

Truth-3: Spirit-Filled God Designed The Most Astounding Operating System Romans

What are the Benefits of a Spirit-Filled Life?

HOW¹ CAN WE AVOID GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT?

We can choose to keep God's commandments and to lead a disciplined life. There are so many verses, let me just show you a couple. Turn to Romans 8—this is probably the best part of the Bible to mine out truth about the Holy Spirit. And this is what I want on your heart as we commune at the Lord's Supper this morning. When we grieve and quench the Holy Spirit it immediately impacts the key areas of our Spiritual life. Romans 8:2 says this: When we sin, we must confess the sin immediately and repent of it, changing our minds and our behavior to conform to God's statutes.

As we ask the Holy Spirit to lead us and help us on a daily basis, we have His help in our Christian walk. He keeps our footing sure. He gives us the courage to withstand temptation.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS QUENCHED

When we grieve (Ephesians 4.30) and quench (1st Thessalonians 5.19) the Holy Spirit there is an immediate impact upon THESE 7 KEY AREAS OF our lives:

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED VICTORY

Romans 8:2 for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

We immediately lose our power to say no to sin. It is kind of like--- you get out of your home area and your cell phone doesn't work. You can have it on but it doesn't work. Look at verse 12, here's another thing that happens in Romans 8.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CONFIDENCE

Romans 8:12,14 therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 14 for as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are sons of God.

¹ Stanley, Charles, *Relying on the Holy Spirit*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson) c1996.

We have spiritual confidence when we walk in the holy spirit. But when we grieve and quench him, as the bible says, the righteous are as bold as a lion but the unrighteous run when no one is even chasing them. The scriptures say **we instantly feel a lack of spiritual boldness in our lives.** If you are afraid to speak up for christ, to witness, to testify, to share your hope in christ with someone, the valve has been shut by you. You have either not listened, not followed or intentionally repeatedly sinned and shut that valve off because it takes away our confidence. It takes away our victorious life in Christ. Look at verse 16, here is another one--

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED ASSURANCE

Romans 8:16 the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of god,

we start feeling like we aren't even saved. Was there a time when you were confidently assured and you were walking in christ and you loved him and now you don't even feel like you are a christian? Does it mean you have lost your salvation? No- if you ever had it, you still have it. It means that by ignoring him or by sinning against him and grieving and quenching the holy spirit that that valve of his water of life flowing through has been constricted to the point you don't even feel it anymore. Our assurance goes away. Here is the last one in verse 26—our prayerfulness also ends---

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED PRAYERFULNESS

romans 8:26 likewise the spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. When we grieve and quench him **we lose our connection and feel our calls to heaven are 'breaking up' like bad reception on a cell phone, because the holy spirit is our carrier of our call signals.** You know why people don't like to pray when they are not full of the holy spirit? Because they have pushed the antenna down, in fact they have unscrewed it and taken it off. There is no way to commune when we grieve and quench. He is the carrier of our signals. He is the one who impels us to intercede.

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED YIELDEDNESS

romans 12:1 I beseech (parakaleo one of the names of the holy spirit "paraklete) you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of god, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to god, which is your reasonable service. **We stop the life of consecration and daily sacrificing for Christ's sake.**

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED FRUITFULNESS

Galatians 5:22 but the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **the production of attitude and action fruit through the power of god ceases.**

SPIRIT-EMPOWERED JOYFULNESS

1 Thessalonians 1:6 and you became followers of us and of the lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the holy spirit,

the springs of the joy of the lord which is our strength – dries up!

So how about it? Are you engaged in the discipline of Spirit Filled Living? [Life the way God wanted it to be?](#) [Does there flow out of your life a mighty river of water?](#) [Are you refreshed;](#) [Are you victorious,](#) [are you rejoicing,](#) [are you serving joyfully?](#) The Holy Spirit wants to flow through our new lives like the rivers of water that flowed in that new house of ours. That is the life of a believer as God intended it to be.

Discipline yourself for the purpose of staying filled with the Holy Spirit ! [So that you don't lose victoriousness,](#) [so that you don't lose confidence and assurance and prayerfulness.](#) [Say no to sin and say yes to the Holy Spirit.](#)

IN REGENERATION: GOD TRANSFORMS MY HEART

Ezekiel 36:26-27 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

GOOD & FAITHFUL SERVANTS SEEK GOD'S CONTROL

We have two simple choices:

Surrender our daily life to God's control, or Neglect to surrender to His control.

Jesus said that we each can really only have one Master! (Mt. 6:24 & Lk. 16:13)

HOW DO WE STAY CONTROLLED BY GOD?

We stay focused on being God's servants, when we: stay "filled with" & "not grieve" the Spirit of God

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

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

WE NEED THE SPIRIT'S POWER SO WE CAN GLORIFY GOD

Look back with me at 1 Corinthians 6. There are about 5 or 6 New Testament passages that can help us to ponder whether or not we are disciplining our self for Spirit fullness.

In other words if the Holy is cascading out of your life or whether you are reduced to just standing under the shower head and hoping to get something from God as the flow of the Spirit in your life has just been constricted to almost nothing.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (this is His headquarters, His abode, His ministry center, His home, His holy place, this is where He comes and abides) who is in you, whom you have from God (He is a gift from God), and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore **glorify...**

(**ao**rist **active imperative** this is not an option. Whenever you bump into these imperatives and there are 562 of them in the New Testament and they are a great study as you are reading through the Bible—you ought to find them and underline them—but as you go through these are not the options, these are the commands, these are what God wants)

...therefore **glorify** God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

What He is saying is because the Holy Spirit is making headquarters in you, do everything necessary to keep Him from being grieved and quenched.

LIVING THE SPIRIT FILLED LIFE OF NEW BEGINNINGS

What is grieving & quenching the Holy Spirit?

What are the Signs & Consequences of grieving the Holy Spirit?

How does one heal their relationship with the Spirit?

DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

How can we detect that any un-confessed and un-forsaken sins, are present in our life?

What are the signs of God's Spirit quenched & grieved in our lives?

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS & CONSEQUENCES OF THE LIFE NOT FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

When we are not "filled" by the Holy Spirit:

1. John 7:38-39 says we dry up inside;
2. Rom 8:1-13 says we get bound again by sin;
3. Rom. 8:14-17 says we get distant from God;
4. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 says the fire goes out on the altar of our heart;
5. 2 Cor. 1:20-22 says we begin to feel lost;
6. 2 Cor. 3:5-6 says our words begin to kill;
7. Gal. 5:18 says we start to wander;
8. Gal. 5:22 says we get fruitless;
9. Eph. 6:17 says we get fearful & defeated;
10. 1 Jn. 2:27 says the Word makes no sense.
11. Gal. 5:22 says we get fruitless;
12. Eph. 6:17 says we get fearful & defeated;
13. 1 Jn. 2:27 says the Word makes no sense.

HOW DO WE GET BACK ON TRACK?

First, we respond to God (2 Cor. 7:1-10) by repenting of whatever derailed us.

Second, we remember that no matter how many steps away from God we take, its always just one step back.

HOW DOES ONE HEAL THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SPIRIT?

As Mt. 6:33 says we surrender to His rule again.

Then, as Eph. 5:18 says we ask to be refilled.

Finally, we restart going through life again singing "Spirit of the Living God" fall fresh on me.

THE BIBLICAL PORTRAIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit is revealed in many ways. Mentioned perhaps eighty times in the Old Testament, at least fifty times in the gospels, nearly sixty in Acts, and more than one hundred times in the rest of the New Testament.

The Holy Spirit attends the birth of Jesus, causing His very conception in Mary (Matthew 1:18, 20), and empowers John the Baptist from childhood (Luke 1:15).

He leads Jesus into His desert sojourn (Mark 1:12).

He is the agent by whom Jesus baptizes believers into His church (Matthew 3:11; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and by whom He casts out evil spirits (Matthew 12:28).

God's Spirit is the possession of all who are in Christ (Romans 8:9), the down payment of our ultimate redemption (Ephesians 1:13).

Scripture also reveals that the Spirit can be lied to and tested (Acts 5:3, 9), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Ephesians 4:30), and quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

WHAT DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT PRODUCE IN LIVES YIELDED TO HIM?

HE IS THE WITNESSING SPIRIT OF GOD	Book of Acts	ROMANS 1:3-4
HE IS THE LIBERATING SPIRIT OF GOD	Clingen POWs	ROMANS 8:1-4
HE IS THE TRANSFORMING & MORTIFYING SPIRIT OF GOD	C. T. Studd	ROMANS. 8:5-8, 12-13
HE IS THE QUICKENING SPIRIT OF GOD	Eye on Sparrow	ROMANS 8:9-11
HE IS THE GUIDING SPIRIT OF GOD	Phillip Acts 8:4	ROMANS 8:14
HE IS THE ENCOURAGING SPIRIT OF GOD	Barnabus Acts 4:36	ROMANS 8:15
HE IS THE ASSURING SPIRIT OF GOD	Peter 2 P 1:16-21	ROMANS 8:16-17
HE IS THE HOPING SPIRIT OF GOD	John Rev. 1:10	ROMANS 8:18-25
HE IS THE INTERCEDING SPIRIT OF GOD	Epaphras Col. 4:12	ROMANS 8:26-30
HE IS THE SACRIFICNG SPIRIT OF GOD	Paul II Tim. 4:6	ROMANS 12:1-2
HE IS THE GLADDENING SPIRIT OF GOD	Apostles Acts 5:41	ROMANS 14:17; 15:13
HE IS THE OUTREACHING SPIRIT OF GOD	Church Acts 8:4	ROMANS 15:16

Some amazing changes occur when God gets a hold of us.

THE WITNESSING SPIRIT OF GOD

ROMANS. 1:3-4 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,⁴ and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

There are 31 different Greek words used in the book of Acts to describe the 160 different times of Christians verbally communicating the Good News about Jesus². It is the Holy Spirit who energized them into action. This book is not the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES but of the HOLY SPIRIT! **When we are walking in the Spirit we will be talking in everyday terms to everyday people about the most extraordinary event of all time. Jesus is to be a part of life.**

THE LIBERATING SPIRIT OF GOD

in Romans 8. Has Jesus marched into your life and liberated you? Is there a vivid recollection that you can't stop sharing? THE LIBERATING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

² Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Discipleship*, p.88-89.

The third element of the Holy Spirit of God's miraculous working. Do you remember the darkness of Africa in 1910 when CT Studd arrived? Remember the total transformation of those former demon worshiping cannibals? Sounds totally impossible doesn't it? It is apart from the work of God.

THE TRANSFORMING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:5-8 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Remember there are six practical action items to begin the MORTIFICATION process in your life. That word means, *to throttle sin and crush it in our lives, sapping it of It's strength, rooting it out, and depriving it of It's influence. ...Mortification involves the cultivation of new habits of godliness, combined with the elimination of old sinful habits from our behavior.*³ Each of these Biblical mortification commands are for us as Christians to obey. They are not something we pray for and wait. They are for us to actively grab a hold of and obey.

THE QUICKENING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:9-11 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.¹⁰ And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

Life giving Psalm 71 Eye on the Sparrow

THE GUIDING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Phillip best illustrates **THE GUIDING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. The seven walks of Ephesians. This is the Spirit of Sonship. The use of Abba in the New Testament John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (KJV)

THE ENCOURAGING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

³ John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, Dallas:Word, 1994, p. 156.

Barnabus best illustrates **THE ENCOURAGING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Acts 4:36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

THE ASSURING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Peter best illustrates **THE ASSURING SPIRIT OF GOD** in 2 Peter 1:16-21 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.¹⁷ For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹⁸ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.¹⁹ And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;²⁰ knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,²¹ for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

THE HOPING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:18-25 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.¹⁹ For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;²¹ because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.²² For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.²³ Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.²⁴ For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

John on Patmos best illustrates **THE HOPING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, Hope because we have 'endless life' Heb.7; Expectancy because 'our citizenship is' Phil.1:27

THE INTERCEEDING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 8:26-30 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.²⁹ For whom He foreknew,

He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Epaphras best illustrates **THE INTERCEDING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. Hebrews 4:15-16 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (KJV)

THE SACRIFICING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Paul best illustrates **THE SACRIFICING SPIRIT OF GOD** in 2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. it is He who comes alongside of us calling for all. The standard is total life consuming sacrifice

THE GLADDENING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Apostles best illustrates **THE GLADDENING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Acts 5:41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

THE WITNESSING SPIRIT OF GOD

Romans 15:16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

ROMANS. 15:16 Paul was a minister (leitourgos-public religious servant) He was ministering (hierourgeo-perform sacrifice as priest) His ministry was presenting gentiles as an offering to God They were sanctified (higiasmene=set apart for divine service) Persecuted saints best illustrates **THE WITNESSING SPIRIT OF GOD** in Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

So the lives of the 1st Century Saints were stained by the irresistible beauty of the Holy Spirit. How did they get that way? Please stand with me and listen as Paul again explains the Walk in the Spirit in Romans 8:14-17

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FOLLOWING JESUS

As we open to John 10, we are looking at one of the most foundational truths of being born again Christians. Jesus made salvation eternal life and assurance of eternal security so SIMPLE. He sums EVERYTHING up with these words in v. 27:

John 10:27 (NKJV) My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.

Salvation is so personal: we are His sheep; we can hear His voice; and-the way we know we are His comes from following His voice.

Think of a shepherd who speaks, and of sheep that turn their heads, listen and then start walking towards him. That is true Christianity!

Following Christ's voice in His Word and thus following Him: that is assurance, that is salvation, and that is all reduced to FOLLOWING Him!

Jesus said that eternal life is all about following Him; and He summarized His entire plan for the disciples in just two words: "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19). Those two words were what He spoke to Peter, Andrew, James and John as they fished and to Matthew as he sat at the tax office (Luke 5:27); and those two words are what He still calls for, as He walks through this world.

Jesus called Himself the "Way"; and described salvation as the beginning of a life-long journey of following Him (John 14:6). This call to a life of following needs to at times be renewed as Jesus demonstrated after His resurrection, when Peter was restored to ministry as Jesus again said: "follow" Me (John 21:19).

So Christ's plan was to have close, personal "followers" who were also learners and doers of His Way. They listened and followed Him as they learned from Him how to do what He did.

The book of Acts repeatedly describes the early believers as those who were "followers" of Christ Jesus, the Way. Open to Acts 9:

Acts 9:2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were **of the Way**, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. NKJV

Acts 18:25-26 This man had been instructed in **the way of the Lord**; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him **the way of God** more accurately. NKJV

Acts 19:9, 23 But when some were hardened and did not believe, but **spoke evil of the Way** before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 23 And about that time there arose a great commotion **about the Way**. NKJV

Acts 22:4 "I **persecuted this Way** to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, NKJV

Acts 24:14, 22 "But this I confess to you, that **according to the Way** which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 22 But when Felix heard these things, **having more accurate knowledge of the Way**, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." NKJV

The Church at the beginning was simple, everyone was following Jesus, acting so much like Him they were described by unbelievers as little-Christ-imitators or "CHRIST-ians". As the church gathered, they were taught that every facet of their lives were to be reflective of what they learned while following Jesus personally. Christian nurture is:

LEARNING TO FOLLOW BY EXAMPLE

This "learning and doing by example" model was the key to Titus 2 discipleship; Paul described a plan for having each person in Christ's Church actually involved in a life-long learning process of following Jesus Christ. In fact, believers are called little imitations or "mimics" of Jesus Christ. The Greek word in the Epistles that describes those who "follow" and are "followers" is *mimetes* (literally "mimics").

Listen to the clear call we have all been given by Christ's Apostles to follow or "mimic" Christ:

1 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore I urge you, **imitate me**. NKJV

1 Corinthians 11:1 **Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ**. NKJV [That is the clearest description of what Titus 2 discipleship is all about!]

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore **be imitators of God** as dear children. NKJV

1 Thessalonians 1:6 And you **became followers of us and of the Lord**, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, NKJV

1 Thessalonians 2:14 For you, brethren, **became imitators of the churches of God** which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, NKJV

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 For you yourselves know **how you ought to follow us**, for we were not disorderly among you; 9 not because we do not have authority, but to **make ourselves an example of how you should follow us**. NKJV

Hebrews 6:12 that you do not become sluggish, but **imitate those who through faith** and patience inherit the promises. NKJV

Hebrews 13:7 Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, **whose faith follow**, considering the outcome of their conduct. NKJV

3 John 11 Beloved, **do not imitate what is evil, but what is good**. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God. NKJV

Today, God is looking for those who will not merely hear God's Word, study God's Word, memorize God's Word, master the content of God's Word-He wants those men and women, and boys and girls, who will follow Christ.

How do we start? After establishing that the person is saved, the very next truth for them to learn is the:

1. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE VITAL CONNECTION BETWEEN SALVATION & THE REST OF LIFE

This connection was taught by Paul in Colossians 2:6. Note with them what Paul said:

Colossians 2:6 (NKJV) As you therefore **have received** Christ Jesus the Lord, **so walk** in Him,

The same way God saved us is how we are to follow Christ through life. We hear the Gospel from God's Word, we believe the truth and respond in faith, and God transforms us. That is the pathway of salvation, and the pathway of each day of our life as believers. Taking God at His Word and seeing Him at work in us. That is simple, clear, and easily explained in Scripture.

2. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS COMPLETELY TIED TO GOD'S WORD

Turn to the Romans Road, one of the simplest explanations of salvation, and look at the final stop in Romans 10:13 (see also v. 5,8,11).

Romans 10:13,17 (NKJV) For "**whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"¹⁷ **So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

We are saved by hearing, and responding to the truth of the Word of God. The Gospel flows only from God's Word, and no where else. Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved.

Only by believing the Gospel contained in God's Word the Bible can a person be saved. That means:

3. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS GOD IMPLANTING HIS WORD INSIDE US

Move onward to James 1:21, from what may be the earliest book of the New Testament written by James who was the Pastor of the First Church of Jerusalem. Here is how he explained salvation to his congregation while Paul was still being trained.

James 1:21 (NKJV) Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and **receive** with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to **save your souls**.

Again we see that receiving God's Word, believing God's Word, and acting upon God's Word are all tied to our salvation.

We hear truth from God.

We believe that truth from God.

We respond to that truth from God

God transforms us.

One of the greatest confirmations of our salvation is seeing this happen each day. That is exactly what we see the Apostles teaching as they planted and established churches in the First Century.

Now move onward to 1 Peter 1:22 to 2:3 and see how Peter describes this exact same process when he explains the relationship between salvation and our daily walk in Christ. Peter reminds us that both are tied to God's Word.

4. FOLLOWING CHRIST STARTS A LIFE OF BELIEVING & OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Peter is near the end of his life, and after walking with Jesus, serving as an Apostle for over 30 years this is his summary of salvation for all the rest of the ages of Christ's Church.

1 Peter 1:22-2:3 (NKJV) Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit** in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, ²³ **having been born again**, not of corruptible seed **but through the word of God which lives and abides forever**, ²⁴ because "All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, ²⁵ But the **word of the Lord** endures forever." Now this is the **word which by the gospel was preached to you**. 2:1-3 Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ² as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word**, that you may grow thereby, ³ if indeed **you have tasted** that the Lord is gracious.

Note how simply and clearly Peter also links God's work of salvation in us, to His Word.

Salvation is regeneration by the Holy Spirit using God's Word: (v. 22 *purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*).

Salvation is the new birth of coming alive through the power of God's Word (v. 23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God).

Salvation is eternal because the Gospel in God's Word is eternal: (v. 25 the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you).

Then Peter gives the essence of our new life in Christ.

5. THE LIFE OF FOLLOWING CHRIST IS FED BY GOD'S WORD

Born again believers are **only fed** with God's Word: (v. 2a as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word).

Born again believers can **only grow** by God's Word: (v. 2b that you may grow thereby).

Born again believers **can taste God's grace** in God's Word: (v. 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious).

So Paul, James & Peter all agree about the connection of God's Word to salvation, and the vital role that God's Word has to our continued new walk. The final link comes from the greatest authority of them all: our Jesus Christ. Please turn with me to Matthew 4:4.

Matthew 4:4 (NKJV) But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man **shall not live** by bread alone, **but by every word** that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus actually quotes these words in Matthew 4:4 from Deuteronomy 8:3; and lays out the vital need for our spiritual lives to be fed as consistently as our physical bodies. In Deuteronomy 8 where Jesus quotes this verse from the context is about manna, the food God sent to feed Israel's 603,000 families each day so they survived the 40 years of wandering in the Wilderness of Sinai.

Jesus says God's Word is necessary for spiritual life as vitally as bread was for their survival. So we could apply Mt. 4:4 by saying that:

6. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS HUNGERING AFTER GOD'S WORD

Jesus compared **God's Word** to food ("man shall not live by bread alone but by every Word of God"). Jesus said we are not really living if we only feed our physical bodies and not our spiritual dimension. Jesus said we need to eat every day; and our spiritual lives are to be as consistent a part of our daily plans as eating.

Jesus goes on to compare **salvation** to food. Those who eat of Him are saved. Look onward at John 6. Jesus said He was the bread of God (Jn. 6:35), those who ate Him live forever.

Jesus says **salvation is eating and drinking Him** by faith through receiving His Word.

John 6:35 (NKJV) And Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life**. He who **comes** to Me shall **never hunger**, and he who **believes** in Me shall **never thirst**."

Then He said that what we eat are His words. Look at this amazing passage.

John 6:63-68 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. **The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.** 68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have **the words of eternal life.**

Now turn onward to John 8:31,37,43,51 (NKJV):

v. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you **abide in My word**, you are **My disciples indeed**. 32 And you shall **know the truth**, and the **truth shall make you free**." [*Three elements: believers are those who abide/remain in Christ's words; believers know/experience the truth of Christ's words; believers are set free through believing/acting upon the truth of Christ's words.*]

v. 37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because **My word has no place in you**. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are **not able to listen to My word**. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is **no truth in him**. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. [*Three elements: Christ's word remains in true believers; true believers desire to hear Christ's words; true believers stand on the truth of Christ's words within them.*]

v. 45 But because I **tell the truth**, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I **tell the truth**, why do you not believe Me? 47 He **who is of God hears God's words**; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if **anyone keeps My word he shall never see death**." [*Three elements: believers know Christ's words are true; believers hear/respond to Christ's words; believers are eternally saved by clinging to Christ as truth.*]

That is why the early church taught that hearing & believing God's Word leads us to salvation, and to partaking of Christ. As only physical food enters our body and nourishes it, to sustain our lives: *so our souls are only fed by God's Word entering into our minds.*

How did we believe on Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How did we receive Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we obey Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we follow Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we please Christ? *Through **His Word**.*

How do we know Christ better and better? *Through **His Word**.*

7. FOLLOWING CHRIST IS THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE

That is the simple truth.

The place of God's Word in your mind today dictates your spiritual health.

Everything is contained in God's Word: our food and drink, our map for life, the light to guide us, the sword to protect us, the exercises to strengthen us, and the revelation of God's character to grow us.

John 7:37-38 we go through life overflowing with a life that is not our own, it is Christ's life through His Spirit overflowing us and splashing onto all the events and people of our life.

One of the most afflicted Old Testament saints was Jeremiah. He was called the weeping prophet for a purpose. Jeremiah's testimony of how he made it through a lifetime of pain, sorrow, loneliness, and discouragement is our closing thought.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NKJV) Your words were **found**, and **I ate them**, And **Your word** was to me **the joy and rejoicing of my heart**; For I am called by **Your name**, O Lord God of hosts.

TEACHING THEM WHY OUR LIFE IS ONLY FED BY GOD'S WORD

1. Connection Between Salvation & The Rest Of Life (Col. 2:6)
2. Salvation is Completely Tied to God's Word (Rom. 10:17)
3. Salvation is God Implanting His Word Inside Us (James 1:21)
4. Salvation Starts a Life of Believing & Obeying God's Word (1 Peter 1:22-23)
5. The Essence of a Believer's Life is God's Word (Mt.4:4)
6. Jesus Said, "Eat God's Word to Live" (John 6:63)
7. God's Word Becomes the Most Vital Element of the Life of the Believer (Jer. 15:16)

Teach Disciples What Christ Taught

We have just traced what Christ actually taught about what it meant to be a disciple. Next, we need to know: what did Jesus teach disciples they need to do, to be properly observing all that He commanded them?

One of the best places to start is to just analyze Christ's longest sermon. We call this three chapter long sermon the Sermon of the Mount; and it is in Matthew 5-7. From this passage we can actually see the teachings of Christ on the basics for all believers, all followers, and all disciples. Join me back in Matthew 5-7 as we see those "basics" that all believers need to be taught.

BASIC-1: SALVATION MUST BE GENUINE

Basic-1 is Salvation: First Jesus explains what it means to be saved. He used His very first words in public ministry (Mt. 4:17-19) to say "repent", but here in Matthew 5:1-4 He begins to

enlarge upon salvation and talks about the elements of coming to God as an absolutely helpless beggar (“poor in spirit”) with contrition or sorrow for sin (“mourn”).

Then Christ ends the sermon with those stern warnings that a decision is not enough, saying all the right things without a life-transformation is deadly. That is Mat. 7:13-29.

So Jesus opens and closes this message for “disciples” in Matthew 5-7 with the **Plan of Salvation**. So the first element disciples need to know, understand, and be taught is what it really means to be saved:

- In Mat. 4:17-19 and 5:1-5 Jesus said: repent, come helplessly seeking mercy, sorrowing over personal sinfulness, humbly to follow Him.
- In Mat. 7:13-29 Jesus said: make sure you have entered the right gate, are on the right road, and have come to obey the right Lord, or great will be your disastrous ending apart from Him.

BASIC-2: GOD'S WORD MUST BECOME YOUR PRIORITY

Basic-2 is God's Word: Next, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus explains to His disciples the vital place that the Word of God has in the life of a disciple for: nurture of our spiritual lives, protection of our spiritual lives, and directions for lives of pleasing God.

In chapter 4 Jesus stated that we need to “live” by feeding upon every part of God's Word. Then Jesus showed the way we are to use God's Word as our weapon in spiritual warfare.

Starting in Matthew 5:6 and extending all the way to Matthew 6:4 were elements of what God expects to see growing in the lives of true disciples:

1. spiritual hunger and thirst (5:6),
2. mercy (5:7), purity (5:8),
3. peacemakers (5:9),
4. bold witnesses (5:10-12),
5. filled with good works (5:13-16),
6. understanding God's Word is Divine (5:17-20),
7. with heart change (5:21-32),
8. truthful words (5:33-37),
9. love (5:38-48), and
10. generosity (6:1-4).

BASIC-3: PRAYER MUST BECOME VITAL

Basic-3 is Prayer: Jesus then goes on to explain how central prayer is to be in the life of a believer (6:5-15). He explains the role of fasting, since He later ties that to prayer (6:16-18), and then explains the faith our Heaven Father desires that prevents anxiety (6:25-32, 34). Finally Jesus ties together self examination and confrontation (7:1-6) with the needed persistence of prayer (7:7-12).

BASIC-4: SURRENDER & CONSECRATION MUST BECOME YOUR GOAL

Basic-4 is Surrender & Consecration: Jesus ties together surrender to His will, and consecration to holiness twice. First in two individual sections on pure “eyes” (6:22-23) and surrendering to one “master” (6:24) the twin concepts of surrender and consecration are explained. Then in one verse (6:33) Jesus combines surrender into the call to “seek” God’s rule over our lives; and consecration as we “seek” God’s righteousness in our lives.

BASIC-5: STAY FILLED & IN STEP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Basic-5 is the Work of the Spirit: Jesus taught that: the Spirit of God is to energize us to a lifestyle of worship (Jn. 4:21-24); the Spirit of God gives us an overflowing life of joy (John 7:37-38); the Spirit of God reveals Christ more and more to us (John 16:13-15).

So, in just a simple look, we can see these “basics” that Jesus Christ taught to those who were His disciples. They are still the framework for us today. They also are seen enlarged and explained, all the way through the Epistles as those closest to Christ understand the command to “make disciples” meant.

THE DISCIPLINE OF DISCIPLE-MAKING: “DISCIPLES: FOLLOW CHRIST & MAKE DISCIPLES”

For us on this side of the Cross, what Christ said is so simple: **Disciples Follow Christ & Make Disciples.** That’s it. Everything else is tied to that simple statement: worshipping God, Biblical ministry, and glorifying God all flow from God’s purpose to show the world that He is a Savior, Who so loved the world that He sent His Beloved Son to be the Savior of the world.

How did they “make disciples”? What is the process that we are to follow, that they followed? That is what we find in the rest of the New Testament.

Throughout all the centuries since the Great Commission, we have had the Scripture record of what Christ did in the Four Gospels; and we have had the explanation by those closest to Him, and sent by Him, actually doing and recording what they did in obedience to His call.

DISCIPLE-MAKING IN THE EPISTLES

Here is a quick summary of what Jesus told the Apostles to do, and how they obeyed.

1. In Matthew 28:18-20 Christ explains that “making disciples” means: those who follow of Christ. Or, a truly saved church.

2. In Acts 1:8 Luke explains that “making disciples” means: those who share the Gospel. Or, a truly evangelistic church.
3. In Acts 6:4 the Apostles explain that “making disciples” means: those who are stuck to prayer. Or, a truly praying church.
4. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who surrender to God. Or, a truly consecrated church.
5. In 1 Cor. 10:31 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who want to feel the weight (glory) of God on everything they do. Or, a truly glorifying God church.
6. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who explain how to follow Christ to others. Or, a truly discipling church.
7. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter explains that “making disciples” means: those who are actually using God's Word. Or, a truly healthy church.

So, the simple lessons we see that Christ gave, and we are to pass on are lessons about: salvation, witnessing, praying, surrendering to God, glorifying God, training others, and staying healthy through the Word of God.

I actually teach these as seven simple sessions with any believer wanting to get started in the right direction.

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS IN THE BASICS

1. ***Salvation, Assurance, Confession & Soul winning:*** Mark the Romans Road starting in Romans 3:10; and discuss 1 John 1:9; John 10.
2. ***Devotional Bible Study Methods:*** Summary, Lessons & Application from Mt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16.
3. ***Daily Spirit-Filled Living:*** Galatians 5: 16-23; Ephesians 4:22-5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 8
4. ***Sacrifice, Surrender & Consecration:*** Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2; Mt. 6:33; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 6:7-8.
5. ***Lifelong disciplines of Scripture Memory & Meditation for Spiritual Warfare:*** Joshua 1:8-9; Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Peter 5:6-9.
6. ***Stewardship of Time, Treasures & Talents in Christ's Church:*** Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2 Cor. 5:10.
7. ***Lifelong Disciplines of Prayer & Following God's Will:*** Prov. 3:5-6; 1 Th. 5:17

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS

Assurance **Salvation**, Confession & Soul winning Romans 3:10 Road mark and discuss 1 John 1:9; John 10

Devotional **Bible Study** Summary, Lessons & Application Mt. 4:4; Jer words found

Daily **Spirit-Filled Living**: Galatians 5:16-; Ephesians 4:22-5:18; Colossians 3:1-17; Romans 8

Sacrifice, **Surrender**, Consecration Galatians 2:20; Romans 12:1-2; Mt. 6:33 Seeking; Rom 12:1-2; Gal 6:7-8 Sowing

Lifelong discipline of **Scripture Memory & Meditation** Joshua 1:8-9;

Stewardship of Time, Treasures & Talents in Christ's Church: Mt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 3; 2 Cor. 5

Lifelong Disciplines of Prayer, Finding God's Will & Spiritual Warfare Eph 6; Prov. 3:5-6

TEACHING LESSONS FOR DISCIPLES

Do lessons like I am discipling the whole church, one person at a time;

1-Define salvation and how to share it

2-Explain how to follow Christ through Baptism portraying the work of salvation

3-Teach how to follow Christ through His Word

4-

Christ the Center

Christ the Center of Salvation: come to me to have life; remission of sins in His Name

Luke 24:46-48 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached **in His name** to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ And you are witnesses of these things.

John 5:40 (NKJV) But you are not willing to **come to Me** that you may have life.

Jn 14.6

CHRIST THE CENTER OF DEVOTIONS: THEY SPEAK OF ME JN 5.39; FEED ON BREAD COME DOWN;

Luke 24:27, 32, 44-45 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. 32 And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" 44 Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

John 6:63 (NKJV) It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

CHRIST THE CENTER OF PRAYERS:

John 14:13 (NKJV) And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

CHRIST THE CENTER OF EVANGELIZATION:

Mark 16:15 (NKJV) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen

How did they "make disciples"? What is the process that we are to follow, that they followed? That is what we find in the rest of the New Testament.

Throughout all the centuries since the Great Commission, we have had the Scripture record of what Christ did in the Four Gospels; and we have had the explanation by those closest to Him, and sent by Him, actually doing and recording what they did in obedience to His call.

So, the simple lessons we see that Christ gave, and we are to pass on are lessons about: salvation, witnessing, praying, surrendering to God, glorifying God, training others, and staying healthy through the Word of God.

I actually teach these as seven simple sessions with any believer wanting to get started in the right direction.

BE SURE TODAY

If you are religious, and morally good, you still may not be genuinely born-again. It is possible to have emotional and intellectual faith. If you have fears and doubts in your heart and mind, about your salvation, that is not God's will.

Why not stop everything today, and make sure you don't miss Heaven by 18 inches?

There is no formula given in God's Word that each person must recite or follow. God looks at our hearts and knows the true desire of our hearts. He has said that no one that comes by faith seeking Christ's sacrifice for their sins will ever be denied.

So if that is your heart's desire, if you want the sacrifice of Jesus to take the penalty of your sins, if you want His complete cleansing and forgiveness—He is here today waiting to respond to your call.

Here is a prayer you can pray, a prayer that calls on the Lord expressing your desire to transfer your trust to Christ alone for your eternal salvation.

This prayer⁴ can be the link that will connect you to God. And if you pray it in faith, God will receive you. Please bow with me.

The best known verse from the Bible in America is John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

But the way Jesus explained what that verse meant is in the relatively unknown verses that precede it. Here is what Jesus said—just before John 3:16.

¹⁴“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵“that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

What does the Brazen Serpent point at? The great similarity between their condition 3500 years ago and ours today!

1. We share a similar deadly infection. ALL sinners WILL DIE.
2. We share a similar offer of a cure. Christ IS the ONLY CURE
3. We share a similar choice. GOD’S WAY is the only way.

Looking at the Bronze serpent was such a wonderful portrait of our salvation. Think of these powerful truths:

1. SALVATION IS SO SIMPLE. The simplicity of the remedy—the bitten had only to look up in faith, LOOK AT JESUS
2. SALVATION IS SO IMMEDIATELY POWERFUL. The antidote for the snake venom is amazing in its immediateness and its completeness. ASK JESUS TO SAVE YOU
3. SALVATION IS SO EXCLUSIVE. The bronze serpent was the only and also the all-sufficient remedy for the deadly wound of the serpent.

Christ's blood has the power to allow us to experience Him daily: *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* (1 Corinthians 10:16). In the Greek, the word "communion" is *koinonia*, or fellowship. "It is the blood that unites us into perfect fellowship. In the book of Acts, this is seen by the use of the term 'brethren' over forty times. 'It describes those who share a common heritage, like citizens of the same country, though it carries the additional force of brethren born of the same Spirit, when applied to Christians.' [Acts 1:16; 6:3; 9:17; etc.] In brief, disciples must have devoted Christian friends to follow, and this can only be facilitated by being together over a period of time."^[4]

⁴ Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1997, pp. 141-143.

The Miraculous Spiritual Power of God

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the Spirit is the same as walking LIKE Jesus did on earth!

- Love. One of several Gr. words for love, *agape*, is the love of choice, respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service ([John 15:13](#); [Rom. 5:8](#); [1 John 3:16](#), 17).
- Joy. A happiness based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. Joy is not the result of favorable circumstances, and even occurs when those circumstances are the most painful and severe ([John 16:20–22](#)). Joy is a gift from God.
- Peace. The inner calm that results from confidence in one's saving relationship with Christ. Like joy, peace is not related to one's circumstances ([John 14:27](#); [Rom. 8:28](#); [Phil. 4:6](#), 7, 9).
- Longsuffering. This is patience or the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations ([Eph. 4:2](#); [Col. 3:12](#); [1 Tim. 1:15](#), 16).
- Kindness. Tender concern for others, reflected in a desire to treat others gently, just as the Lord treats all believers ([Matt. 11:28](#), 29; 19:13, 14; [2 Tim. 2:24](#)).
- Goodness. Moral and spiritual excellence manifested in active kindness, exemplifying goodness (6:10; [2 Thess. 1:11](#)). faithfulness. Loyalty and trustworthiness ([Lam. 3:22](#); [Phil. 2:7–9](#); [1 Thess. 5:24](#); [Rev. 2:10](#)).
- Gentleness. Better translated "meekness." It is a humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while having no desire for revenge or retribution. In the NT, it is used to describe 3 attitudes: submission to the will of God ([Col. 3:12](#)), teachability ([James 1:21](#)), and consideration of others ([Eph. 4:2](#)).
- Self-control. This refers to restraining passions and appetites ([1 Cor. 9:25](#); [2 Pet. 1:5](#), 6). no law. When a Christian walks by the Spirit and manifests His fruit, he needs no external law to produce the attitudes and behavior that please God (cf. [Rom. 8:4](#)). [1]

The Discipline of **Truth** (the source) leads us to > The Discipline of **Devotion** (the love) leads us to > The Discipline of **Time** (the investment) leads us to > The Discipline of **Repetition** (the retention) >

didaskalia 15 x in Pastorals vs. 21 x total; 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:1, 6, 13, 16.

Biblical Exercises for Spiritual Health & Fitness in 2014

Please stand and follow along in your Bibles as we hear God speaking through the Apostle Paul.

1 Timothy 4:1-16 (NKJV) Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; 5 for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 6 If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed. 7 But reject profane and old wives' fables, and exercise yourself toward godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. 9 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. 10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. 11 These things command and teach. 12 Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. 13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

Spiritual Exercises, Disciplines & Training Tips from God Himself

Nestled right in the 16 verses of this chapter: we have the demonstration of genuine spiritual life-coaching, poured out from the heart of Timothy's father-in-the-faith, Paul.

Look at the basic divisions of this chapter:

1. **Timothy:** Expose False Doctrines & Teachers (4:1-6a)
2. **Timothy:** Nourish your own Soul spiritually (6:6b)
3. **Timothy:** Reject all forms of profane & empty living (4:7a)
4. **Timothy:** Pursue personal Godliness (4:7b-10)
5. **Timothy:** Command and Teach others to Exercise themselves in Godliness (4:11)
6. **Timothy:** Live an Exemplary Life (4:12)
7. **Timothy:** Attend to personal Mastery of God's Word (4:13)
8. **Timothy:** Use the Giftedness God Gave to You (4:14)
9. **Timothy:** Devote Yourself to Christ (4:15)
10. **Timothy:** Regularly Examine Your own Lifestyle (4:16)

What did Paul say were “the disciplines” to practice?

1. **The Discipline of Truth:** Expose False Doctrines & Teachers (4:1-6a)
2. **The Discipline of Devotion:** Nourish your own Soul spiritually (6:6b)
3. **The Discipline of Time:** Reject all forms of profane & empty living (4:7a)
4. **The Discipline of Integrity:** Pursue personal Godliness (4:7b-10)
5. **The Discipline of Discipleship:** Command and Teach others to Exercise themselves in Godliness (4:11)
6. **The Discipline of Example:** Live an Exemplary Life (4:12)
7. **The Discipline of Bible Study:** Attend to personal Mastery of God's Word (4:13)
8. **The Discipline of Ministry:** Use The Giftedness God Gave To You (4:14)
9. **The Discipline of Submission:** Devote Yourself to Christ (4:15)
10. **The Discipline of Lifestyle:** Regularly Examine Your own Lifestyle (4:16)

Which Disciplines Does God ask Paul to Command for Us?

What are the areas that Paul writes down for Timothy?

- Paul who knew the entire Old Testament better than any of us.
- Paul who knew from the Apostles and Christ Himself, what had been taught and written?
- Paul who spoke from a better vantage point than any of us.
- Paul who wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit, to the model of all future pastors (Timothy).

What did Paul say were “the disciplines” to practice?

1. **The Exercise of Truth:** Expose Evil Doctrines & Teachers (4:1-6a)

2. **The Exercise of Devotion:** Nourish your own Soul spiritually (6:6b)
3. **The Exercise of Time Investment:** Reject all forms of profane & empty living (4:7a)
4. **The Exercise of Integrity:** Pursue personal Godliness (4:7b-10)
5. **The Exercise of Discipleship:** Command and Teach others to Exercise themselves in Godliness (4:11)
6. **The Exercise of Example:** Live an Exemplary Life (4:12)
7. **The Exercise of Bible Study:** Attend to personal Mastery of God's Word (4:13)
8. **The Exercise of Ministry:** Use The Giftedness God Gave To You (4:14)
9. **The Exercise of Submission:** Devote Yourself to Christ (4:15)
10. **The Exercise of Personal Discipline:** Regularly Examine Your own Lifestyle & Never Step (4:16)

How did they “make disciples”? What is the process that we are to follow, that they followed? That is what we find in the rest of the New Testament.

DISCIPLE-MAKING IN THE EPISTLES

Here is a quick summary of what Jesus told the Apostles to do, and how they obeyed.

1. In Matthew 28:18-20 Christ explains that “making disciples” means: those who follow of Christ. Or, a truly saved church.
2. In Acts 1:8 Luke explains that “making disciples” means: those who share the Gospel. Or, a truly evangelistic church.
3. In Acts 6:4 the Apostles explain that “making disciples” means: those who are stuck to prayer. Or, a truly praying church.
4. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who surrender to God. Or, a truly consecrated church.
5. In 1 Cor. 10:31 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who want to feel the weight (glory) of God on everything they do. Or, a truly glorifying God church.
6. In 2 Timothy 2:2 Paul explains that “making disciples” means: those who explain how to follow Christ to others. Or, a truly discipling church.
7. In 1 Peter 2:2 Peter explains that “making disciples” means: those who are actually using God's Word. Or, a truly healthy church.

So, the simple lessons we see that Christ gave, and we are to pass on are lessons about: salvation, witnessing, praying, surrendering to God, glorifying God, training others, and staying healthy through the Word of God.

I actually teach these as seven simple sessions with any believer wanting to get started in the right direction.

DISCIPLES HAVE NEW OPERATING SYSTEM

And this is the completely new operating system described by Paul in Galatians:

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (2:20)

John Wesley wrote, "I am more and more convinced that the devil himself desires nothing more than this, that the people of any place should be half-awakened and then left to themselves to fall asleep again."⁵ So, in 1743 John Wesley organized a society. "Such a society is no other than a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their own salvation."⁶

The rest is history. From Wesley's ministry the Methodist Church began and spread across the world in evangelism and missionary work.

Noted pastor and writer Ray Steadman (who wrote that great challenge to the church called *Body Life*) summarized this truth when he taught these words to his congregation:

"People who equate orthodoxy with authenticity find it hard to even consider the possibility that, despite the correctness of all their doctrinal positions, they may have missed the deepest reality of the authentic Christian life.

But we must never forget that true Christianity is more than teaching--it is *a way of life*. In fact, *it is life itself*. "He who has the Son has life," remember? When we talk about life, we are talking about something that is far more than mere morality, far more than doctrinal accuracy.

Life is a positive quality, not negative--a description of what we fundamentally *are*, not what we are not.

The eternal life that Jesus brings to us is radical, not superficial. It is humble, not self-promoting. It is compassionate, not indifferent. It is courageous, not timid or retiring. It is a far cry indeed from the mild compatibility, agreeability, and affability that passes for Christianity in thousands of churches across the land. In fact, the Great Imitation is so widely accepted as genuine Christianity that the real thing is often regarded as a threat or a heresy whenever it appears."⁷

FOUR DIAGNOSTICS TO REVEAL SPIRITUAL HEALTH & FRUITFULNESS

This morning we each need to do a self-checkup of our spiritual health and fruitfulness. Remember, the healthier we are the more fruit God can produce through our lives. Here are some diagnostic questions:

WORSHIP DIAGNOSTIC: To you feel excited to be here at church and close to the Lord, with a heart tuned and already filled with Spirit-prompted worship: or are you

⁵ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, entry dated Sunday March 13, 1743; vol. 1 (10.14.1735 to 11.17.1746), London: J. Kenshaw, 1827, p. 398.

⁶ Richard Watson, *A Biblical and Theological Dictionary*, article entitled "Methodists", Waugh & Mason, Ny, NY: 1832, p. 641.

⁷ Ray C. Steadman, *Authentic Christianity*

distant these days from all that, and you even feel kind of far away from God this morning?

FELLOWSHIP DIAGNOSTIC: Do you love to meet with other believers and share what God is doing in each other's lives: or can you hardly remember the last time your life was fruitful? Do you feel far from joy and peace, victory and blessing? In fact, do you secretly hope that no one gets too close this morning and asks you personal questions while you are here?

DEVOTIONAL DIAGNOSTIC: Can you hardly wait to get started in our study of God's Word this morning, and feel the same way each day of the week in your personal devotions: or does your Bible feel as heavy as lead when you pick it up?

MINISTRY DIAGNOSTIC: Are you a conscious investor in ministry, looking for more ways to use your time and spiritual gifts to serve the Lord: or do challenges for you to jump in to serve and speak up for Christ bother you a bit, and even push you away? Do you sometimes wonder if you'll get any reward in Heaven, and you just hope that you'll get there? Has the zeal you once knew dried up, and become a far off memory?

If these, or a myriad of other telltale signs of spiritual listlessness and barrenness, have cast their shadows across your path, then Christ's invitation to His spiritual heart cultivation clinic is for you.

DISCIPLESHIP IS TO GROUND ALL BELIEVERS IN THE TRUTH

1 John 2:12-14 uses the analogy of physical growth to describe three stages of Christian development.

Read in I J2.12-14

Child	Young	Adult
12) I am writing to you, little children , because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. 13) I have written to you, children , because you know the Father.	13) I am writing to you, young men , because you have overcome the evil one. 14) I have written to you, young men , because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.	13) I am writing to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning. 14) I have written to you, fathers , because you know Him who has been from the beginning.
Children are unstable and need security.	Young men face special temptations that must be overcome.	Fathers step closer and closer to God in order to find life solutions.
The new Christian learns about what the Christian life is and how to live it.	The young Christians master the fight over the world, Satan and flesh by God's Word.	The mature Christian develops a deep and strong faith to carry out God's work.

John first divides all believers into three categories: "children" (babies in Christ), "young men" (those who have been around a while but still really struggle), and "fathers" (who are mature and serving Christ's church but so aware they are imperfect). He then describes the condition and needs of each.

"These very clear distinctions identify 3 stages of spiritual growth in God's family.

- "Fathers," the most mature, have a deep knowledge of the Eternal God. The pinnacle of spiritual maturity is to know God in His fullness (cf. Phil. 3:10).
- "Young men" are those who, while not yet having the mature experience of knowing God in the Word and through life, do know sound doctrine. They are strong against sin and error because they have His Word in

them. Thus they overcome the wiles of the devil, who makes havoc of children (cf. Eph. 4:14). Since Satan's efforts are in falsehood and deception, they have overcome him.

- "Little children" are those who have only the basic awareness of God and need to grow. All are in God's family and manifest Christ's character at different levels".⁸

Level 1: children are those who have never grown or been trained. Either they are brand new babies in Christ or they have stayed that way for some reason. Children need to understand what they have in Christ. They have struggles with three areas: sin, forgiveness, and security in Christ. If you struggle with what is right and wrong in God's sight, wonder whether He could ever forgive you, and sometimes wonder if you are even really saved—John says you are a child in the faith. These saints need training and nurture from older believers in these three areas until they are strong in their faith.

Level 2: John speaks to the second level of growth he calls the "young men". This group knows they are saved but are so aware of their spiritual lives and the powerful temptations they face that they can easily become very discouraged. They often fear they'll never be able to be victorious and wonder why they fail so often. This group needs to be trained (think discipleship) in who they are in Christ (that they are already victors) and how to overcome (through Word-filled obedience) one area at a time in their lives and bring that area under His gracious Lordship.

Level 3: John talks about those who are fathers and mothers of the Word. They can nurture spiritual children. They have a walk that talks and they use their life to mentor others.

Healthy Doctrine In Christ's Church

Do you remember the story about the frog that landed in a pan of water and stayed until it boiled? If the water in the pan had been hot, the frog would have noticed and immediately hopped out. But the water felt cool at first, and the frog sensed no danger. As the water warmed, the frog just relaxed and conformed to the gradual change. Finally, when the water was dangerously hot, the muscles of the frog were subdued by the rising heat, and grew too sluggish to act. By the time the water boiled, the frog was dead.

The longer I live, the more alarmed I get at the growing trend of Biblical illiteracy and the lack of Biblical discipleship in today's church. Just as the decline in church attendance, Bible reading, and even Bible carrying can be seen in each new generation—the corresponding decline in even knowing the Bible (Biblical illiteracy), and obeying God's Word (Biblical discipleship) is showing up in the woefully powerless lives of so many believers.

Recently some findings that point to Biblical illiteracy and ineffective discipleship were published. This is what, Christian researcher and author George Barna reported as he surveyed people who considered themselves to be "Christians":

1. Less than half of all adults can name the four gospels.
2. A majority of professing Christians struggle to identify more than two or three of the disciples.
3. 60 % of Americans cannot name even five of the Ten Commandments.
4. 82 % of Americans believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.
5. 12% of adults believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.
6. Over 50 % of graduating High School Seniors thought that Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife.
7. 60% of Americans reject the existence of literal angel named Satan.
8. 40% of Americans believe that when Jesus Christ was on earth He committed sins.
9. 50% believe that anyone who is generally good or does enough good things for others during their life will earn a place in Heaven.
10. 40% believe that the Bible, the Koran and the Book of Mormon are all different expressions of the same spiritual truths.
11. 70% of those identifying themselves as born again Christians said they do not believe in moral absolutes.
12. Only 10% of Christians base their moral decision-making on the principles taught in the Bible.
13. Finally, 54% believe truth can be discovered only through logic, human reasoning and personal experience.

Biblical Illiteracy Abounds

These statistics indicate a gradual change of temperature over time. In general, Biblical illiteracy is a growing trend and the discipleship that is being offered in churches is ineffective.

⁸John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

One British pastor insightfully wrote, *"The Christian landscape is strewn with the wreckage of derelict half-built towers. The ruins of those who began to build and were unable to finish. For thousands of people still ignore Christ's warning and undertake to follow Him without first pausing to reflect on the cost of doing so."*

The result is the great scandal of Christendom today, so called nominal Christianity. In countries to which Christian civilization has spread, large numbers of people have covered themselves with a decent but thin veneer of Christianity. They have allowed themselves to become somewhat involved, enough to be respectable but not enough to be uncomfortable.

Their religion is a great soft cushion. It protects them from the hard unpleasantness of life while changing its place and shape to suit their convenience. No wonder the cynics speak of hypocrites in the church and dismiss religion as escapism."
(John Stott)

What was the solution? Paul told Titus as he tells us today: each believer needs to be disciplined into becoming a discipler. What is discipleship?

New Testament Discipleship

1. Life-long: New Testament Discipleship is a life-long process by which we become servants and friends of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:14,15); and we find others along the way that either lead us closer to God, or whom we lead closer to Him (Titus 2:1-8).
2. Stages: New Testament Discipleship is always presented as having stages. Jesus trained the 12 for a number of years before they were qualified and released by Him to carry on His work; Paul spent years in preparation also (Galatians 1:15-18) being taught by the Lord and then being in his hometown; finally John even describes three levels of spiritual maturity (I John 2:13-14).
3. Obedience: New Testament Discipleship focuses upon obedience to God's Word, not just head knowledge (John 15:14).
4. New Birth: New Testament Discipleship can only start with a genuine relationship with God and always grows into a vital relationship with others (Matthew 22:37-40); discipleship must be both vertical and horizontal (II Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:1-8).
5. Never Arrived: New Testament Discipleship recognizes that one is to be qualified as a teacher and the other is a student, but both must be mutually submitted to one another, both must be on the journey—learning to walk as Jesus walked (Phil. 3:17).
6. New Testament Discipleship recognizes that learning involves transparency, safety, confidentiality, content, environment, experiences and relationships (I John 1:7). An effective discipleship process is built upon strong foundational biblical principles (I Tim. 4:6).
7. Never Alone: Discipleship creates an environment where no one stands alone, struggles alone, serves alone, develops alone, seeks alone, or grows up alone (I Cor. 12:12).

Paul details in Titus 2 the behavior that follows a proper understanding of God (or "sound doctrine"). When Paul gave these clear objectives for Titus as he taught the older men, it was to show them how to become a strong advertisement for God in a 'crooked and perverse' world (Phil. 2:15).

God's discipleship program for men was laid down for Christ's church right from the earliest days. It was focused upon guarding healthy faith—in a sin sick world.

There is nothing more timely for us as we enter the end of days, because, as the end of the physical world approaches, so does earth's darkest spiritual hour. Be sure that you are in that life-long process of discipleship; look for the evidence of your progress (I Timothy 4:15); obey God; share your life with others as you walk with them and Christ through life.

4:12

The eternal—"godliness" (vv. 7-12). Phillips Brooks said, "The great purpose of life—the shaping of character by truth." Godly character and conduct are far more important than golf trophies or home-run records, though it is possible for a person to have both. Paul challenged Timothy to be as devoted to godliness as an athlete is to his sport. We are living and laboring for eternity.

Paul used two similar athletic images in writing to the Corinthians (I Cor. 9:24-27), emphasizing the disciplines necessary for godly living. As an athlete must control his body and obey the rules, so a Christian must make his body his servant and not his master. When I see high school football squads and baseball teams going through their calisthenics under the hot summer sun, I am reminded that there are spiritual exercises that I ought to be doing (Heb. 5:14). Prayer, meditation, self-examination, fellowship, service, sacrifice, submission to the will of others, witness—all of these can assist me, through the Spirit, to become a more godly person.

Spiritual exercise is not easy; we must “labor and suffer reproach” (1 Tim. 4:10a). “For this we labor and strive” (NIV). The word translated “strive” is an athletic word from which we get our English word *agonize*. It is the picture of an athlete straining and giving his best to win. A Christian who wants to excel must really work at it, by the grace of God and to the glory of God.

But exercising ourselves in godly living is not only profitable for us; it is also profitable for others (1 Tim. 4:11–12). It enables us to be good examples, so that we encourage others. Paul named several areas of life in which you and I should be examples.

“In word” (1 Tim. 4:12) implies that our speech should always be honest and loving, “speaking the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15).

“In conduct” (the KJV’s “conversation” means “walk,” not “talk”) suggests that our lives are to be controlled by the Word of God. We must not be like the hypocrites Paul described to Titus (Titus 1:16): “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him.”

“In love” (charity) points to the motivation of our lives. We do not obey God to be applauded by men (Matt. 6:1ff), but because we love God and love God’s people.

“In spirit” is not in many manuscripts, but it would describe the inner enthusiasm and excitement of a child of God.)

“In faith” implies that we trust God and are faithful to Him. Faith and love often go together (1 Tim. 1:14; 2:15; 6:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:22). Faith always leads to faithfulness.

“In purity” is important as we live in this present evil world. Ephesus was a center for sexual impurity, and the young man Timothy was faced with temptations. He must have a chaste relationship to the women in the church (1 Tim. 5:2) and keep himself pure in mind, heart, and body.

But godly living not only helps *us* and *other believers*; it also has its influence on *the lost*. Paul reminded pastor Timothy that Jesus Christ is the Saviour (1 Tim. 4:10), and it is the believer’s task to share that Good News with the lost. In effect he wrote, “We Christians have fixed our hope in the living God, but the lost have no hope and do not know the living God. All that many of them know are the dead idols that can never save them.”

The title “Saviour of all men” does not imply that everybody will be saved (universalism), or that God saves people in spite of themselves; for Paul added “specially of those that believe.” It is faith that saves one’s soul (Eph. 2:8–10). Since God “will have all men to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4), and since Christ “gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:6), then *any* lost sinner can trust Christ and be saved. Christ is “the Saviour of all men,” so nobody need despair.

One of the features of Paul’s writing is his love of pictures from the life of the athlete. And there is little wonder. In every Greek city the gymnasium was far more than a physical training-ground. It was in the gymnasium that Socrates often discussed the eternal problems; it was in the gymnasium that the philosophers and the sophists and the wandering teachers and preachers often found their audience. In any Greek city the gymnasium was not only the physical training-ground but also the intellectual club of the city.

In the Greek world there were the great Isthmian Games at Corinth, the great Pan-Ionian Games at Ephesus, and, greatest of all, the Olympic Games, held every four years. The Greek cities were often at variance and frequently at war; but when the Olympic Games came round, no matter what dispute was raging, a month’s truce was declared that there might be a contest in fellowship between them. Not only did the athletes come, but the historians and the poets came to give readings of their latest works, and the sculptors, whose names are immortal, came to make statues of the winners.

There can be little doubt that, in Corinth and in Ephesus, Paul had been a spectator of these games. Where there were crowds of men, Paul would be there to seek to win them for Christ. But, apart from the preaching, there was something about these athletic contests which found an answer in the heart of Paul.

He knew the contests of the boxers (1 Corinthians 9:26).

He knew the foot-race, most famous of all the contests. He had seen the herald summoning the racers to the starting-line (1 Corinthians 9:27); he had seen the runners press along the course to the goal (Philippians 3:14); he had seen the judge awarding the prize at the end of the race (2 Timothy 4:8); he knew of the victor’s laurel crown and of his exultation (1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 4:1). He knew the rigorous discipline of training which the athlete must undertake, and the strict regulations which must be observed (1 Timothy 4:7, 8; 2 Timothy 2:5).

So his prayer is that he may not be like an athlete whose training and effort have gone for nothing. For him the greatest prize in life was to know that through him others had come to know and to love and to serve Jesus Christ.⁹

NIV New International Version

⁹ Barclay, W. (Ed.). (1975). *The letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (electronic ed., pp. 45–46). Philadelphia: The Westminster John Knox Press.

Timothy should not fear to practice the Word of God and apply it to the life of the church, for this Word is “a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance” (1 Tim. 4:9). These faithful sayings made up a summary of truth for the early church (see 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8). The fact that Timothy was a young man (the word then applied to a person from youth to forty) should not deter him from practicing the Word. In fact, he was to “command” these things, and this is our military word “charge” (1 Tim. 1:3). The local church is a unit in God’s spiritual army, and its leaders are to pass God’s orders along to the people with authority and conviction.¹⁰

Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way (v. 37). This was Ezra’s greatest prayer: “I have choices to make as I am going through life,” he said, “so I ask You, Lord, to turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things.” He is so practical. Whenever I notice someone not growing spiritually—not being alive and flourishing and bearing fruit—I surmise it is because they are spending their time looking at and investing in worthless things. To avoid that in his own life, Ezra prayed: “*Revive me in Your way.*” God does this by turning away our eyes from looking on what displeases Him.¹¹

• **Turn me away** (Strong’s #5674, abar). *Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way. ... Turn away my reproach which I dread, for Your judgments are good* (vv. 37, 39).¹²

Get Started in a Weekly Plan of Exercises in Truth

Like physical exercise, spiritual exercise requires discipline, daily effort, and ongoing commitment. Just like daily exercise strengthens our muscles, so our daily spiritual disciplines can strengthen our “spiritual muscles.” The five classic Biblical disciplines ought to be part of every Christian’s life:

- **The Discipline of Bible Study:** Reading the Truth of God’s Word
- **The Discipline of Communication:** Praying the Truth of God’s Word
- **The Discipline of Memorization & Meditation:** Applying the Truth of God’s Word
- **The Discipline of Worship:** Attending public worship built upon the Truth of God’s Word
- **The Discipline of Surrender:** Giving time, money, and abilities to God’s service based on obedience to the Truth of God’s Word

What do empty lives become? Without Christ empty hearts bear rotten fruit. Moral cancer consumes the soul and the symptoms are seen in the behavior of these self-centered lives. Paul says avoid at all costs these cancerous traits.

- **Lovers of Self** (*philautos*). This represents a totally self-centered life. Such persons behave as if the world revolves around them; their needs and desires typically take first place. This practice is the antithesis of the life God calls for, which is death to self.
- **Lovers of Money** (*philaguros*). To be a lover of money, God says, leads to “*all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (1 Tim. 6:10). Timothy pastored in Ephesus, which was much like New York City. All trade routes, into and out of Asia Minor, came through Ephesus. Constant exposure to that materialistic flow of commerce often fostered a passion for wealth.
- **Boastful** (*alazon*). Paul said that men would be *braggarts*; this is the same word used to describe a medicine-peddler who bragged that he had a cure-all for anything. At country fairs, men like these peddled their “miracle product.” They made outrageous statements, such as claiming that the very same product could not only grow hair but also remove stains

¹⁰ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, pp. 226–227). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ Barnett, J. S. (n.d.). *Discipline Yourself for Godliness*.

¹² Barnett, J. S. (n.d.). *Discipline Yourself for Godliness*.

from carpet, or take marks off walls. Eventually, medicine-peddlers became known as quacks because their promises amounted to nothing more than boastful, empty words. A highway sign near Manchester, Tennessee aptly describes this destructive condition: A man is never so empty as when he's full of himself!

- **Arrogant** (*huperephanos*). The arrogant have an internal heart attitude that assumes they are better than everyone else. They are afflicted with an all-consuming pride.

- **Revilers** (*blasphemia*). This word means “one that totally derides someone else.” Revilers don't merely use hot words of anger, but coldly, and arrogantly, insult others to the point of destruction. Thus if someone wanted to insult God, the worst they could do was to coldly blaspheme Him, without any anger, just with callousness of heart.

- **Disobedient to Parents (put in Greek words)**. In the last days, Paul says that there will be the total loss of all submission, beginning with disobedience to parents. The United Nations has even promoted lack of submission to authorities by declaring “The Year of the Child,” “The Year of the Woman,” “The Decade of the Child,” and now “The Decade of the Woman.” Its leadership advocates world wide egalitarian equality, believing that all men should have equal political, social, and economic rights—with no submission, no authority, and everybody being equal. The fallout from this philosophy is impacting individual families drastically.

Today's parents often feel intimidated by the outside threat of dire consequences if they discipline their children for disobedience, or tell them what to do. Without credible proof, it's possible in some areas to be jailed for even the slightest suspicion of abuse or molestation. Like the first century, when people could be taken to the arena for not offering incense to the emperor, so today's parents can be taken before the courts for obeying God. Rather than face that type of trial, parents back off from doing what they know they ought to do in the training of their children. It's simply the spirit of the world in which we now live.

- **Ungrateful** (*acharistos*). Not only are such people ungrateful but they are thankless, refusing to acknowledge that there is any debt of gratitude owed to either God or man. After climbing the ladder of success, they quickly forget humble beginnings. Instead they pridefully claim credit for all their accomplishments. In today's world, persons with a genuinely grateful spirit are rare.

- **Unholy** (*anosios*). An unholy person cares nothing about common decency. News reports are regularly full of gruesome stories about man's treacherous ways. For example, a little while ago I heard about a trash compactor murder of a child in New York City—he was squashed to death! In the ancient Greek world, “unholy” referred to someone who wouldn't bury a dead person and left the body to decay on the surface. In today's world, common decency is rapidly disappearing. Seeking after abnormal thrills is more and more the rage.

- **Unloving** (*astorgos*). Christ said that others would identify Christians by their *love*. In contrast, the Apostle Paul says Satan's crowd will be known by their *unloving* spirit. The word *unloving* means “without family or human affection,” or “a time when self prevails over even the closest relationships.”

People who don't even have a love for family will be prevalent in the last days. The ever-increasing number of abandoned babies—left out in the elements to face death—coupled with careless abandonment of spouses, children, and even elderly parents in need, is staggering! Genuine family love is uncommon.

- **Irreconcilable** (*aspondos*). The irreconcilable are unforgiving, mean-spirited, and implacable. No matter how hard you try, you simply can't reconcile with them. They're always, as the saying goes, acting as if there's “a burr under their saddle”! They refuse to make things right, and that's typical of society as a whole.

- **Malicious Gossips** (*diabolos*). *Diabolos* is a very interesting word; it's the word for “Satan.” In Greek, “malicious gossips” literally means “little devils.” Without giving a moment's thought to the havoc it might bring, destroying others with their evil reports is relished by such gossips. Scripture warns:

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, . . . the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . . But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so” (Prov. 18:21a; James 3:6a, 8-10).

If we aren't constantly alert to the dangers of exposure to self-lovers, lovers of money, people without familial love, or malicious gossips, it's easy to likewise become tarnished. This is the flavor of the world we live in, and it's going to get increasingly more defiled. Don't let a devilish slanderous tongue become a part of your life.

- **Without Self-Control** (*akrates*). In Greek, “*a*” means *no* and “*krates*” means *power*. People like this do not have the power or ability to hold in their desires; nor do they *want* to. For example, if they're shopping, they'll buy whatever they want—even to the point of accumulating tens of thousands of dollars in credit card debt. If they want a woman, they'll take a woman; if they want a man, they'll take a man; if they want a pleasure, they'll take that pleasure. They lack control in every area. Instead of viewing the root problem as not having God's self-control, they refuse to accept responsibility for their actions and end up blaming their sinful state on others.

- **Brutal** (*anemeros*). To be brutal is to be savage, like a wild beast. Look at murders these days. It used to be that people just got killed. Now they get diced up, cut up, dragged around, skewered, burned, parts of their bodies taken off, and so forth. Some types of murders are too indecent to even mention! We live in a brutal world; as the end of the age gets nearer, we can expect brutality to become epidemic.

- **Haters of Good** (*aphilagathos*). People today want any answers but God's; they fervently resist His truth. Why? Because they are haters of good. When what the Bible says is mentioned in certain groups, it is quickly disputed. Scriptural answers are considered unacceptable because they are righteous answers. Don't be surprised when that happens. Expect it. Since the world hated Christ, and crucified Him because He made them feel uncomfortable, because Christ lives in us, you and I can likewise anticipate having the same affect on others.
- **Treacherous** (*prodotes*). Treacherous persons willingly betray others for any reason—just to accomplish personal agendas.
- **Reckless** (*propetes*). Reckless people are literally “swept along,” unthinkingly, in their lusts and desires. They'll do whatever it takes, no matter the cost, to get whatever they want.
- **Conceited** (*tetuphomenos*). Conceited people are haughty, which literally means that they have a “head swelled with their own importance.”
- **Lovers of Pleasure Rather Than Lovers of God (put in Greek words)**. These are recreation worshipers who pursue self-indulgent pleasure as a way of life. On any Lord's day, they'll be “worshipping” nature on the golf courses, or the sun on the beaches. In other words, they're out “worshipping their pleasure” rather than sacrificing their pleasure to worship the infinite and true God.

Our world is devoted to the pursuit of pleasure; we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death in this respect. In many recent studies, it has been noted that many men seem to default morally in the second half of their lives. King David, and many others who are chronicled in Scripture, defaulted morally after reaching the half-way point. They had been conditioned by those around them to lust after immediate gratification: “Get what you want—*when* you want it!” After being continually exposed to that message, they became desensitized. Men like this will eventually give into those desires, and thus embrace being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

- **Holding to a Form of Godliness (put in Greek words)**. Though outwardly somewhat religious, this type doesn't want to be bothered with discussing things like doctrine, the holiness of God, the reality of sin, or the coming judgment of God. Both the power and the hope which can be found in Christ alone are denied. They may profess a form of godliness when they go to church, but, in reality, they worship something or someone other than the infinite and true God revealed in Jesus Christ. Verse 5 thus concludes with a warning to avoid such men as these.¹³

Why Memorize the Bible?

Memorization works on our hearts to instill faith, cultivate Christ-like character, fight temptation, and enhances prayer and worship. Scripture mentions the following encouragements for memorizing.

Memorizing ...

- Is one of the most effective ways to “meditate” on the Word of God “day and night” (Joshua 1:8).
- Helps us treasure God's Word in our hearts that we might not sin against the Lord (Psalm 119:11).
- Allows us to meditate on the Lord in the “watches of the night” (Psalm 63:6) so that we can fix our eyes on your ways (Psalm 119:15).
- Helps us in evangelism, making the Word of truth readily available to build our own and others' faith—since “faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Read more from John Piper: [Why Memorize Scripture?](#)

¹³ Barnett, J. S. (n.d.). *The Joy of a Word Filled Family*.