor under comIn retrospect, he said, his heart was not

pulsion, *for God loves a cheerful giver” (* 2 Cor awash with gratitude, for until the doctor in-9:7). The word translated “cheerful” in the formed him, it never occurred to him that he

original Greek has the meaning “hilarious.”

might die. He closed his eyes and went back to

God loves a “hilarious” giver. This implies that

sleep.

the most joyful moment in our worship ser—

But here is what happened two nights later

vices should be when the offering plate is

in Smedes’ own words, “In the moody hush

passed. We give not out of reluctance or any

that settles on a hospital room at two o’clock

sense of “have-to,” just out of the overflow of

in the morning, alone, with no drugs inside of

joy that we can be a conduit of the Lord’s gen—

me to set me up for it—I was seized with a

erosity.

frenzy of gratitude. Possessed! My arms rose

But what is the wellspring from which

straight up by themselves, a hundred-pound

cheerfulness comes? How do we get the atti—

weight could not have held them at my side.

tude that is the foundation for financial free—

My hands open, my fingers spread, waving,

dom? There is only one thing that produces hi—

twisting, while I blessed the Lord for the al—

larity in life. Gratitude. The words “grace,”

most unbearable goodness of being alive on

“gift” and “thanksgiving” dominate Paul’s

this good earth in this good body at this

thought in the rest of our text. Read 2 Corin—

present time.”

Money

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“I was flying outside of myself, high, held in

was the practice in the Old Testament that peo—

weightless lightness, as if my earthly existence

ple gave the first fruits of the harvest or the

need no ground to rest in, but was hung in

best of their flock to the Lord. Make the first

space with only love to keep it aloft.”

checks you write each month to further the

“It was then I learned that gratitude is the

Lord’s work.

best feeling I would ever have, the ultimate joy

of living. It was better than sex, better than

Step 4—Give When It's Tight

winning the lottery, better than watching your
Giving is an act of faith in the ability of God to
daughter graduate from college, better and
provide, whatever the circumstances. The
deeper than any other feeling . . . I am sure that
beauty of stepping out in faith in regards our
nothing in life can ever match the feeling of
money is that it gives the Lord an opportunity
being held in being by a gracious energy per—
to demonstrate his faithfulness to us in very
colating from the abyss where beats the loving
tangible ways. How often do we get to see the
heart of God."
Lord's hand clearly at work? When we trust
Once gratitude gets a hold of us, rooted in
God even in the lean times, and watch him
undeserved grace, giving will not be an issue
provide, we have clear evidence that he is real.
ever again.

Step 5—Give Sacrificially

STEPS TO FREEDOM

C. S. Lewis has said it best: “I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot because our char—

Here’s a very practical picture of the steps to financial freedom.

Step 1—Give Cheerfully

All giving begins with attitude, not the amount. Giving has nothing to do with how much you have. There is no correlation in God’s economy between means and munificence. The first step to financial freedom is to ask the Lord to show you how outrageously

lavish is his grace toward you.

itable expenditures exclude them.”

Step 2—Give Regularly, Not Haphazardly

Step 6—Give a Tithe

Giving that is honoring to God has a thought—

There is no more exact guideline for obedience

ful faith goal that is translated into a plan.

that to give a tenth of our income to the Lord’s

What can you believe God for this year? Giving

work. Write down your annual or monthly inis not just reactive or sporadic, but done with

come and multiply by 10%. Here is your goal

forethought. Plan your giving in the same way

and starting point. Build from there.

that you would an addition to your house.

Step 7—Give in Faith

Step 3—Give Your First Fruits

Giving should always contain the element of

Pay God. Pay yourself (save). Pay your bills. It

the risk of faith. In the realm of stewardship,

this is called making a “faith promise.” In

Consider what it would be to move beyond the

other words, the goal of giving is set to the

routine, to a place of cheerful adventure.

level that the Lord must provide in faith. You

Giving that is honoring to God is motivated

reach at least a little beyond where you know

by gratitude. Cheerfulness and the awareness

the resources will come from. For those who

of undeserved grace are inseparable. When we

have been practicing tithing for some time,

know what we have been given, we give. And

the edge of adventure may have been lost. Giv—

then the cycle repeats itself. We get back, what

ing has simply become a financial transaction.

we give.

Reading Study Guide

1. Put in your own words the key principle of this reading: *You get back what you give.*

2. Paul tells us to not give “reluctantly” nor “under compulsion.” Where do you see evidence of *reluctance* or *compulsion* in your own motives?

3. According to the reading, what is gratitude? What is gratitude's connection to cheerful giving?

4. Since being a "cheerful giver" is the motivation that is honoring to God, on a scale of 1-5, 1

being *grim* and 5 being *hilarious*, how would you rate yourself and why?

5. Look at the steps for financial freedom. State where you are in regards to each: Step 1—Give Cheerfully Step 2—Give Regularly, Not Haphazardly

Step 3—Give Your First Fruits

Step 4—Give When It's Tight

Step 5—Give Sacrificially

Step 6—Give a Tithe

Step 7—Give in Faith

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6. What is one commitment that you are being led by God to make in order to be a more faithful steward of the Lord's resources?

7. What questions do you have about the reading?

8. Does this reading convict, challenge or comfort you? Why?

Going Deeper

Sider, Ronald J. *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: Moving from Affluence to Generosity.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005.

Appendix

BUILDING A DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY

My vision is to see disciples made and churches empowered through the multiplication of small, reproducible discipleship groups. It has been my joy as pastor to witness the transformation of two churches through this expanding network. Since this material was self-published for ten years prior to its current form, it has been gratifying to receive continuous reports about the value of this tool in implementing a strategy of disciplemaking.

After years of trial and error in attempting to disciple others, I have arrived at the following five criteria as essential to any program of discipleship. These criteria then serve as the basis upon which this tool has been designed.

LIFE INVESTMENT

Discipling is not a six-week program. We are geared to herding people in mass through a program, and once completed we expect mature disciples to pop out at the other end. Classroom models are necessarily focused on mastering content at the same pace for all, with standardized require-ments. Disciplemaking should be viewed in terms of a parent's investment in a child who is nurtured through the stages of infancy, childhood, adolescence and finally into adulthood. Making disciples will only occur when we change our thinking from a quick fix to a long-term life investment. In the long run the results are both deeper and numerically greater.

It may be three to five years before the effects of this approach on the quality and vitality of a church will be seen. Those selected for leadership of the church will be those who have been discipled and in turn can disciple others. The leadership base will be expanded, and spontaneous ministry will begin as "self-starters" energize the body of Christ. Mission groups will crop up because qualified leaders have a passion to meet a heart-felt need.

TRANSFERABILITY

In my discipling efforts I had been frustrated by my inability to move the discipling process beyond the first generation. Those in whom I had invested either did not catch the vision or did not feel equipped to do for others what I had been attempting to do for them. Yet, inherent in anything called discipling must be the ability to transfer life to life to life. When Paul wrote Timothy, he looked four generations down the road (2 Timothy 2:2).

One of the obstacles to transferability is dependency. In a one to one relationship an authori-

tarian model of discipler over disciple can lead to an unhealthy reliance upon the "mature" believer. This is especially true when pastors disciple "laity." For transferability to occur one must move out of a hierarchical view to one of mutual dependency. Instead of parent-child, teacher-student images for discipleship, I much prefer a relational model of partners walking together toward maturity in Christ. The discipler in this process is not so much a teacher as a guide, facil-itator or partner along the way.

From the beginning of the discipling relationship the new disciple is asked to give serious consideration to continuing the discipling chain by committing to the next generation. The order of the chapters also places the next generation in clear focus so that the disciples from the beginning are thinking and praying about whom they can give themselves to. The process of weaning disciples away from the discipler is supported by sharing the leadership of the discipleship sessions among the group members. This allows disciples to practice in a safe environment what they will be asked to do in their next discipleship unit.

PURPOSEFULNESS

Spiritual maturity is difficult to quantify. However if disciplines are being practiced, if content is being learned and applied, and if lifestyle changes are taking place, then progress is experienced.

For example, Paul apparently felt mature disciples should know their spiritual gifts and be using them. They also should be reproducing themselves in the next generation.

This approach to discipling is designed to give participants a sense of growth toward maturity.

The sequential format gives a sense of movement, working through the essentials of the Christian character, content and call. Simply progressing through the numerical sequence gives a sense of direction.

I do not mean to imply that if you master this content, you automatically become a mature disciple, as if it is the tool that transforms. But entering the discipline of this process creates a context for the Holy Spirit to do his work.

FLEXIBILITY

If you are discipling more than one group at a time, there is a need to be at a different point with each. Discipling is by design individualized instruction. There is content to be absorbed, there are tools to be practiced, and there are personal lifestyle changes to be made. No two people do this in the same way or at the same speed. Therefore an approach to discipling will take into account that Christ is formed in each person on a timetable unique to them.

This can put a strain on disciplers who are investing themselves in a number of people who are at very different points of spiritual development. One of the advantages of *Discipleship Essentials* is the sequential nature of the teaching design. This means you can be studying a different chapter 232

with each person you are discipling. You can go as fast or as slow as needed, without worrying that you are at the same point with each person.

PREPARATION

Once you get into a multiple discipling situation, the time you will have to prepare for each appointment will be limited. This is especially true if the discipler is pastor. Given the preparation for weekly teaching and preaching events, a pastor will have neither the time nor the emotional energy to prepare two or three different lessons a week for discipling.

Discipleship Essentials is a tool which disciplers can use to convey their vast experience and knowledge. The core truth brings to focus their life experience and theological training. Initially, preparation time is required for the discipler to master the lessons, but once the lessons are mastered the material can be used in multiple discipling appointments with a minimum of preparation. Since the format is so simple, the only preparation needed to cover the same material with other disciples is a brief review along with prayer for the disciples.

May we be empowered to do God’s work in God’s way so that the whole world

may know the good news of Jesus Christ.

F OR F U R T H E R TR A I N I N G

In order to pass on the vision and skills necessary for a church-or ministry-based discipleship strategy, I have developed a five-hour training workshop. I am available on request to train your leaders in the criteria and methods for a discipleship program. I can be reached at the following: Dr. Greg Ogden
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Website: www.gregogden.com

Praise for *Discipleship Essentials*

“I have long admired Greg Ogden’s rare ability to distill the complex down to the essential. *Discipleship Essentials* has become a modern classic in the field of discipleship because it does just this. If you’ve ever looked for a tool to help people you care about understand the core principles and practices of the Christian life, look no further than this book. I have seen it help absolute beginners and advanced disciples alike mature in their walk with Christ in a life-changing way. The book is interactive, thought-provoking, enjoyable and deep. I use it weekly myself.”

DANIEL MEYER, SENIOR PASTOR, CHRIST CHURCH OF OAK BROOK, ILLINOIS

“Greg Ogden’s engaging book sets the expectation that every follower of Jesus has the joyful responsibility to invest into two or three regularly and purposefully for the kingdom. For the past ten years, *Discipleship Essentials* has provided an engaging and balanced approach to the task of raising up mature

believers who will then invest in others. I can only imagine that in the next ten years thousands more will be shaped toward maturity because of his important work that gives each believer the inspiration and the framework to do what they were made to do: advance the kingdom by making mature disciples."

REV. TIMOTHY J. YEE, MINISTER OF YOUNG ADULTS, ST. ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA

"I am currently leading my fourth group. The study is a Spirit-inspired study of the skeletal structure of our Christian faith upon which individuals can flesh out the shape of their individual walk with our Lord. If taken seriously and followed as a spiritual discipline, the truths it contains will change the follower's life, and lives that come in contact with the disciple will be touched by God's love. It's a powerful tool in a group for learning to practice confession and being accountable. It is never old for me. The Spirit speaks to me through the Word in the study. I am refreshed every time we meet as a group."

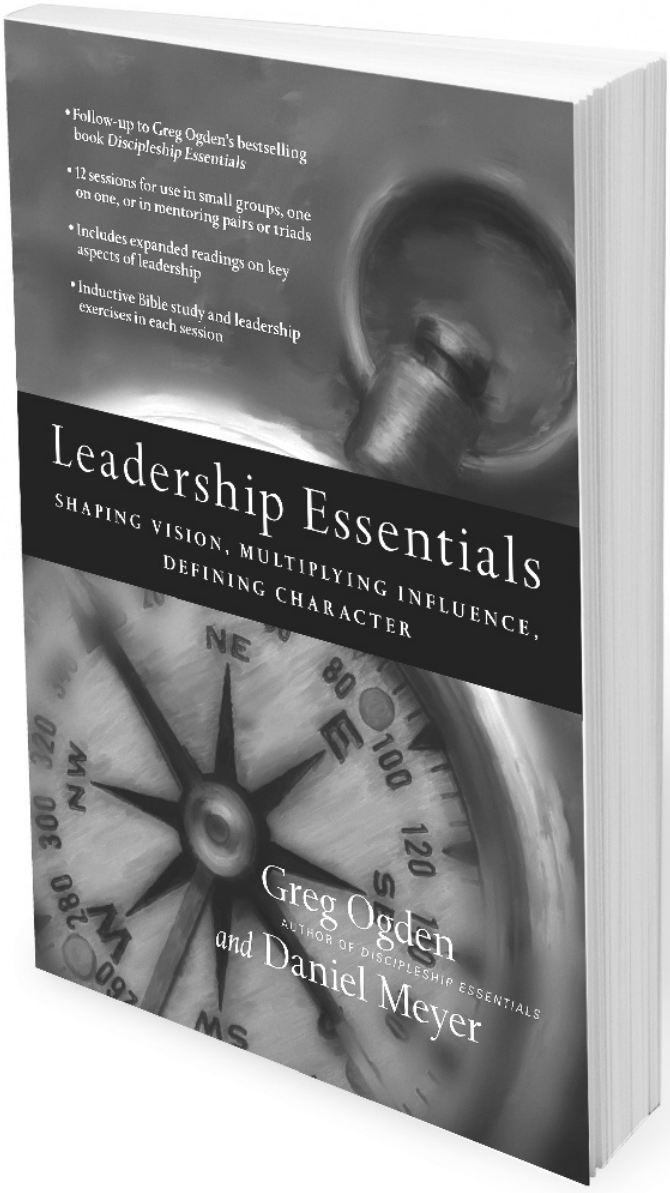
HUDSON STAFFIELD, PRESIDENT, CHI RHO MINISTRY

"Our entire congregation used *Discipleship Essentials* as the template for a yearlong sermon and small group series. It served as a life-changing tool that united our church family and deepened our faith as a community. Ogden's work is thorough, organized and challenging—a great resource for churches and small groups who desire to grow in their love for the Lord and their commitment to following him."

REV. JANE FILKIN, ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF COMMUNITY LIFE, FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BOULDER, COLORADO

"If you're looking for a shortcut to the likeness of Christ, stop looking because there isn't one. No program or structure can replace the hard, time-consuming, rewarding and utterly fulfilling process of discipleship. *Discipleship Essentials* is rev-olutionizing the lives of the people in our church. Everyone can and should use this effective tool! Stop talking about it and start doing it. Today!"

JAN DEN OUDEN, MINISTER-AT-LARGE, OM INTERNATIONAL, ROTTERDAM, NETHERLANDS



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