

The Way of Discipleship

Growing in Grace Women's Ministry 2023

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Introduction

How often do you hear people say they are a Christian and yet see little evidence in their life to support that claim? Sadly, many profess Jesus as Lord, but the way they live their lives isn't much different from the world around them. It is troubling to see, and yet, we must ask – what about our witness, what about the way we live our life? Do we look like His disciples?

This study has grown out of a heartfelt desire to show believers a better way – the way of discipleship and the incredible blessing of living out God's Word. In *The Way of Discipleship*, you will be introduced to the first disciples and the core elements of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ today. In other words, what it means to truly follow Him.

When we study the Word of God, we ought always to examine our own lives to see if they measure up to what His Word says. Through this study, our hope is that you would be devoted, disciplined, and dedicated to seeking God, committed to doing all 8 lessons of this study. They are written in a four-day format to maximize your study time. Unless otherwise stated, we use the King James Version of the Bible and encourage you to do the same. Now, let's get started on our journey of learning the way of discipleship!

LESSON ONE THE CALLING

All Jews were to make an annual pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast and Jesus' family was no exception. But as Mary and Joseph began their return trip home, they soon discovered their adolescent son wasn't among their group and hurried back only to find He had returned to the Temple. It's in this setting that Jesus speaks His first recorded words found in Luke 2:49, "*...I must be about My Father's business.*"

We read no more of Jesus until Luke 3:21 where we find Him coming from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. It was at Jesus' baptism that God sent His Spirit in the likeness of a dove that rested upon Him and declared, "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:17). This symbolically showed to all those present that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. John's prophetic statement regarding Jesus, "*Behold, The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*", (John 1:29) was truly fulfilled as Jesus began His public ministry. It was at this time that Jesus selected and called His disciples to come and follow Him.

Over two thousand years have passed since Jesus and His disciples lived and ministered, but He continues to seek out those who will answer the call to discipleship. And so begins our own personal journey to discover some key elements about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Day One – The Called

Read Matthew 4:18-22

If you were going to seek out disciples, where might you begin? Jesus began with a walk alongside the Sea of Galilee.

1. Who are the first four men called by Jesus according to verses 18 and 22?

2. What do you learn about them?

a. Based on only their occupation, what kind of conclusions can you make about them?

3. It is recorded that Jesus specifically told Peter and Andrew, “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” (Matthew 4:18-19) What do you think Jesus meant by this statement? How do you think this statement might have helped these particular men understand the purpose of His call for their lives?

a. In what ways could being a “fisher of men” also play an active part in your own Christian walk?

4. According to verse 20, how did the brothers, Peter and Andrew, respond to Jesus’ call?

a. Additionally, who did the brothers, James and John, leave behind according to verse 22?

b. What kind of consequences could this have had on their lives?

c. Put yourself in their sandals and share how you think you might have responded.

d. In your current life situations, when you hear the Spirit leading you, do you immediately respond as the disciples did or is there hesitation in your obedience? Explain.

From the very beginning we see that following Jesus would become the main priority in the disciples' lives, which is the essence of discipleship.

Day Two – The Useable

Jesus went on to ultimately choose 12 men that He would train, mentor and instruct in His ways and who would become His loyal followers.

1. Read Matthew 10:2-4 along with Mark 3:16-19 to learn their names and any of their background information. Complete the chart below. Note: You may or may not find details on all of them.

Disciple's name	Details given about him

a. Overall, how would you describe the group of men that Jesus called?

It is interesting to note the type of people that Jesus did not choose: those who were wealthy, the ones with power and authority, or those who were well known.

b. If you were looking for twelve qualified people to do something of great magnitude, would you have chosen these men? Why or why not?

2. Based on what you learned of the disciples as a group, are you any different than these men? Write your thoughts below.

3. How did Jesus know who to pick to be His twelve disciples? Luke 6:12-13 teaches us a very important lesson that we need to adhere to as well. Write down what you learn.

a. How should this relate to our everyday lives regarding decision making and knowing the will of God?

Day Three — The Disciple

Read John 1:43-51

1. Both Philip and Nathanael responded to Jesus with profound statements. What does Philip declare about Jesus in verse 45?

2. Who does Nathanael say Jesus is according to verse 49?

a. Explain how this corresponds to John the Baptist's declaration in John 1:29-34.

3. Both Philip and Nathanael's faith-filled statements concerning Jesus were grounded in their knowledge of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. How do you think this would have impacted their decision to follow Him?

a. What about you? When you are confronted with a choice to follow Jesus or to go your own way, what do you base your decision upon? Please explain.

Note: If knowledge of the Scripture is new to you or you haven't studied much, please know that it's never too late to start! Read your Bible daily, especially the four gospels, and learn all you can about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Day Four – The Walk

As Jesus began His earthly ministry, He called specific men to come alongside Him. Even though each responded positively by following Him, they had no real idea as to what this new relationship would be like. They also had no idea what would be required of them, where they would travel to as they followed Him, or even how long their commitment would last. These men were going to have to learn what it meant to be a true disciple and follower of Christ, just like we must do.

1. To help you gain a better understanding of what the word disciple actually means, use a dictionary to define it. For the most accurate definition, use the online version of Webster's 1828 Dictionary or a Greek dictionary such as Vine's Dictionary of the New Testament.

2. After reading this definition, do these characteristics describe you as a follower of Christ? If so, in what ways?

a. In what ways might you need to become a more intentional student of your Master?

3. There is a cost in following the Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 14:26-33. Record the three "cannot" statements that Jesus makes regarding discipleship and share your thoughts on each.

Verse 26:

Verse 27:

Verse 33:

*Note: To understand the startling statement made by Jesus in Luke 14:26, we need to understand what the word **hate** means. Hate in the Greek language means preference for one thing over another by expressing either aversion from or disregard for the claims of that person or thing above those of another. So, for us to hate our family requires a commitment and faithfulness to Jesus in a way that shows He is number One in our life, even above our earthly relationships.*

4. Evaluate yourself by the threefold test laid out in the above verses. Do you consider yourself to be a disciple? Why or why not?

a. What needs to change based on the above?

5. Read John 21:20-22 and consider the following: Followers of Jesus Christ are to have but one focus - pleasing Him who called us. Sadly, we have the tendency to look at others and become jealous and complain, just as Peter did. What does Peter ask of Jesus in verse 21? What lesson was the Lord was teaching him?

a. How do you think this might apply to us today?

6. As you recall the definition of disciple, you should be able to see there is a difference between being a true disciple and one who just says they are a Christian and living according to their own ways. Look up the following verses in the chart below to help you understand the difference.

	True Disciple	Claims to be a Christian
1 Corinthians 3:1-3		
Ephesians 4:14, 20-24		
Hebrews 5:12-6:1		
1 John 2:3-6		

a. Write your own conclusions about the difference between a disciple and one who claims to be a Christian.

b. Based on your conclusions, do you consider yourself to be on the right path in following Him in the ways of discipleship? Why or why not?

7. Take some time to prayerfully journal your answers to the following questions.

In the three years of Jesus' ministry, the twelve disciples lived intimately with Jesus, witnessed His amazing works, constantly being instructed by Him, as they were molded into the strong leaders of the faith that we read about today. How about you? Are you willing to look closely at His life and the way He ministered to others so that you might be instructed just as they were?

Are you willing to be a diligent student of His Word and obediently follow Him?

Are you willing to be molded into the disciple He desires you to be?

8. If you answered affirmatively to all three, well done! Choose one of the above statements to prayerfully focus on this next week. In what areas do you need to surrender or become more active to make this a reality in your daily life? Write a prayer below and make it a commitment.

*“We never become disciples in crowds or even in twos;
discipleship is always a personal matter.”
Oswald Chambers*

LESSON TWO THE WAY OF THE CROSS

As Jesus spent time with His disciples, He began to reveal to them His mission. In Matthew 16:21, Jesus told them He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things. In addition, we find Him saying in Matthew 20:18-19 that He would be crucified, which would be the means of His death. Jesus introduced lessons to His disciples concerning the cross and we will examine the importance of these lessons and why they are relevant to us today as we learn more about discipleship.

Henry Blackaby states in his book, *Experiencing the Cross*: “*The cross is not just His; the cross is mine, and the cross is yours. It’s an unconditional and incontestable requirement if we would follow Him as a disciple.*” These are not easy words to read, but they are even more difficult to practice as we learn there is much that is required from us. Let us seek to apply these words to our lives as we study the way of the cross.

Day One – Jesus and the Cross

1. Let’s begin with a basic question; what does a cross signify to you?

In order for us to have a clear picture of the way of the cross, we need to take a look first at Jesus and the cross.

2. Read each of the following scripture passages and record what His suffering the cross literally meant for Him.

Matthew 27:26-31

Mark 15:29-34

Luke 22:47-53

Luke 23:44-46

3. It is extremely important that we be familiar with the sufferings and death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thoughtfully read the following passages and record what you further learn about what Christ experienced.

Isaiah 52:14, 53:1-12

4. The horrific cross that Christ bore was done in obedience to the Father's will. Read Luke 22:39-46 and write what you learn about Jesus, His heart and God's response. Include any emotions you think He might have experienced.

5. Write a prayer below thanking Him for what He did and the incredible salvation it brings.

6. After your examination of the scriptures in this day's lesson, has your understanding of the cross and what it signifies changed since you answered question one? In what way(s)?

Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines cross as: suffering of Christ by crucifixion; doctrine of Christ's sufferings and atonement or salvation by Christ. Anything that obstructs, perplexes, hindrance, misfortune, opposition. "To take up the cross is to submit to troubles and afflictions from love to Christ."

7. In light of what we've studied, what kind of cross might we have to take up for the sake of Christ? Be specific.

Day Two – Deny Yourself

1. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus speaks words that for most of us, are difficult to hear. Please write out this verse below. Consider memorizing this verse.

a. List the three commands that Jesus gives us in this verse.

In the remainder of this lesson we will take a closer look at what each of these commands mean.

2. Matthew 16:24a “...let him deny himself.” Why would Jesus say that to us? What do you think this means?

3. Webster’s dictionary says to deny oneself is to decline the gratification of appetites or desires, to refrain from, to abstain. The scriptures teach us some of the things we must learn to deny. Look up the following scriptures and record what areas we are to deny. (The word deny may or may not be used, but it is implied.)

Romans 6:12

1 Thessalonians 4:3b-5

Titus 2:12

4. Read Matthew 16:24a in the Expanded Translation and Amplified Bible below.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, if anyone is desiring to come after me, let him forget self and lose sight of his own interests...” Expanded Translation.

“Then Jesus said to His disciples, if anyone desires to be My disciple, let him deny himself (disregard, lose sight of and forget himself and his own interests) ...” Amplified Bible.

Share your thoughts about what it means to deny yourself.

5. As you read the following verses, use them to help you understand some of the things you can put into practice in order to know how to deny yourself. Record what you learn.

Romans 6:13

2 Corinthians 10:5

Galatians 5:16

6. Thoughtfully read 2 Corinthians 5:9, 15. How do these verses relate to this command of denying self?

7. In reality, how easy or difficult is it to deny self? Share your thoughts.

a. What would keep you from denying yourself?

8. When we learn to deny ourselves, what do you think the result will be in our lives? Please explain.

“And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.” Luke 14:27

Day Three – Suffering

There are two aspects of the cross, both of which are difficult, yet necessary for us to understand: suffering and death. As we study these two topics, we will seek to understand how we are to apply them in our lives.

1. As we read in Matthew 16:24, Jesus tells us to take up our cross. Explain what this looks like from these scriptures.

Matthew 5:10-12

Philippians 1:29

a. Share some ways this could happen in our lives.

2. One of the themes for the book of 1 Peter is suffering. He gives us some reasons for our suffering. Write what you learn.

1 Peter 2:19-21

1 Peter 3:14, 16-17

3. None of us like to suffer and most of us don't suffer very well. But God expects us to have a certain mind-set toward our suffering. What do the following scriptures tell us?

Matthew 5:11-12

James 1:2

1 Peter 3:14, 4:12

4. If we are to take up our cross, that which represents the idea of suffering, let us examine God's purpose in the area of suffering. How do the following verses help you to understand why we experience suffering and hardships?

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

John 9:1-3

Philippians 3:10

James 1:3-4

5. Job was a man who suffered much yet was a godly man in his sufferings. Read Job chapters 1 and 2 and list the ways in which he suffered.

a. Re-read Job 1:20-22 and 2:10. How is his attitude in suffering an example to you? How do you think he was able to respond as he did?

6. As we look to Jesus, we find the perfect example concerning the topic of suffering. In what ways do the following verses explain why He had to suffer?

Hebrews 2:17-18

Hebrews 5:7-8

a. In what ways ought we to follow His example? 1 Peter 2:21-24

7. How can the following verses help you in your times of suffering?

Psalm 119:49-50

John 16:33

Romans 8:28-29

8. Part of being a disciple of Christ will be to experience suffering. Amid suffering, we are to be a particular way and to have a certain mindset. What do you learn in these verses?

2 Timothy 1:12

1 Peter 4:19

9. Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and Hebrews 12:2-4. How can we get to the place where we don't focus on the "agonies" of our cross (suffering), but instead on the crown (reward)?

"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."

Romans 8:18

Day Four — Death

Christ experienced suffering on the way to the cross as well as while on the cross. Ultimately, the cross led to His death.

Death as defined by Webster's 1828 dictionary: the state of a being in which there is total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions and having lost the susceptibility of renewed action. Keep this definition in mind as you answer the questions for today.

1. As it was with Jesus, taking up the cross can literally mean to go to die. According to the following scriptures, what are we to be dead to?

Romans 6:6

Galatians 5:24

Galatians 6:14

2. Explain how we are to be dead to these things when we are yet a living person.

3. What kind of things in your own life do you still need to die to? Be specific (and humble), recording them below.

4. Although the cross can result in a physical death, there is another principle at work through the cross. There is power in the cross which is to result in something else within us. What do you learn from these verses that should be in effect in our lives?

Romans 6:4, 11

Galatians 2:20

5. The apostle Paul makes a profound statement to us in Philippians 3:10: *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”* Look up the word conformed in the dictionary and write its definition.

a. What do you think it means to be conformed to His death?

b. How does Luke 22:42 help you to understand this better?

6. Read the following and share your thoughts as to its meaning and application in your life. A missionary from Africa once said this: *“The cross is the key to all situations as well as to all scripture. If I lose that key, I miss the road, not only in the Bible, but also in the whole of my life.”*

7. Consider the following statement made by G. Campbell Morgan as he shares a possible thought which Jesus could say to us. “*I gave My life for thee. What hast thou given for Me?*” How does this make you feel? What does this mean to you? Share how you think this should be applied to your life.

Following Jesus

The final command in Matthew 16:24 is, “...*follow Me.*” We will end today’s lesson by looking at what it means to truly follow Jesus.

8. What does this command, “*follow Me,*” mean to you?
 - a. Write down what type of things Jesus might expect of us when He says this.

 - b. List some things that come to mind that make it difficult for us to follow Him.

9. Jesus gives further enlightenment on this subject of following Him. Write what you learn from the verses below.

John 8:12

John 10:4, 27

John 13:14-15

a. How can you practically apply these words of Jesus to your daily life?

10. Read Luke 9:57-62. We too, like these people, might say: “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” But is this true? What path did Jesus ultimately have to follow, and would you be willing to follow Him there?

a. In light of these verses, what is Jesus trying to help us understand by His reply to these people?

11. As we conclude this lesson on the way of the cross, what is one thing the Lord has shown you that you need to apply to your life and how will you do it?

*“Jesus, I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken, Thou, from hence, my all shall be!
Perish every fond ambition, all I’ve sought and hoped and known;
Yet how rich is my condition, God and heaven are still my own!”*
Author Unknown

LESSON THREE THE MASTER AND THE SERVANT

In our current culture and society, we know little of the meaning of servanthood. When we think about a master and servant relationship, we often have a negative image of the two because of the many unfavorable examples. But the heart of a true servant biblically is one who cares for the work and interest of his master and who is always ready, seeking only to do what will please or profit him. A servant differs from a slave as the servant's subjection to a master is voluntary, the slave's is not. Every slave is a servant, but not every servant is a slave.

As we will see in this lesson on the master and the servant, Jesus portrays to us the greatest example there is and He doesn't ask us to do more than what He has already done. His own life was a pattern for us to follow. Andrew Murray states: "*The power of an example depends on two things. The one is the attractiveness of what it gives us to see; the other is the personal relation and influence of him in whom it is seen.*" We will now take a closer look at what Jesus did by example as well as what He taught on the subject of servanthood.

Day One – Servant

The teaching found in John 13:1-17 by Jesus is given in a private setting with His disciples the night before His crucifixion. These words would begin His last instructions to the disciples which were weighty and significant.

1. Read John 13:1-5. Share your thoughts.
 - a. Record the setting and place found in these verses.
 - b. Who was there?
 - c. What, if anything, do you find unusual?

2. Obviously, Jesus was showing by example what the heart of a servant should be. But, when you hear the word *servant*, what is the first thing that pops into your head?

a. Look up the word servant in the dictionary and write its meaning. Keep this definition in mind as you complete this lesson.

3. What do you see as the driving force for Jesus to wash the disciple's feet? See John 13:1.

4. Read John 13:6-8 and answer the following questions.

a. What attitude do you see Peter displaying?

b. Is there anything wrong with this? Explain.

c. How is Peter's attitude in opposition to Christ's? See Matthew 26:39.

d. Why do you think that Peter is the only one who seems to be objecting to Jesus washing the disciples' feet?

5. After reading how Peter responded to Jesus in John 13:6-8, take a moment to reflect on how you think you would have responded and write your thoughts below.

a. How do you feel when others serve you?

It has been observed, the true test of whether we are a servant is that we don't mind being treated like one.

Unknown Author

Day Two – Servant Example

Read John 13:12-15

In Biblical times, shoes and sandals were removed from the feet upon entering the home as a guest. It was customary for slaves to wash the guests' feet as they arrived before sitting to eat. This washing was necessary because they sat to eat a meal on a rug or mat with their feet tucked beneath them.

1. Although we don't practice foot washing today, contemplate this practice for a moment. How would you feel about having someone wash your feet? How would you feel about washing someone else's feet? Share your thoughts.

a. Why do you think what Jesus did was such a powerful example to the disciples?

b. What principle(s) is found in the washing of feet?

c. How might we put this principle into practice in our own lives?

2. In verse 14, Jesus refers to Himself as *Lord and Teacher*, (the KJV uses the word Master). Look these two words up in a Greek dictionary (blueletterbible.org) to help you gain a greater understanding of what they mean.

a. Now, explain what each of these titles should mean if He really is both of these in your life.

b. Read Luke 6:46. How does this verse give you insight to the word *Lord*?

3. What principle is being taught in John 13:17 and James 1:25?

a. Is it enough to just know what the Word says? Why or why not?

b. Even though the disciples were chosen by Jesus, followed Him, and enjoyed many intimate moments with Him, we read in John 13:2 that Judas Iscariot would betray Jesus. How can you relate the above principle to what we read about Judas in John 13:2?

4. According to the following scriptures, how are we to serve? What needs to be our motivation?

1 Samuel 12:24

Galatians 5:13c

Ephesians 6:5-7

5. It isn't always easy to follow Jesus' example of servanthood. Share a few reasons why we might be kept from doing do.

6. When we fail to offer loving service to others, we are in essence proclaiming that we are greater and more important than Jesus Himself. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.

7. Give some examples of how you can serve others. It could be for your family, your neighbors, your co-workers, or the body of Christ. List them below.

a. Choose one of these examples of service and go do it! Record what and how you will do this.

“Conduct often lags behind knowledge. Christ being Lord, as well as Master, demands that we shall not only know, but do.”

Alexander Bruce

Day Three – Servant Mindset

As we continue to study what it means to be a servant, it will be of benefit for us to examine ourselves in light of the subject of servanthood. Today, we will consider how important one's attitude and mind-set are in being a servant.

1. Sadly, we often have a high opinion of ourselves. What does Jesus teach in these scriptures that dispel this wrong thinking? Matthew 20:20-28 and Matthew 23:11-12.

a. Why is this difficult for us?

2. Though this idea of being a servant may sound unattractive, we have much to learn in the scriptures from those who are considered servants. Look up the following verses to see how Paul, James, Peter and Jude describe themselves and record it below. Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1, James 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1:1.

3. Exodus 21:1-6 gives a great description of what it means to be a bondservant. Record what you learn in verses 5-6 that gives you a better understanding of a bondservant.

a. How is this relevant to us today?

4. In Philippians 2:7b, Jesus is referred to as one who willingly chose the position of a bondservant. How is this related to what we studied in John 13:1-17?

5. Fill in the chart below by looking at the referenced verses. Record what the verses say about being a servant and how you can apply it to your life.

Verse	What it says about being a servant	How to apply this to your life
Matthew 20:26b		
Romans 12:1		
1 Corinthians 4:1-2		
1 Corinthians 9:19-22		
Colossians 3:22-24		
1 John 3:16-18		

6. There are challenges that we will face as we put ourselves in the position of a servant. Read the story that Jesus told the disciples in Luke 17:7-10. What do you learn from this story? How do you feel about it?

*“Go, labour on; spend and be spent—
Thy joy to do the Father’s will;
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?”
Horatius Bonar*

Day Four – Jesus-Servant

The people of Israel expected the Messiah to come and reign as King, but God's plan was for Jesus to come as the Servant of God. A servant's sole function is that of obedience, pleasing his master and completing the work that's been given to him/her. Jesus is the perfect pattern for all disciples to follow and for those who seek to live in a close, obedient relationship with Him.

1. To understand what the scriptures teach about Jesus as a servant, answer the following questions.

How does Jesus identify Himself?

Luke 22:27

What does Jesus say about His purpose?

Mark 10:45

John 4:34

John 17:4

2. You have studied what a servant is this week. Now read Philippians 2:5-8 and record how Jesus was the ultimate example of a servant.

a. How does what you've learned about Jesus as a Servant change how you view yourself as a servant?

b. How well are you following His example? Explain.

c. What changes might you need to make to better follow His example?

3. Jesus is the perfect model of the Master-Servant which He taught His disciples to follow. How is this type of teaching viewed by the world today?

4. As we complete this lesson on servant and master, it is helpful for us to see what important truth Jesus imparted to the disciples as He finished washing their feet in John 13:15-17. Record it here.

a. What does this mean to you?

5. End this lesson by writing a prayer to the Lord; share your thoughts about what He has done, the example He gave, and asking Him for help to apply all that you have learned.

“O Master, let me walk with Thee...With Thee, O Master, let me live.”
Dr. Charles H. Richards

LESSON FOUR SELF-SACRIFICE AND HUMILITY

We currently live in a society that knows little of the topics of this week's lesson: self-sacrifice and humility. In fact, quite the opposite is true. More than ever today people are all about themselves as evidenced in selfies, blogs, Facebook posts, Instagram pictures, road rage and so on. Even many Christians have moved away from embracing or living out these traits of self-sacrifice and humility. If we don't look different than the world around us, how can we expect to shine the light of Jesus and lead them to Christ?

Author L.E. Maxwell states: *"Self is the new and false center upon which man has fixed. He loves himself as nothing else under the sun."* That these topics of self-sacrifice and humility are not fully understood is evidenced by how few Christians today are living them out on a daily basis. Thus, it is vital for us to look into what Jesus Himself exemplified and taught the disciples concerning these two all-important Christian virtues.

Day One – Self-Sacrifice

1. When you hear or see the words, self-sacrifice, what immediately comes to mind?
 - a. Why don't we like the idea of self-sacrifice?
 - b. In what areas do you believe we are to show self-sacrifice?

2. As we consider this teaching on self-sacrifice, what important truths are found in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 that remind you to live a life of self-sacrifice?

3. Paul gives us the proper perspective on self-sacrifice. Look up Romans 12:1 and write the verse below.

a. What should be our motive for sacrifice according to this verse?

b. Write what you learn about how we are to become a sacrifice to God according to Romans 12:2.

4. It is only as we sacrifice ourselves to God that we are able to begin to live a life of self-sacrifice. According to these verses, how can we apply these characteristics in more practical ways?

Romans 12:10

Romans 12:16

Ephesians 5:1-2

1 John 3:16

a. Give some specific ways you can apply this in your daily life.

5. It has been said that sacrifice is in the Bible and the dictionary, but not in most people's hearts. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

6. Compare what Jesus says in Mark 10:31 to the thinking of society today. Write your thoughts.

"True Christian self-sacrifice signifies hardship and loss, not for its own sake but for Christ's sake."

Alexander Bruce

Day Two – Humility

1. In order to better understand a topic, it is good to start with learning its definition. Use a dictionary and define humility.

2. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul warned the believers that their attitudes were wrong, they were prideful, and lacked love for each other. How does Philippians 2:2-4 help you better understand the meaning of self-sacrifice and humility?

a. How would practicing these verses be useful to you every day?

b. If we truly practiced Philippians 2:3, what would be the result?

3. When we lack humility, it often shows that we are depending upon ourselves and not God. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24. What do you learn?

4. John Bunyan, author of Pilgrim's Progress, says that it is hard to get down into the valley of humiliation because the descent into it is steep and rugged, but it is very fruitful, fertile, and beautiful when once we get there. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

5. It would do us good to look at some examples in scripture of men who portrayed humility and self-sacrifice. Read about them in the following verses and record how they exemplified either one or both of these traits.

Moses

Exodus 32:30-32

Hebrews 11:24-28

Mary

Luke 1:26-38; 46-55

John the Baptist

John 1:19-27; 3:25-30

Paul

1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Galatians 6:14

6. Sadly, even when we are “doing good” and are well-intentioned, we may still show signs of thinking of ourselves and our own honor, dignity or reputation. We may struggle with self-importance and wanting recognition for what we have done or are doing. Why do you think this is true?

a. How can we overcome this?

“Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.”
C.S. Lewis

Day Three – Pride

One of the biggest battles we face is with our internal attitudes. These internal attitudes often display themselves outwardly in pride and selfishness. If these are not dealt with, they can begin to control us.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines pride as: inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, rank or elevation of office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve and often in contempt of others.

1. The opposite of humility is pride. Read the following verses to see what God says about pride.

Psalm 101:5

Proverbs 6:16-17

2. It is important for us to know and understand that these sins of pride and selfishness are not to be tolerated in our lives. How can you begin to overcome them according to these verses?

2 Corinthians 10:5

Philippians 4:8

1 Peter 5:5b-6

a. Which one of these verses might you need to apply in your life and/or situation today?

3. Most of the time we view things from our own perspective. Read Isaiah 64:6. How does God's view of things change your viewpoint on what you might consider to be the "best" of yourself? How does this verse show you that pride cannot have a place in your heart?

4. As even the disciples learned, pride and self-importance are things we all struggle with. We read of two powerful teachings of Jesus to His disciples concerning humility. As you read these passages of scripture, consider how Jesus addresses the topics of pride, self-importance and humility.

Read Matthew 18:1-5; 20:26-28.

a. What does Jesus say in answer to the disciples' question about who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Read Luke 18:9-14.

a. A word is repeated five times in verses 11-12, what is it?

b. Is there anything wrong with the attitude of the Pharisee? Explain.

What conclusion can you make from above passages of scripture?

5. When we allow pride and selfishness to exist in our lives, what is the result according to James 4:1-4?

a. According to James 4:7-10, how can we overcome these attitudes?

6. As mentioned previously, pride is the opposite of humility. Let's look at the warnings given about pride and the blessings that come to the humble.

a. What warnings are given in these verses about pride?

Proverbs 11:2a

Proverbs 13:10a

Proverbs 16:5a

Proverbs 16:18

b. What blessings or good things come to the humble?

Proverbs 11:2b

Proverbs 22:4

Proverbs 29:23b

Isaiah 66:2

7. As we've studied what the scriptures say about pride and humility, it would be good for us to take a moment to examine ourselves in light of them and write a prayer to the Lord.

*Let not pride swell my heart...
Help me to see myself in Thy sight...
Humble my heart before Thee...
Keep me humble, meek, lowly.
The Valley of Vision
Puritan Prayers and Devotions*

Day Four – God’s View

Can one really sacrifice himself fully to God as we’ve been studying? Isn’t this asking too much? Paul states in Romans 8:29 that we are to be conformed to the image of Christ and this includes the areas of self-sacrifice and humility. In this last day of study, we will take a final look at God’s view on the matter.

1. How is God described in these verses?

Isaiah 57:15a

Job 38-41

a. Why is it important for us to know the attributes of God?

When we have a right view of God, it should lead to a right view of ourselves.

2. Based on 1 Samuel 15:22-24 and Isaiah 57:15b, what condition of the heart is acceptable to God as it relates to the subject of our lesson?

a. What did you learn that is applicable to your life?

3. Once again Jesus offers us the example we are to follow. What does He specifically state about Himself in Matthew 11:29b?

4. Slowly and carefully read Philippians 2:5-8. Write down all you learn about Jesus that you need to practice regarding the principle of self-sacrifice and humility.

a. What stands out most to you from this passage?

b. What emotions/feelings do you experience as you read these verses? Why?

5. How does Matthew 22:37-39 help you to make self-sacrifice and humility a reality for your life?

6. As we close out our lesson today, take a look at where you stand on the *humility and self-sacrifice* scale by asking yourself the following questions. Share your thoughts.

- Have I been decreasing and letting Jesus increase in my life?
- Do I think less of myself and my position than I did a year ago?
- Am I seeking some position of dignity, prestige or authority?
- Am I offended because I'm not treated with some courtesy or attention that I think is due to me?

7. From the study of self-sacrifice and humility, record at least one thing the Lord has spoken to you and how you will apply it to your life. Review some of the verses if necessary.

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature; self-sacrifice the highest rule of grace."

Anonymous

LESSON FIVE A LIFE OF HOLINESS

Jesus' teachings were not always well received by those He lived among because they didn't conform to what they believed and practiced. The people of Jesus' day were often very religious, but He tried to get them to understand that it wasn't about being religious or outwardly doing the right thing, but rather, the Christian life is to be characterized by an inward holiness. This thinking is absolutely necessary if we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Author and Bible expositor, J. C. Ryle's significant statement about the need for holiness should cause each of us to examine our own lifestyle. He said, "Sound doctrine is useless if it is not accompanied by a holy life. It is worse than useless; it does positive harm."

Holiness in our lives is a joint process with God actively working in us as we responsibly put forth effort on our part. As you will see in our study, there is no easy way to holiness and yet, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, personal holiness must be our personal pursuit.

Day One – The Need for Holiness

1. Holiness is not a word commonly used today. In order to gain a right understanding of the word, write the definition for holy and/or holiness from Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary or from a Greek New Testament dictionary.

a. Based on this definition, do you see any evidence of holiness in your own life? Please explain.

2. What do you learn about holiness from 1 Peter 1:15-16?

3. In order for us to even begin to truly understand what it means to be holy, we must first see ourselves for who we really are. Record what you learn from Romans 3:10-18, 23.

a. The verses above are not for our condemnation, but rather that we might see our great need for a Savior. Read John 3:16-21 and state in your own words what you learn.

4. Record the beautiful promise found in 2 Corinthians 5:17 and write a prayer of thanksgiving unto Him!

We must understand that apart from God, it is impossible to live a life of holiness. It is only in accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior that the Holy Spirit comes and lives within us giving us the power to live a life pleasing to Him. *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* Titus 3:5

Day Two — Self Righteousness

There is a great difference between walking in holiness and being religious, therefore we need to understand why Jesus spoke about these things to His disciples.

Note: Ritual external cleansing to the Pharisees was a symbol of internal purity. It is important to note that many of these observances were traditions that the Pharisees and the elders had instituted themselves so that they might appear righteous before the eyes of the people.

1. Read Matthew 15:1-20 and answer the following questions.

a. What were the scribes and Pharisees accusing the disciples of according to verse 2?

b. Jesus is not timid when He responds to the Pharisees and scribes. Explain His response in verses 3-7.

c. What did Jesus say about them in verses 8 and 9?

2. Jesus gave a similar teaching in Mark 7:1-23. Please read it and answer the following questions.

a. What word is repeated in verses 2, 15, 18, 23?

b. Look at the 1828 Webster's Dictionary to find the definition of defile and record it below.

c. We may or may not be guilty of the things that the scribes and Pharisees were doing, but we can have the same mind-set that they did. How do the verses in Mark 7:14-20 help you to understand what Jesus was trying to convey to them?

d. According to verses 21-22, what specific things are mentioned that defile us?

3. What applications or lessons do you find for yourself in Mark 7:1-23?

4. We, like the Pharisees, might take offense at Jesus' teaching on this subject. Read the following scriptures and record the insight you gain of what Jesus taught about the deceitfulness of the heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10

Matthew 12:34b-35

5. What types of things might we practice today that could be compared to attempting to look holy or of being self-righteous?

a. Why do we do these things?

b. How does Micah 6:6-8 help you better understand why Jesus gave the rebuke that He did in Mark 7? What else does He desire from us?

6. Jesus is always so good at getting to the heart of the matter to teach us. Read Luke 18:9-14 and answer the following questions.

a. What type of people did Jesus address according to verse nine?

b. Compare the Pharisee and the tax collector. What do you learn about them?

Pharisee

Tax Collector

c. Record Jesus' conclusion about these men in verse 14.

d. How do the following scriptures help explain the error of the Pharisee's attitude?

Proverbs 16:2, 25

Proverbs 30:12

7. Those who are self-righteous are prideful and self-deceived. The Bible speaks strongly on both subjects. What do you glean from the scriptures below?

Proverbs 16:18

Galatians 6:3

"Pride must die in you or nothing of heaven can live in you." Andrew Murray

7. It is always important for us to not just read the teachings of Jesus, but to learn what application there is for us in it. As we conclude this day, read Proverbs 4:23. What application do you find for your life as it relates to today's study?

The scribes and Pharisees were guilty of trying to look holy and of doing things that outwardly made them appear religious and spiritual to others. Jesus' teachings focused on conversion of the heart rather than on external behaviors. Let us heed the exhortation and rebuke given by Jesus so that we aren't guilty of those same things in our own lives!

Day Three — Hypocrisy

1. When Jesus spoke, He was often blunt and to the point, as we read in Mark 7. Looking again at this chapter, what does Jesus specifically say that the Pharisees and scribes are guilty of in verse 6?

2. In our attempts to look holy, we may find ourselves guilty of hypocrisy as well. Using the 1828 Webster's dictionary, define hypocrisy.

3. Read Matthew 23:1-36 to see some examples of hypocrisy and the ugliness of it by answering the following questions.
 - a. What repeated phrase is said to the hypocrite by Jesus? Write what you think this means. (Hint: vs.13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29)

 - b. List the things the hypocrite is guilty of.

 - c. Take time to reflect on these verses and on your own life. Are there ways that you too might be guilty of hypocrisy, just like these Pharisees were? Record your thoughts below.

d. Carefully read verses 25-28 and record what important principle or truth Jesus is trying to teach them.

4. Based on what you studied so far, is there an attitude or action in your life that needs to change? Please explain.

5. There are wrong and right motives for desiring to be holy. As you read the following verses, write down what our **motivation** ought to be for holy living.

2 Corinthians 5:9

1 Peter 1:15-17

2 Peter 3:10-12

*“Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without
which no one will see the Lord.”
Hebrews 12:14*

Day Four – Practical Holiness

The subject of holiness was first spoken of by God Himself in the Old Testament in Leviticus 11:44, “...*you shall therefore consecrate yourselves and you shall be holy...*”.

God gave specific instructions to Moses and Aaron concerning holiness for their own lives, as well as instruction for the people. Unfortunately, it was after this that many other manmade rules and rituals developed and were practiced as they thought it would help them to be holy. This is exactly what Jesus was addressing in the verses that we previously studied.

Although we no longer are required to follow the Old Testament law, we still have instructions in the New Testament which we are to appropriate in our own lives as they concern the topic of holiness.

The process whereby we become holy is called sanctification. Sanctification is an ongoing process in which we become more and more like God as we grow in our understanding of His Word and our relationship with Him. In today’s lesson, we will focus on what practical holiness should look like.

1. In John 17:17, Jesus prayed to the Father and said, “*Sanctify them by Your truth.*” How does God’s Word *sanctify* you or help make you grow in holiness? Use the following verses to help you answer this question.

Psalm 119:9-11

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hebrews 4:12

The Word of God truly transforms us from the inside out. As we study and memorize it, we begin to understand what walking in holiness really means. Our desires change and what we once thought about, did or planned, thankfully is quite different. However, we will still struggle with unholy desires and deeds until the day we die.

2. Holy living should be our goal because it fits our true identity as people of God. We are to be dedicated to living a holy life. As the Holy Spirit does His inward spiritual work, we also have a responsibility and obligation to do our part in sanctification. What practical things do these verses teach us about how to do this?

2 Corinthians 7:1

Ephesians 4:22-32

Colossians 3:12-17

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7

a. Which one of the above verses spoke to you the most and why?

b. What is one thing you can do to apply this to your life?

As we are being sanctified (made holy) we are being separated from our old ways and brought closer to God so that we can become more like Him.

3. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23. How does this verse help you better understand how the sanctification process works and how it is to affect our lives?

4. Take a few moments to think about your life, what you do, what you look at, what you watch, what you read, etc. Record below the area(s) in your life that still need change.

a. What do you learn from the following verses that you can apply to your life in order to walk in holiness?

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 4:22-23

5. As we end this week's lesson, let's do a heart check! Jesus taught well that there is a need for us to pay attention to the cleansing of our hearts. True godliness will be far from us until we realize that to be near to God, we must have a pure heart. Psalm 51:10 says, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*"

Write a prayer to the Lord below expressing your heart. Include those areas that are yet impure in your life and ask Him to help you walk in holiness before Him.

*"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee."
Frances Ridley Havergal*

LESSON SIX THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

Jesus often taught using metaphors, allegories, and symbolism and everyday things that would have been familiar to the disciples. In John 15, He uses the ordinary grapevine, which was celebrated for its luxuriant growth and immense clusters of grapes.

Vines are unusual in that they adapt to their environment. They can acclimate and grow quickly in good surroundings alongside of homes, rocks and other structures. Grapevines have no use other than fruit bearing. They aren't ornamental, don't provide shade, aren't useful for building homes, or making furniture. They are not even valuable for firewood because they only burn for a short time.

In John 15:1-8, Jesus gives us a vital teaching regarding our relationship to Him. He uses the illustration of the vine to teach spiritual truths, truths which will reveal the real secret of the Christian life. Keep in mind that the theme within these verses is not salvation, but fruit bearing.

This lesson provides us with three very important principles. In Day One, we will take a general look at John 15:1-8, while in Days Two-Four, we will examine the three key principles that Jesus taught about of pruning, abiding and fruit bearing.

Day One – A Vital Union

Read John 15:1-8

It is likely that most of us have not grown grapes or any other fruit on a vine, so we may be unfamiliar with vineyards and what is necessary to grow them successfully. Let's look at what we can learn from the scriptures that will be helpful to better understand this teaching from Jesus.

1. How does Jesus refer to Himself and to God the Father in verse 1?

A vinedresser or husbandman is an agriculturist who is involved in the daily pruning and cultivation of grapevines. A good husbandman works the earth, cultivates his plants, and naturally expects them to produce fruit equal with the amount of effort he has invested in them. A vine must have a husbandman to plant it, watch over it and rejoice in its fruit.

a. As you reflect on God as the great Husbandman who lovingly cares and provides for you, how does this personally speak to you? What proof of His care do you see in your life?

b. In what way does Jesus refer to the disciples verse 5?

2. By nature, the vine is one plant with many branches. Though both are necessary, each have a different purpose. The vine stores the life, strength, and sap while the branch has nothing but that which the vine supplies it. Commentator and Bible teacher Andrew Murray said: “*A branch is simply a bit of wood, brought forth by the vine for the one purpose of serving it in bearing its fruit.*” Share your thoughts below about what this means to you.

3. In John 15, the phrase *in Me* appears in verses 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and denotes a fixed position. Why is this important?

4. For a vine or any plant to be healthy and survive, it must have roots that support and nourish it. How does Colossians 2:7a relate to this teaching about the vine, the branches and us?

5. Read the quote below and write down your thoughts as it relates to Jesus and you.

“I’m only a little branch, I live by a life not mine, for the sap that flows through my tendrils small is the life-blood of the Vine.” From Only a Branch by Freda Hanbury.

Day Two – Pruning

Read John 15:1-8

A good vineyard is noted for the grapes it produces. But good grapes don't just happen. The vine must be cultivated in order to be healthy and fruit bearing. Interestingly, the vine is a plant that needs extensive pruning and is dependent on the cultivation and training by the husbandman to produce a rich harvest.

1. During the cultivation process, there are two things which are done to the branch. According to John 15:2, how are the branches dealt with?

When a word is translated from the Greek to the English, some of the meaning can be lost or misunderstood. In the Greek language, the phrase “*takes away*” means to lift up, to raise up from the ground. The Greek word *purge* means to cleanse.

2. New branches have the tendency to trail down and grow along the ground where they get covered in dirt and eventually can become sick, useless, and non-fruit bearing. The vinedresser *takes away* or lifts up the branches to promote better growth. The pruning of grapevines is done by cutting off every superficial branch and those that are sickly or feeble. Pruning also cuts away the heavy branches and those that have disease or are infected with insects so that sap might freely flow into healthy branches.

a. According to verse 2c, what is the reason both processes are done?

b. In what way does this describe God as your vinedresser?

c. What areas are there that might not be as healthy as they should be in your life? Journal your thoughts.

3. As the husbandman goes about the purging and pruning process on the branch, we need to understand what a pruning process might look like in our own lives. This process may seem painful and senseless, but God has a purpose and is very intentional in the pruning within our lives. Read the following verses and write **why** the Lord does this in our lives.

Deuteronomy 8:2-17

Hebrews 12:5-8

a. List the intended **results** of God's pruning in our lives found in Hebrews 12:9-11.

4. We can think of pruning as the process by which spiritual growth will be enhanced in our lives. What things might need pruning so that we can grow spiritually, as fruitful and useful branches?

Psalm 19:12b-13

2 Corinthians 7:1

1 John 2:15-17

a. What area(s) in your life do you see that God might need to prune for you to be more fruitful?

5. The pruning process is necessary in our lives but can be painful at times. And it is not always just “bad things” that God will prune in our lives. While we will appreciate the results that pruning brings, during the process our attitude may not always be what it should be. How do you or have you responded in the past to the pruning process?

a. According to the following verses, what is to be our attitude and response in pruning?

Job 5:17

Revelation 3:19

b. Write a prayer below asking the Lord to help you with your attitude whenever discipline or pruning is needed in your life.

“Expect to be pruned if you are abiding in Christ. This is the only way to bear more fruit and glorify the Father. The abiding Christian is not discouraged when the Father prunes his life and cuts away something he considers dear, because he knows he will receive something far more precious in return.”

Warren Wiersbe from 5 Secrets of Living

Day Three — Abiding

Read John 15:1-8

1. In Day One we learned about the key repeated words *in Me*. We have another key word repeated seven times in verses 4-7. What is it? (Notice that in most instances it precedes the key phrase *in Me*)

Abide means to continue in one place, to remain; to have one's abode, to dwell. Please take note that when Jesus says abide, it is a command. It is not a suggestion or a request and, as such, we must take action to implement it into our lives.

2. The branch will have no life without staying attached to the vine. Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches. We understand from these verses in John 15:1-8 the necessity of abiding (remaining) in Him to have a full spiritual life and to be fruitful. Why do you think abiding is such a difficult thing for us?

a. What are some things that could keep you from abiding in Jesus?

b. What blessing or promise do you find in verse 7 that might motivate you to be more faithful to abide in Him?

c. On a practical level, what things can you do in order to be certain that you abide in Jesus?

3. Jesus says in John 15:5c “...for without Me you can do nothing.” What is the significance of this verse to you? (Keep in mind the text and subject of this lesson.) Refer to 2 Corinthians 3:5 for any additional insights.

4. The concept of abiding teaches us that we are to completely depend upon Christ. Look at the following verses to see how Jesus sets the example for us in the way that He depended upon His Father and write what you learn.

John 5:30, 6:38

John 10:37

John 12:49-50

John 14:31

a. How does Jesus’ example of abiding and obeying speak to you personally?

5. In John 15:6 we learn that if someone doesn't abide in Jesus as a branch, several things will result: he is cast out, is withered and is thrown into the fire. Cast out is indicative of loss of fellowship, withered indicates loss of vitality, while burned indicates loss of reward. If we don't abide in Christ, there are consequences. Share your thoughts on verse 6 as well as 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

6. The Old Testament contains a seldom read book, *Song of Solomon*. We read in chapter 2:15, "*Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes.*" Although this book speaks of the relationship of a couple, we can see the relevance of these words in our own lives as it relates to us as being the branches of the vine. The foxes were 'enemies' to the vineyard. What "little foxes" can you think of that would spoil the vine/branch relationship in our lives?

7. Abiding is essential for the disciple of Christ. In addition to the fruit bearing that results from this abiding in the Vine, what additional benefits do we have as we abide in the Vine?

John 8:31-32

1 John 2:28

8. When good vineyards are neglected or abandoned, the fruit will be poor or non-existent and the vine will become wild and uncultivated. God desires that we not live worthless and barren lives, but rather strong and vibrant ones. List some ways that you can develop the abiding relationship needed so that you are fruitful in your life.

9. As we end this day, what important truth is found in 1 John 2:28 that we need to remember?

“Abiding: it is the continuous act by which the Christian lays aside all he might draw from his own wisdom, strength and merit, to desire all from Christ by the inward aspiration of faith.”
Quote by Godet

Day Four – Fruitfulness

Evidence that we are abiding in the Vine will be that we are bearing fruit. The grapevine only bears a small amount of fruit the first few years after planting. As it matures it will produce more and more fruit. Likewise, Jesus, tells us in John 15 that there should be a progression of fruit bearing in our lives. (fruit, more fruit, much fruit)

1. Which area or stage of fruit bearing do you see yourself in? Explain.

2. One of the most familiar and beloved passages in scripture that speaks of fruit is found in Galatians 5:22-23. In the chart below, list the kind of fruit mentioned and then use a dictionary to give a specific description and meaning to each of these Spirit filled characteristics and record them.

Fruit	Definition

a. Which of these fruits would you like to see more evidence of in your life? List them below as you explain why.

b. Write a prayer asking the Holy Spirit to develop these in you.

3. As Jesus continues His discourse with the disciples in John 15, He gives several practical ways that bearing fruit can be seen. What are they?

John 15:9-10

John 15:11

John 15:12

4. Fruitfulness is not to be optional for us as disciples of Christ for it speaks of vitality in our spiritual lives. Examine the following scriptures and record what the fruit is and what it should look like in our lives. (Try to be specific.)

Romans 6:22

Philippians 1:11

Philippians 4:14-17

Colossians 1:10-12

Hebrews 13:15

2 Peter 1:5-7

“The one object of my being a branch, the one mark of my being a true branch, the one condition of my abiding and growing strong, is that I bear the fruit of the heavenly Vine for dying men to eat and live. With Christ as my Vine, and the Father as my Husbandman, I can indeed be a fruitful branch.”
Andrew Murray from The True Vine

5. We've seen how the branch is to be fruitful, but unfortunately, it can be unfruitful as well. What reasons are given in the following verses as to why we would be barren or unfruitful? Explain what they might mean in your life.

Mark 4:19

Ephesians 5:11a

Titus 3:14

1 John 2:9-11

a. Prayerfully and thoughtfully consider any changes that might need to be made in your life after reading the above verses and write a prayer below.

6. Even though Jesus was specifically teaching them about the vine and the branches, there are a number of Old Testament scriptures that speak to us about fruitfulness as well. Please read these scriptures and record the important principles found in them.

Psalms 1:1-3

Psalm 92:12-15

Jeremiah 17:7-8

7. Re-read John 15:8 and state what you have learned in this lesson about discipleship.

a. According to the above verse, do you think others consider you to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?

b. Ultimately, what is the result of our fruit bearing according to this verse?

8. In closing, what truth, command and promise are given by the Lord in John 15:16?

“Our Father, Thou comest seeking fruit. Teach us, we pray Thee, to realize how truly this is the one object of our existence, and of our union to Christ. Make it the one desire of our hearts to be branches, so filled with the Spirit of the Vine, as to bring forth fruit abundantly.”

Andrew Murray from The True Vine

LESSON SEVEN POWER

Power...the word can conjure up many things in our minds. The power of the wind as seen in a hurricane or a tornado; the power of the sea in a tidal wave or tsunami; the power of people in the business world; the power of those in government; the power of the effect of words spoken, and even the power of advertisements to influence our minds to purchase something. As Christians, we need power, but what kind of power and where do we get it?

Bible commentator R. Kent Hughes made a statement that we would do well to give credence to: *“When the Holy Spirit comes upon followers of Christ, the most unlikely people become fountains of power.”*

Jesus spent His last 3 ½ years ministering to the people of Israel and teaching the disciples in order to prepare them for the time that He would return to heaven by His ascension. As you can imagine, this seemed worrisome to the disciples, however, He told them He would not leave them orphans but would send the Holy Spirit to be their Teacher and Comforter. This week’s lesson will open our eyes to the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to influence the world for the kingdom of God and to help us to be effective Christians and disciples.

Day One – The Power of God

God is omnipotent, meaning that He is all powerful, having unlimited authority. God’s power is part of His character. In order to really understand the power of the Holy Spirit in our *own* lives, we need to first look at the almighty power of God and all that it entails.

1. Look up the following scriptures and record what you learn about God’s power.

Genesis 1:1

Jeremiah 32:27

Luke 6:19

Romans 1:20

Ephesians 1:19-20

a. Which of these verses speaks to you the most and why?

2. God has many names in the Scriptures. Some are personal names while others are descriptive of His nature or His character. One of those names is El Shaddai. Look this up in a Hebrew dictionary or Smith's Bible Dictionary (you can find these on blueletterbible.com) and write what you learn.

a. How does this relate to Jesus from the following verses?

Isaiah 9:6

Revelation 1:8

3. It is important for us to understand that there are no limits to God's power. Write what you learn about God and what you learn about yourself from the following verses.

Isaiah 40:26

Isaiah 40:28-30

a. At times, are you guilty of not seeing God as you ought? Is He seemingly small in your eyes? Do you find yourself comparing Him to man's limited power and ability instead of His almighty power? Please explain your answer.

b. Instead, what should our response be to our omnipotent God? Job 5:8-9

4. Read Psalm 62:11 and Ephesians 3:20-21. Based on what you learned from all the verses in this day as well as these verses, what conclusions can you make concerning God's power in your life? How does what you've learned affect you personally?

"God's power is like Himself: infinite, eternal, incomprehensible; it can neither be checked, restrained, nor frustrated by the creature."

Stephen Charnock

Day Two – The Power of the Holy Spirit

As we learned in a previous lesson, Jesus said, “*without Me, you can do nothing*”. At times we may feel inadequate in what He asks of us as it may seem impossible. So, how then are we to effectively live out our lives as a disciple? Jesus knew we would need help in order to live as such, so He promised to supply us with His power.

1. Jesus spoke of the promise of the Father in Luke 24:49, speaking of the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 1:4-8 to further your understanding of this promise of the Father given to the disciples. What do you learn?

The disciples were directed to “tarry” until the promise of the Holy Spirit came, because they needed to learn, as do we, that we can’t do anything without the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus was assuring the disciples that they would have power given by the Holy Spirit to do His work after He was gone. But there is much more to know and understand about who the Holy Spirit is and what He does in the life of a disciple. Carefully read the following verses and record His role.

John 14:16-17

John 16:13-15

Romans 8:15-16

Romans 8:26-27

1 Corinthians 2:12-13

a. Which of the above verses speaks to you the most and why?

3. The Holy Spirit is essential in our lives to better equip us to be more effective and diligent as His disciples. God gives us giftings which also come through the power of the Holy Spirit. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 and write what you learn.

a. List the gifts of the Spirit given in the below verses.

Romans 12:6-8

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

b. Read Ephesians 4:11-16 and explain the purpose of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

c. According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, the Holy Spirit has given gifts to every individual believer. As you review the above gifts, record what you think your gift(s) is. Write a prayer asking God to show you how you can use your gift. If you don't know what your gift is, then use the space below to pray and ask God to reveal your gift to you.

4. 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that we are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, but can the power or the work of the Holy Spirit be hindered in our lives? Look up the following verses to answer how this could happen.

Galatians 5:17

Ephesians 4:30

1 Thessalonians 5:19

1 Timothy 6:9-10

1 Peter 5:5c

“The Holy Spirit’s power cannot be harnessed. His power cannot be used to accomplish anything other than the Father’s will. He is not a candy dispenser. He is not a vending machine. He is not a genie waiting for someone to rub His lamp the right way. He is holy God.”

Charles Stanley from The Wonderful Spirit Filled Life

Day Three – The Power for the Mission

Some of Jesus' last words to His disciples are found in Luke 24:46-49. Here we find Jesus giving instructions to His disciples for what He says is to be their mission as He would be returning to the Father. Jesus summarizes this mission in two specific ways: they were to preach repentance and remission of sin, and they were to be witnesses of Him. He instructed the disciples to wait to be endued with power from on high, for they would not be able to accomplish this work without it. As His disciples, we too have the same mission and require the same power.

If our mission is to preach repentance and remission of sins, we need to be sure we understand what that means. Let's take a brief look at this before we study about the power we have from the Holy Spirit for this mission.

1. Jesus began His ministry by preaching that the people needed to repent. Look up the word repentance and write what it means. Use a Greek dictionary or the Webster's 1828 dictionary, if possible.

2. Why is repentance necessary?

Romans 3:10-12

Romans 3:23

3. Remission is not a word that we commonly use today. It means dismissal, or release from debt, and is used of the forgiveness of sins. How do the below scriptures help to enlighten your understanding of remission and the necessity of it?

Matthew 26:28

Acts 10:43

Romans 3:25-26

Hebrews 9:22

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” We deserve death as the punishment for our sins, but Jesus took the judgment for our sins upon Himself and He suspended the due punishment by His sacrifice that we might receive forgiveness and remission of our sins. No charge can be brought against the believer for God has declared him righteous.

Jesus knew that the disciples and we as His future disciples would need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the preaching of repentance and to be an effective witness of Him. Let’s examine what that looks like.

4. The fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made to the disciples of the Holy Spirit came after He ascended, which is recorded in Acts 2. Read this chapter and write all you learn about the extraordinary effect of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

5. It is interesting to note that the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the Old Testament as well. What do you learn when you read Exodus 35:30-35?

6. The following Scriptures in the New Testament are examples of people who were filled with the Holy Spirit. What do you learn about them and what did they do?

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 7:54-60

Acts 9:10-22

7. The Spirit-powered life can and should belong to every disciple. In Ephesians 5:18 Paul says, “*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.*” This is a command for us today concerning the Holy Spirit. Notice the comparison being made in this verse and explain what you think this means.

8. We, no doubt, have learned that we are weak and need the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. What does the effect of the power of the Holy Spirit look like in our life according to the below verses?

Romans 8:9-11

Galatians 5:16

Ephesians 3:16-19

“The Spirit-filled life is a life of dependency on and sensitivity to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.”
Charles Stanley

Day Four – The Power in the Witness

1. Acts 1:8 “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” This verse records the last words spoken by Jesus before ascending to heaven. How is this applicable to you?

2. A witness is one who declares with confidence what he has seen, heard or knows. To be an effective witness of Christ we must ‘walk the talk’. Read the following verses and share what you learn about Paul and why he was such a powerful witness.

Acts 16:24-32

1 Corinthians 9:19, 22b

Philippians 1:12-14

Philippians 3:7-16

3. Our witness of Christ can be through the words that we use to share about Him but more importantly, the witness of how we live our lives. David Livingston was a missionary to Central Africa. Sir Henry Stanley said this about him after spending time with him: *“If I had been with him any longer, I would have been compelled to be a Christian and he never spoke to me about it at all.”* Share your thoughts on the meaning of this quote.

4. What type(s) of things hinder you from being a living witness?

5. One would think that in sharing the gospel with others there would always be a positive outcome or response. This may or may not be true. Look up the following verses and record the positive and negative results which can occur when we share the gospel and live our lives as bold witnesses for Christ.

Matthew 5:10-11

Luke 6:22-23

1 Peter 4:14-16

6. We are called to be His witnesses to others. How can the following verses help you to be confident in fulfilling this mission that Christ has given you?

Joshua 1:9

John 14:26

Acts 4:31

Ephesians 3:20-21

7. As individuals, as well as the body of Christ (the church), we are to be witnesses of Christ to those around us and to the ends of the earth. Would you say that the church today is an effective witness of Christ to the world? Explain.

a. What needs to change for this to be true?

8. While we are called to be faithful witnesses for Christ, we should never take credit for any who come to salvation. What do these verses say about our role versus God's role in this?

Acts 2:47b

1 Corinthians 3:5-7

9. How are we to be true witnesses for Christ?

Matthew 5:14-16

Philippians 2:15

a. Do you feel like your life shines as a light to the world? On a scale of 1-10, rate your witness for Jesus.

10. As we conclude this lesson on the power of the Holy Spirit what have you learned that you will apply to your life? Share the verse or passage that spoke to you the most.

“The Holy Spirit manifests His power in whatever way He deems necessary to enable believers to be effective witnesses for Christ.”

Charles Stanley

LESSON EIGHT PRAYER

Throughout the gospels we find Jesus walking, talking, eating and living life with His disciples, but always with an eye to teaching them and equipping them. Jesus' disciples came from diverse backgrounds, which meant that in order for them to minister with one heart and mind, they were going to need instruction in the ways of His kingdom. One of those essential lessons concerned the subject of prayer.

Prayer is a necessity of our spiritual life, and in its simplest form, it is candidly and sincerely talking to God. This expression of our personal relationship with the Lord should be at the heart of every disciple of Christ. As you begin this week's lesson, ask the Lord to deepen your understanding of prayer so that you might communicate with Him in a more intimate way.

Day One – The Heart of Prayer

Read Matthew 6:5-8

1. We might think that prayer is simple and needs no instructions or warnings, but we learn otherwise from Jesus as we see in Matthew 6 verses 5 and 7. Jesus taught that both method and motive are important when we pray. He begins by negatively describing the prayer of two types of people in these verses. What does He call them?

a. How does He describe their methods of praying?

b. What is wrong with their prayers?

2. Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 gives a warning concerning when we gather to pray with others. What does it say?

a. How does this relate to what Jesus stated in Matthew 6:7?

3. In Matthew 6:6, how does Jesus describe what we are to do when we pray?

a. In what ways can you personally apply His admonition?

4. When you see the word “therefore” in scripture it always gives a conclusion based on previous verses. What is the conclusion given in Matthew 6:8?

a. What does it reveal about God?

b. How does this change your thinking about prayer?

5. From Romans 8:26-27 we learn that we can have weaknesses when it comes to prayer, but we can also have confidence in prayer, even when we don't know what to pray or how to articulate our needs. Share what you learn from these verses.

a. Why is this comforting?

"In prayer, it is better to have a heart without words, than words without heart."

John Bunyan

Day Two – The How To’s of Prayer

Read Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1

In Matthew 6, we’ll take a brief, but careful look at Jesus’ model for prayer, which is often referred to as the Lord’s Prayer. You may be familiar with its words, but like other well-known things in our lives, we may miss its meaning. Truly, if the disciples needed instruction, so do we!

1. What request do they make of Jesus in Luke 11:1?

a. The disciples made this request after observing Jesus in prayer; they saw something in His prayer that led them to want to pray like He did. Sometimes we may find it difficult to pray or desire to pray differently than we do. Take a moment to write your own request below as you prepare to study Jesus’ instruction.

In Matthew 6:9, Jesus said, “*In this manner, therefore, pray.*” This doesn’t mean to pray only using these words, but to pray *in this way*, to pray *like this*.

2. Matthew 6:9 shows us how to begin our prayers. What does it say?

a. Why do you think it is important for us to begin this way?

3. The word “hallowed” means to make holy, to sanctify. The following verses give us some reasons why we should bless His name as we start praying. Record what you learn.

Psalm 8:1

Psalm 72:17-19

Luke 1:49

Acts 4:12

Philippians 2:9-11

a. Which of these spoke to you personally? Why?

4. What was Jesus' main point and instruction in Matthew 6:10?

a. Praying for God's will to be done, especially in difficult situations, can be challenging, but nevertheless is important. Is this how you usually pray? Explain.

5. Prayer is not a matter of manipulating God, but of expressing our requests and submitting to His will in them. Jesus gives us a perfect example of how to pray in this manner. How does Matthew 26:39-42 help you adopt a right attitude and perspective so that you too can pray according to His will?

We have seen Jesus emphasize the importance of beginning our prayers with worship and acknowledgement of God; next we move to our requests.

6. Matthew 6:11 is brief and to the point. What does it say and what does it imply?

7. What do you learn from the following verses that illuminate Matthew 6:11?

Psalm 23:1

Proverbs 30:8b-9

Philippians 4:19

a. Are you daily satisfied with how God supplies your needs? Explain.

b. How could actively cultivating these attitudes change your prayer life?

Day Three — Effective Prayer

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. Prayer goes beyond just asking for our needs to be met; it touches every area of our life, both past and present. Matthew 6:12 teaches that our relationship with others is connected to our requests. What does it say?

a. Jesus gives further explanation of this in verses 14-15. What important truth do you learn?

b. Read Matthew 18:21-22 and share your thoughts on forgiveness below.

c. Why do Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 say this is necessary?

2. Lack of forgiveness is a sin. How does Isaiah 59:1-2 say this will affect your prayers?

3. Jesus introduces another aspect of our life that needs to be covered by prayer. Matthew 6:13 says, “*And do not lead us into temptation...*” We know that God does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13) but we often find ourselves being tempted. Why do think it’s important to include this in our prayers?

4. What do you learn about temptation from Galatians 5:17 and James 1:13-15?

a. What comforting promise does 2 Peter 2:9a give to believers?

b. List what methods are found in these scriptures to help us combat and overcome temptation.

Matthew 26:41

2 Corinthians 10:5

5. God does not tempt anyone, but the “evil one” does. 1 Peter 5:8 uses a vivid word picture to describe his method of attack. What do you learn about him?

6. Peter admonishes us to be sober and vigilant in 1 Peter 5:8. Read the definitions of the words sober and vigilant and then answer the question below.

Sober: to be self-disciplined, to think rationally.

Vigilant: to be alert to pitfalls; to take steps to not stumble.

- a. How can you combine Peter's admonishment to be sober and vigilant in prayer to effectively ward off any temptations that might come your way?

7. In each of our lives and in varying degrees, there are three issues that can be problems for us: our personal need for forgiveness, unforgiveness toward others and temptation. Sometimes they flood in all at the same time! End today's lesson by bringing these and any other concerns before the Lord. Journal your prayer below.

Day Four – Active Prayer Life

1. As Jesus walked along roads and through villages, it's easy to imagine Him in free-flowing conversations with His disciples as He instructed and taught them, answering their questions. While we can't physically speak with Him the way they did, He gave us His Word to answer our questions regarding the topic of prayer. Record what you learn below.

When should I pray?

Psalm 55:17

How often should I pray?

Ephesians 6:18

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Will God hear my prayer?

Psalm 66:19-20

Psalm 138:3

How many times should I pray for a particular need/request?

Luke 18:1-8a

What should I pray about?

Philippians 4:6

Does God always answer prayer?

Psalm 86:7

Will God always answer my prayer according to what I ask?

2 Corinthians 12:8-9a

James 4:3

1 John 5:14

- a. What verse spoke to you the most on the topic of prayer?

It's been said that God answers prayers in one of three ways. He says, "Yes", and you receive what you are asking. He says, "No", and you must accept that and move on. Or He will say, "Not yet", and you learn to be patient and wait.

2. Throughout the Gospels, we see that prayer was a vital part of every aspect of Christ's relationship with the Father. This close connection between the two of them developed through the amount of time that Jesus spent in prayer. Take some time now to reflect on your own personal prayer life and evaluate the time that you spend sharing and talking with your Heavenly Father. Journal your thoughts below.

a. As you consider yourself, what things hinder you from following Jesus' example of time well spent in prayer?

b. What will you do to change at least one of the things you listed so that you will have more opportunity to pray?

3. Choose one of the verses about prayer from this lesson and try to memorize it. Start by writing it here.

Jesus provided a model in Matthew 6, but it was only supposed to be a starting point for heartfelt conversations between Him and His people. To begin your time in prayer with the Lord, you might try what many people enjoy using, the **ACTS** acronym: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication. This is a tool that can help keep you focused on what's most important, as putting Him first is key.

Adoration sets our hearts aright as we extol the attributes of God. Adoration isn't giving Him thanks for what He has done as that comes later, but it's recognizing and praising Him for Who He is as the Bible reveals Him to be. Example: Creator, LORD of Hosts, Alpha and Omega, Redeemer, Savior, Friend and so on!

Confession is where we humbly ask for forgiveness for any attitudes, actions or words that we know are wrong or hurtful. This is a good time to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any hidden or unknown sin that needs to be repented of.

It is now in a time of **Thanksgiving** that we thank God for all He has done. This is when we can thank Him for the many blessings He has given us from dying on the cross, the externals of life such as the food we eat and the clothes we wear. In other words, thank Him for everything and anything!

Now our hearts are ready for **Supplication** because we have put Him first in our time of prayer. This is when we ask God to help us personally in our own issues at hand as well as interceding on the behalf of others.

Hint: Spend some time reading the Word before praying and then pray any verses that are appropriate. It will add strength and power to your prayer time.

The best way to learn to pray is to just start praying! God desires so much to hear from us and for us to have a close relationship with Him. This happens when we make the spiritual discipline of prayer a priority every day. Use what you have learned throughout this lesson and spend time worshiping, thanking, and speaking to your Heavenly Father.

“In public and private, in sanctuary and home, may my life be steeped in prayer, filled with the spirit of grace and supplication, each prayer perfumed with the incense of atoning blood.”

Excerpt from The Valley of Vision; Puritan Prayers and Devotions

Day 5

Good work! You've completed this study on what it is looks like to be a disciple of Jesus. This week we will add an additional day to our study for a time of reflection and review on what we've learned.

1. At the beginning of this study you were asked to reflect on your life to see whether you or others would be able to consider you a disciple. Now that the study has concluded, how would you answer that question? What have you learned that might change your answer?

2. Look back briefly at the lessons we've studied. Is there a specific one that the Holy Spirit has spoken to you about? If so, share it below.

3. Discipleship is a choice. Living a life dedicated to following Christ is what we should desire. Daniel 5:27 says, "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting." In his book *Discipleship The Road Less Taken*, Greg Laurie asks these questions concerning this verse: If our life was weighed in the balances what would God say? Would He find a life of substance, a life dedicated to following Christ? Or would He find a life that has been wasted in empty pursuits? Share your thoughts.

4. Alan Redpath, a British evangelist, pastor and author stated that a friend of his made a comment that forever changed his life. He said, “It is possible to have a saved soul and a wasted life.” Explain your understanding of that statement. Do you see yourself at all in that?

5. Have you come to the place in your life of total dependence and total surrender to God, thus making it possible for the Holy Spirit to maximize His work in your life for you to be a disciple of Christ? Share your thoughts.

6. You might be thinking that being a disciple is just too hard and that you cannot do it. Yes, it is true, following Jesus as His disciple can be challenging. However, what encouragement do you find in Luke 18:27 that will help you?

One final thought about being a disciple. In the culture of Jesus’ day, a disciple’s goal was to gain knowledge from his teacher but also to become more like him in character. The teacher would show through their exemplary life how to live it out. The disciple was expected to leave his family and live with the teacher twenty-four

hours a day, walking with him from town to town, working, eating and studying with him. He would also be the teacher's servant, to service his needs and to submit to his authority. Likewise, as a Christian, we are to live out the scriptures, to serve Christ and submit to His authority and to become more like Him in character. While we can't literally walk with Him, work with Him, and eat with Him, He is our model and Teacher and we are His servants. He has given us clear instructions in His Word about being His disciple that we might live this way in our everyday walk. Matthew 28:19a says "*go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*". We can't expect to make disciples of others if we aren't a disciple ourselves.

7. Make a commitment today and write a prayer asking for God's help to truly live as a disciple of Christ.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Thessalonians 5:23

