

THE WORK WITHIN

Discover God's Truth in You

**13 Empowering Lessons for Individual
or Group Bible Study**

Carl E. Carey, Ph.D.

The Work Within

©2013 Carl Carey

Unless otherwise noted, the Scriptures quoted are from The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV).

All Rights Reserved: No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the author.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publishing Data

Bible Study 2. Christian Commitment 3. Bible—Examination

BS 587 H 65 C4 2013

320.1Ca

ISBN: 978-0-9821207-4-3

Additional copies of this book and other resources are available at:
www.TheWorkWithin.com

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published in the United States of America

*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more
than all we ask or imagine, according to
His power that is at work within us*

— Ephesians 3:20 (NIV)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	iii
Author's Note: A Message Before You Begin	vii
Bible Study Tips for Individuals and Groups.....	ix
Certificate of Commitment.....	xii
Lesson One: The Greatest Test of Your Life	1
Lesson Two: The Definition of Love	12
Lesson Three: Have Faith.....	21
Lesson Four: I Surrender All	31
Lesson Five: Cry Out to the Lord	41
Lesson Six: Chasing After the Wind.....	52
Lesson Seven: Defeating The Evil Adversary	64
Lesson Eight: The Sin Addiction.....	74
Lesson Nine: Surviving the Knockout Punch.....	84
Lesson Ten: Doing a Great Work	95
Lesson Eleven: The Forgiveness Factor	105
Lesson Twelve: What Must I Do to Be Saved?.....	115
Lesson Thirteen: Set Apart.....	126
Acknowledgements.....	136

AUTHOR'S NOTE

A Message Before You Begin

On November 10, 2003, I was called to be a life-long servant of God. I must admit that while I attended church regularly, I never envisioned myself teaching His Word on a permanent basis. I have learned that even when it's not our plan, **God's plan is always perfect.**

I accepted the Lord's call and embarked upon a new journey, which eventually led me to write the Bible lessons included in this book. In the midst of my own study of God's Word, I discovered how relevant it was to the issues I was facing in my life. Not only do I find great value and joy in studying His Word, I have found it an added blessing to be able to guide others in their discovery of its power. My hope is that this companion guide in conjunction with your personal Bible will help you explore His Truth in ways that will empower your life.

I have learned that the best gift that we can give each other is the Word of God. It is in that spirit that I offer this book to you. God has done amazing things in my life. I present this work to Him as an expression of my gratitude.

The lessons in this book require that you use a Bible. If you don't have access to a traditional Bible, there are online versions of God's Word that are available as well. In crafting these lessons, I used the *New International Version*. You may utilize the version of His Word that you prefer. While the language is slightly different, the meaning is virtually the same.

I encourage you to truly engage in **your Work**. In each lesson, you will find scripture readings, questions to answer, and opportunities for reflection. **This is your journey.** Own and embrace it! My role is simply to serve as your guide. I will walk you through God's Word and at each stop, you will discover the messages that He has waiting just for you. At the end of this adventure, you will be spiritually enlightened and renewed. I hope that when you leave **this Work**, that you will continue to use the Word of God to direct your path for the rest of your life. Let us begin our **Work from within.**

BIBLE STUDY TIPS

for Individuals and Groups

- **PREPARE YOURSELF FOR BIBLE STUDY.** Prior to beginning each lesson, I want you to think about your life and what you desire to gain from your study of God's Word. If studying with a group, work through parts of the lesson before coming to class. This will help you get more out of the study and prepare you to contribute to the discussion.
- **BE PRESENT IN MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT.** Bible study should be done in a quiet, protected zone free of distractions. Put the cares of your life to the side for a time and enjoy what God has in store for you in His Word.
- **USE THIS BOOK AS YOUR PERSONAL JOURNAL.** Record your thoughts as you work through the lessons. You will be able to look back someday and see where you were in your life. Writing can be a form of therapy. Reminisce, explore, and brainstorm your way to a better, wiser you.
- **SECTIONS OF EACH BIBLE LESSON INCLUDE:**

Introduction. In a few short paragraphs, I introduce each lesson to you. Those who are studying in groups should select someone to read this section aloud.

Meditation Moment. Take a moment to read a passage of Scripture in silence. You will be amazed at how a quiet room prepares your heart for Bible study. If you are part of a group, this may be done on your own just before class officially begins, or it may be the first activity of the study. Soak in the goodness of God's Word. Use the questions asked of you to center yourself for the lesson.

Open the study with a prayer. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.

Lesson Launch! Read the assigned passages. If studying with a group, the leader or volunteers should read the passages aloud. Think about the topic of the study and allow the Word of God to speak to you.

Wisdom Within the Word. Use your insight and personal experiences to help you answer the questions that are posed. Your ability to connect the dots between Scripture and your life will be enhanced through this introspective process. Group leaders should decide in advance of the meeting which questions will be used for discussion.

Scripture in Review. In this section, I summarize the major points of the assigned passages of Scripture.

Empowerment Exercise. Participate in a brief activity designed to show the relevance of the Word of God to your life. Groups may choose to highlight this section in class or assign it as homework.

Lesson Learned. Throughout each lesson, I highlight points to take away and hold onto during your life-long Christian journey.

Character Study. Examine the lives of selected men and women in the Bible and learn from their experiences as they relate to the topic of the study. Groups should read the assigned passages aloud and share thoughts during their discussions.

Character Questions. Use your insight and experiences to answer the character building questions in this section. Group leaders should decide in advance of the meeting which questions will be used for discussion.

Personal Reflection. Reflect on the Word and use your life experiences to gain a deeper knowledge of yourself. Group leaders may choose to highlight this section during class or assign it as homework.

Revelations. Read the passage and discover the Revelations you receive from God's Word. Group leaders may choose to ask volunteers to read selected passages and share what God has revealed to them.

Working Within. At the end of your study, complete the sentences or paragraphs that I have started for you. This section gives you the opportunity to journal your truth as you have discovered or confirmed it during the lesson. Group leaders may choose to end the class by reading the first part of the sentence and asking volunteers to complete the sentence or statement aloud.

Close the study with a prayer. Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.

- **APPLY THE WORD TO YOUR LIFE.** God tells us that He wants us to not only hear the Word, but to do what it says (James 1:22). Bible study is effective and useful when we use the truths we have discovered to guide us in our everyday lives.

CERTIFICATE OF COMMITMENT

God created His Word as a guide for living life on Earth in a way that pleases Him. In the Bible, He also provided a road map for my journey to salvation.

I want to please God. I want to make heaven my eternal home.

I commit myself to studying His Word and engaging in this series of 13 Bible lessons.

As I begin my work, I open myself to the incomparable power of God's Word.

I ask the Lord to be my helper as I utilize His Truth as my source of enlightenment, encouragement, and empowerment.

I know that if I put in the work, my life will change for the better.

Your Signature

Your Supporter

Carl E. Carey, Jr.

Your Guide

LESSON ONE

The Greatest Test of Your Life

*To him who overcomes and does My will to the end, I
will give authority over the nations*

— (Revelation 2:26 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Life is a gift from God. It is an incredible blessing to be chosen for the opportunity to inhabit the Earth that He created. God chose *you* to experience Him. Stand at the shore of the ocean and be amazed. Look at the serenity of the clouds. Listen to the birds singing in perfect harmony. God is amazing! His perfect Creation is a product of His supreme power and intense love for mankind.

When God created the Earth, He prepared a place for His children who were soon to be born. He gave us an unlimited supply of food to eat, water to drink, and air to breathe. He gave us the sun to warm us. He sent the moon and the stars to give us light in the night. When everything was just right, He then created man and woman to enjoy His great masterpiece.

While our time on Earth may seem significant to us, in reality this life is a mere *passageway* to where our real life begins. The Lord has designed an unimaginable place that is sure to allow us to experience eternal love, peace, joy, and beauty. *Why can't we just go there now?*

Believe it or not, as each day passes, you are getting closer to your opportunity to call heaven your permanent home. As you make your way to be with God, there are decisions you will face, sacrifices you must make, and challenges you have to undertake. Unfortunately, not everyone will survive the test of moving through the tunnel, as required, to complete the journey to heaven. Some will lose their way,

some will give up, and some will be lured away from the right path. God gives everyone the opportunity to be with Him, but only those who pass the test will receive eternal life.

I believe that there is biblical evidence that strongly supports the idea that God gives us tests. He tests our hearts. He tests our loyalty to Him. He watches to see how well we respond to the situations He allows us to experience. He observes. He evaluates. He grades. He is looking for those children who are His.

Are you dealing with something right now that could be a test? How are you responding? What grade will God give you?

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read Revelation 2:7

The Spirit comes from God and the Spirit is God. Those who overcome the world are promised everlasting life in the paradise we know as heaven.

Try to envision heaven.

- What is that world like?
- What do you see, hear, and feel?
- How is it different than our world today?
- What would you be willing to sacrifice to make heaven your eternal home?
- What do you believe each of us must *overcome* in order to get to heaven? Be as specific as you can.
- You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*

LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*






GOD TESTS ADAM AND EVE



Read Genesis 2: 7-8, 15-18, 21-25

Read Genesis 3: 1-13

Scripture in Review:

-  God creates man and woman.
-  He gives man and woman a buffet of food items to enjoy in Eden. God has supplied their every need.
-  Adam and Eve may eat from any tree, except the one in the middle of the garden.
-  The serpent lies to Eve and entices her to partake of the fruit.
-  Man and woman, now one flesh, disobey God and eat from the forbidden tree.

WISDOM WITHIN THE WORD: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

God created the Garden of Eden. It is His garden and He can have anything that He wants in His garden. He also can remove anything that He doesn't want in His garden. God decides that the forbidden tree should stay.

- Why is the forbidden tree in God's garden? What is its' purpose?

- What do you believe God was able to observe in the character of Adam and Eve as they dealt with this test?
-
-

- The serpent was successful in convincing Eve to sin against God. What tactics did he use? Why do you believe his tactics were effective?
-
-

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Our life tests are designed to show God our allegiance to Him. The reward for successfully passing the tests we must endure is eternal life with the Lord.*

Adam and Eve failed God's test of obedience. What do you think you would have done if you were faced with the same test in the Garden of Eden?

Empowerment Exercise:

- Consider the tests of obedience you have endured in your life.
 - How have you performed on the obedience tests that God has allowed you to experience?
 - What tactics has the enemy used to entice you to sin?
 - What can you do to improve your performance in the future?
-
-

- **Lesson Learned:** *The enemy lies to us in an attempt to influence our thoughts and actions.*

CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

JOB UNDER ATTACK














Read Job 1: 1-3, 6-22

Read Job 2: 1-13

Read Job 42: 10-17

Scripture in Review:

-  Job has it all. He has a good relationship with the Lord. He has a family. He has wealth and honor.
-  In an instant, Job loses everything except his relationship with God.
-  Job acknowledges that all of his blessings were given to him by the Lord. Despite his great loss, Job praises God.
-  Satan does not succeed at turning Job against God.
-  God is confident in Job's ability to withstand Satan's assault.
-  God nominates Job for a second test.
-  Satan tortures Job by attacking his body.
-  Job is in a physical and emotional state of utter misery.
-  Satan uses Job's wife to accomplish his goal of getting Job to dishonor God.
-  Job maintains his loyalty to God.
-  After enduring a sustained attack by the enemy, God blesses Job with more than he had before.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Can you relate to Job and what he is going through?

- Who or what did you lose? How did you feel?
- How did you react or respond?

What can we learn from the way Job responded to his personal trial that can help us as we face our own challenges?

Satan was actively looking for someone to wreak havoc upon. Why did God nominate Job, in particular, to be tested? What message do you see here?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Godly people will face many trials.*

As he mercilessly attacked Job, what was Satan's goal? What, specifically, did he want to accomplish?

Following his painful ordeal, Job is blessed by God for maintaining his loyalty. What is the message for us? What does the happy ending to Job's story tell you about the character of God?

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

- How is Satan attacking you?
- What is he attempting to accomplish?
- What can you do to make sure he doesn't succeed?

Job has had a sequence of horrific events happen to him in a short amount of time.

- Have you ever felt a sudden and sustained attack by the enemy?
- How did you deal with those situations?
- What was God able to observe about your character during your test?
- What was He able to observe about your relationship with Him?
- What did you learn from the experience?

Compare and contrast Job 1: 21-22 with Job 30: 20-21.

- As his suffering continues, how does Job's attitude towards God change?
- Can you relate to Job's frustration?
- Have you ever questioned God? What were the circumstances? What did you learn during that time period in your life?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *The devil doesn't give up easily. He will stop at nothing to interfere with your relationship with God.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*



➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Ultimately, the job of the enemy is to stop you from getting to heaven.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of our personal trials and tests in life. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

What I now accept about life is...

The test I am facing now is...

The way God expects me to respond is to...

I know for sure that I...

God allows me to be tested because...

I can be better prepared for future life tests if I...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *The greatest test of your life is life itself.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON TWO

The Definition of Love

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,
His love endures forever*

—(Psalm 136:1 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

One of the universal needs that human beings have is the need to be loved. This quest to be valued and cared for can unfortunately send us looking for love in all the wrong places. Part of making personal progress is realizing that we already have the love we are so desperately seeking. Love comes from God. When you know how much God loves you, it can fill the void so many of us have at various times in our lives.

The Bible tells us that God is our Father—and we know how much parents love their children. In fact, we were created because God wanted offspring in His own image. Can you imagine that God wanted *you* to be His child? It is awe-inspiring to comprehend that God, our Father, wanted to have children so He could *love* them. Consider how our human parents, despite their imperfections, are usually able to love us unconditionally. Now imagine how much more God, in His perfection, is able to love us despite our shortcomings. If you are looking for real love, look for God.

God wants us to love Him back. In His Word, He says that loving Him is the greatest commandment. It is easy for us to say we love God. However, love is not passive; it is an action. The Lord has given us numerous examples of His love and He expects that we will show love to Him and to each other in return. If we want to make heaven our home and spend eternity with God, we must learn how to freely give love. The Bible tells us that this is a non-negotiable condition that we must meet in order to gain eternal life.

While we can never fully comprehend the love of God, a greater understanding of it can help us to better love Him, others, and ourselves. He is pleased with us when we use His example of love and seek to emulate it in our walk with Him, as well as in our daily interactions with others. Love is the essence of Christianity. God is the definition of love.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read I Corinthians 13: 4-7

Read I John 4: 7-12

Consider the descriptions of love in the above passages.

- Can you think of a time when someone in your life showed you love? Describe the love you received. What did the love feel like?
- Think about the biblical description of love again. Can you think of a time when you showed love to someone? Describe the love you gave. What did it feel like to show love to another person?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*

LESSON LAUNCH!:

Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!




GOD SACRIFICES HIS SON



Read John 3:16

Read Mark 15: 16-20, 25-39

Scripture in Review:

-  The world was in such a terrible state that we needed to be saved from ourselves. God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to be our Savior.
-  God knew that His Son would eventually be crucified by the world He was sent to save. Despite this knowledge, God loved us so much that He made the ultimate sacrifice.
-  Christ endured horrible suffering on the cross so that we would have the opportunity to be saved from sin and eternal condemnation.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

- Can you think of anything more significant that God could have done to show His love for us than to give up His Son? What message do you believe God was sending when He chose the sacrifice to be His Son and not something else?

- What does the nature of the pain Christ endured for our sake say about the depth of His love for us? Describe the love that Christ has for you.

- **Lesson Learned:** *God gave us His very best. He wanted to show us how deeply we are loved by Him.*

Empowerment Exercise:

- Imagine yourself as a parent of one child.
- Could you send your one and only child to be sacrificed in such a violent, painful way to atone for the sins of others?
- Describe the love God showed you by sending His Son to die for your sins.







CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*



THE GOOD SAMARITAN SHOWS LOVE

Read Luke 10: 25-37

Scripture in Review:

-  An expert asks Jesus for the key to gaining eternal life in heaven.
-  Jesus confirms that the law expects that we love the Lord completely and love our neighbor as ourselves. If we do that, Jesus says that we will inherit eternal life.
-  Jesus demonstrates active love through the parable of the Good Samaritan.
-  Notice that the priest and the Levite pass by the man who is in desperate need. One would expect that the religious priest and Levite would stop to help the man, but they do not show love to him.
-  Samaritans were known adversaries of the Israelites. Despite the inherent conflict, a Samaritan was the one to stop and help the beaten man.
-  Jesus commanded that we should follow the example of the Good Samaritan and do likewise to others.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Look deeply into the parable of the Good Samaritan. What life lessons is Christ hoping that we learn?

Describe what our world would be like if everyone followed the example of the Good Samaritan and showed their love in an active way.

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

- How can you be more like the Good Samaritan in your actions towards others?
- Is there someone, in particular, who needs your help right now?
- Think about that person. How can you actively show them the love they need at this time in their life?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *If you want to please God, show your love to another person.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*



John 14:23
Matthew 5: 43-48
Matthew 22: 34-40
Matthew 25: 31-46

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Love is not just an emotion. Love is an action.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of love. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

Love is...

God's love for me...

I experienced God's love when...

My love for God...

I showed my love for God when...

I will continue to show God my love for Him by...

An example of how I showed my love for others was when...

I will continue to show my love for others by...

The person who needs my love now is... I will show my love for them by...

I can show more love to myself by...

LESSON THREE

Have Faith

Then He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith will it be done to you," and their sight was restored.

— (Matthew 9: 29-30 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Perhaps one of the most significant struggles people have in their walk with God is to have faith during troublesome times. In our humanness, we are conditioned to believe that which we can see. We see sickness, financial woes, family issues, conflict on the job, and personal problems. Seeing is believing; and it becomes our reality. Having faith means rejecting the negativity that you see and believing in a positive outcome, which in the moment you are unable to see.

God is amazing and He wants us to believe it! In our situations that seem impossible, He wants us to be confident that with Him on our side, all things are possible. He commands us to have faith. God is saying that we *must* believe that we can count on Him. He is telling us that He won't let us down. It's a beautiful thing when you really think about it.

In order to please God, we have to work on increasing our faith. Our belief that He exists, despite our inability to see Him, is our faith in action! We must be consistent in building upon that belief. We know He exists, and as a result, we must then be confident that He who exists loves us entirely; and is constantly attentive to our needs. Having faith, while not always easy, is possible with His help. Let us ask our God to help us increase our faith.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read Hebrews 11: 1-3
Read Matthew 14: 25-31

The Bible gives us a definition of faith.

- Describe faith in your own words. On a scale of 1-10, (10 being perfect) how would you rate the degree of faith you have overall?
- Why did you choose that rating?

Peter became afraid and started to sink.

- Why do you believe he wavered in his faith?
- What does the “wind” represent to you?
- What causes you to become afraid as you deal with the daily challenges of your life?
- Why did Peter become afraid and start to sink?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*










LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

ABRAHAM'S FAITH IS TESTED



Read Genesis 22: 1-18

Scripture in Review:

-  God tests Abraham's faith.
-  He gives Abraham the unimaginable task of slaying His one and only son.
-  Isaac was special because he was truly a gift from God to Abraham and Sarah in their old age.
-  Despite his love for his son, Abraham obeyed the Lord.
-  Abraham believed strongly that God would intervene and provide for him during his tough situation.
-  An angel of the Lord stopped Abraham just as he was about to kill his son.
-  God provided the ram as a substitute sacrifice.
-  God was pleased with Abraham's faith.
-  God blesses Abraham because of his obedience.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

- Can you think of anything harder God could have asked Abraham to do than to slay his one and only son?
 - What does Abraham's obedience in this situation say to you about his relationship with God?
-
-











CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

JEHOSHAPHAT FACES A VAST ARMY



Read 2 Chronicles 20: 1-4, 12-30

Scripture in Review:

-  Jehoshaphat is the King of Judah.
-  He is warned that a very large army of adversaries is already on route to attack him and his people.
-  The first thing Jehoshaphat does when he hears the news is to inquire of the Lord and seek His help.
-  Jehoshaphat declares three things in 2 Chronicles 20:12. First, he says that he and his people don't have the power to face the vast army. Second, he acknowledges that they don't know what to do about their problem. Finally, Jehoshaphat yields and says to God, "but our eyes are upon you."
-  The Spirit of the Lord tells Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:15-18 to not be afraid or discouraged because the battle belongs to God. The Spirit also commands the people of Judah to march down on the army and reassures them that the Lord will be with them.
-  Jehoshaphat, in faith and obedience, does as the Spirit tells him. He also tells his people to have faith in God.
-  Jehoshaphat and his people sing and praise the Lord during their test of faith.
-  The Lord fights the battle for Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah.
-  When they get to the place where they can see their dead adversaries, Jehoshaphat and his men are blessed with equipment, clothing, and other items of value.
-  After their great test of faith, the kingdom of Judah is blessed with peace on every side.

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Your battle belongs to God.*

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

When Jehoshaphat hears the news of the army coming against him, the first thing he does before anything else is to inquire of the Lord.

- What can we learn from how Jehoshaphat dealt with his dilemma?

The Spirit of the Lord declares that it is God's battle.

- Why, then, did God tell the people of Judah to march down against the army?

- What lessons can we learn from God commanding the people of Judah to face the reality of their problem, even though He knew He was going to fix the situation for them?

— After seeing how the Lord delivered them from their situation, what do you think the people of Judah learned about God?

— What can we learn about God from actually seeing Him deliver us from the situations we face? Why, then, might it be a blessing to experience troublesome times?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *God can use our life challenges to benefit us in ways we cannot imagine.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*



Read 2 Chronicles 20:12.

- Have you ever felt like Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah?
- Can you relate to not knowing what to do in a situation?
- Describe the situation you experienced and your feelings.
- What did you do when you didn't know what to do?
- What did you learn from that experience?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



2 Corinthians 5: 7

James 2: 14-24

Mark 9: 17-29

- **Lesson Learned:** *Faith and action work together for your benefit.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of faith. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

Faith is...

I want...

I need to have faith that God will...

My current level of faith is...

I trust...

When I have faith, God responds by...

I am trying to improve my personal situation by...

I will work to increase my faith by...

God promises...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *Have faith. God will come through for you.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON FOUR

I Surrender All

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight

— (Proverbs 3:5 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

You are not in control. None of us are. While we can certainly influence the path our life takes, ultimately, God has the final say. Often times, we get stressed out and needlessly worry about things we cannot change on our own. Learning to surrender your life circumstances to the will of God is a critical step in finding the peace that you desire.

If we are to become mature in Christ, we must learn to appreciate the sovereignty of God. When you approach the Lord with an issue you are facing, you have taken it to the Highest Court in the land. Only God, in His divine wisdom, goodness, and mercy, has the power to decide the verdict of your life.

Actively releasing the control of your situation to the One who really has the control is the remedy that relieves the pressure. However, it is important to realize that you do have some responsibility. There is work for you to do too. Put your best foot forward, but understand that the final outcome is really up to God. Living with a philosophy that yields to the will of the God gives you the freedom to accept the things you cannot change and appreciate your circumstances.

Seek His will and try your best to follow it in your daily choices. When we use our free will to make life decisions without the Lord, the result is often disappointing and potentially devastating. Count yourself as blessed that your Father has already made great plans for your life. Don't fight it. Surrender to His will.

LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*









JESUS IS CRUCIFIED



Read Matthew 26: 1-4, 36-39, 42

Read John 19: 28-30

Scripture in Review:

-  Jesus spent his life on Earth preaching the Gospel, healing people, and blessing the lives of those whom He encountered.
-  Despite His love for mankind, Jesus was unfairly sentenced to be crucified by those whom He was sent to save.
-  It has been a long journey for Jesus. He is weary. He is emotionally drained.
-  The *cup* represents the horrific burden Jesus endured on the way to His crucifixion. Jesus is overwhelmed. He falls to the ground and asks God if it is possible that He be relieved of the pain of this great responsibility.
-  Christ, in His suffering, wants relief, but He prioritizes the will of His Father over His own will.
-  Jesus releases control over the situation. In the midst of His personal trial, He says to God, "...may Your will be done." Christ knows that His Father knows best.
-  After being crucified, Jesus says that he is thirsty. He wants to take a drink to symbolize finishing the cup of tremendous sacrifice given to Him by His Father.
-  Jesus, though it was not His will, was obedient and yielded to the will of God. His great sacrifice has given us all a chance to be saved and make heaven our eternal home.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Before he took his last breath on the cross, Jesus said “it is finished.”

- What life lessons can we learn from how Jesus handled His will versus the will of His Father?
- What do you think Jesus meant by, “*it is finished*”?
- What messages are there for us in watching how Christ dealt with His personal trial?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Sometimes our pain has a purpose.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Think about your will versus the will of God in a situation you are currently facing.*

- What do you believe God wants you to do in the current situation? What do you think you will do?
- What are your thoughts about following God’s will instead of your own will?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Our free will can get in the way of God’s perfect will.*

CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*








JONAH FLEES FROM THE WILL OF GOD



Read Jonah 1: 1-17

Read Jonah 3: 1-3

Scripture in Review:

-  God commands Jonah to go on a mission to the city of Nineveh. Jonah disobeys and runs away from God. Instead of following God's will, Jonah heads towards Tarshish.
-  God and Jonah aren't on the same page with what should happen in Jonah's life.
-  Jonah does things his own way and trouble follows him.
-  Because of his disobedience, Jonah unintentionally endangers the lives of the sailors on the boat.
-  Jonah is thrown overboard, but the Lord sent a big fish to swallow and protect him.
-  Jonah is given a second opportunity to follow the will of God.
-  Jonah is obedient to God the second time. He goes to Nineveh to deliver the message from the Lord.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

- Speculate as to why you think Jonah disobeyed the initial call of the Lord to go to Nineveh.
- What are some of the reasons that we choose not to surrender to God's will in our life choices?

- The men on the boat were in danger because Jonah acted outside of God's will. What is the message for us as it relates to how our ungodly actions impact others?
- Have you ever been unintentionally hurt because someone else acted outside of God's will? Give an example.

- Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights. He spent much of that time thinking and praying. What do you believe Jonah learned about going against God's will?

- Despite Jonah's disobedience, the Lord provided a fish to save his life. What does this say about the character of God?

- God gave Jonah a second chance to be obedient. What is the message as it relates to the love God has for us as we make our mistakes in life?

Personal Reflection: Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth

- Have you ever decided to do things your way instead of God's way?
- Were there consequences?
- What did you learn from your “Jonah experience?”

- **Lesson Learned:** *There are times when what we want for our life and what God wants for our life don't match.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



Matthew 6: 6-10
Matthew 6: 25-27
I John 5: 14-15
Romans 8:28
Romans 12:2

- **Lesson Learned:** *Even when we don't understand, His will is still perfect.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of surrendering all to the Lord. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

God's will is...

The challenging situation in my life that I know I do not control is...

If I completely surrender this situation to God's will, I believe that I'll feel...

When there are events in my life that I know I cannot control, from now on I will...

One decision I know I need to make that will bring me closer to God's will is...

I can better know God's will for my life if I...

Living according to God's will...

Acting outside of God's will for my life will likely lead to...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *You can trust that God knows what is best for your life.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON FIVE

Cry Out to the Lord

*The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears
are attentive to their cry*

— (Psalm 34:15 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Our Father in Heaven can do anything. There are no limits to His power. As we examine God's Word, we can see numerous examples of times when the Lord saw the distress of His children and came to their aid. That same God exists today and is listening for our SOS call.

Most of us have experienced a season in our life in which we have had a desperate need for the presence of the Lord. I've definitely been there. The good news is that our Father takes good care of His children. He knows that challenges and suffering are part of life, but He wants to give us the relief from our personal storms that only He can provide.

The more we know God, the better off we are. It is our constant communication in prayer coupled with living our life in a Godly manner that creates a strong relationship with Him. As human beings, we are more likely to come to the assistance of someone in need when we actually have a relationship or a bond with them. A careful examination of God's Word shows us that He, too, listens with favor to the requests of those who He knows. Don't hesitate to reach out to the Lord. He is attentive to the cries of His children who are in need.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read I Chronicles 4: 9-10

Jabez cried out to the Lord and his request was granted.

- What do you see in the passage that helps you understand why Jabez received favor from God?
- What is the message for us as we approach the Lord with our requests?

Examine the specific things that Jabez asked for in his prayer.

- What do you see?

The Lord found favor with what Jabez requested.

- How does the content of what we pray for impact the probability that the request will be granted?

Think about what you are asking God for now.

- Should you alter the content of your prayer so that God will find favor with your request?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*





LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

DAVID'S PRAYER



Read Psalm 69: 1-17

Scripture in Review:

-  David is certainly facing one of the most difficult challenges of his life.
-  He discusses in prayer the effect that his enemies are having on him.
-  David has had all the pain and turmoil that he feels he can take.
-  He urgently needs the Lord and cries out for help.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Through reading David's prayer to God, what is your overall impression of David and what he is going through?

- Interpret his feelings in your own words. Describe his mindset.

Read verse 3 of this passage.

- Can you relate to David?
- Have you ever prayed consistently for something but felt like your prayers were not being answered?
- Describe the situation and how you felt.
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Read verse 5 of this passage.

- Why is this verse significant?
- What is the message for us as we go to God in prayer?

Read verse 17 of this passage.

- How is this verse different than your typical prayer?
- Have you ever prayed with this kind of emotion?
- What were the circumstances?

- **Lesson Learned:** *The Lord is a friend on whom we can depend.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Make a list of five things you have prayed for within the last few years of your life.*

- Next to each request, record the current status of the prayer as either *granted, pending, or denied.*
- Give thanks for the items that have been granted.
- Review the requests that are pending or have been denied.
- Consider the Lord's will as a reason that some of your prayers may not have been answered in the way you anticipated.

- **Lesson Learned:** *The Lord is wise and His will is perfect.*









CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

HANNAH'S PRAYS FOR A SON



Read I Samuel 1: 1-20, 27

Scripture in Review:

-  Elkanah had two wives. One of his wives was named Hannah and the other one was named Peninnah.
-  Peninnah bore children for Elkanah, but Hannah was unable to conceive.
-  Peninnah used her ability to conceive as a means to taunt and agitate Hannah.
-  Hannah was despondent. She desperately wanted to be a mother and give her husband, Elkanah, a child from her womb.
-  Hannah grieves and she cries out to the Lord and asks Him to remember her and give her a son. In return, she promises to give her son back to the service of the Lord.
-  God remembers Hannah and she conceives and gives birth to a son. She names her son Samuel.
-  Hannah makes good on her promise to God. She gives her son to the Lord to serve Him all the days of his life.
-  Samuel grows up and becomes a great prophet of God.

Character Questions: (*journal and/or share your insight and experiences*)



Read verses 13-15 of this passage.

- In your own words, describe what Hannah is going through as she deals with not being able to conceive a child.
- What do you believe is her mindset?
- Can you relate to desiring something that feels nearly impossible for you to have? Discuss the situation and your feelings.



Read verse 5 of this passage.

The Bible says that, “the Lord had closed her womb.” This statement indicates that the Lord actively decided that Hannah would not be able to conceive.

- Why would the Lord close her womb and then later open her womb?
- What life lesson can be learned from verse 5?



Read verse 19 of this passage.

The Bible says that the Lord *remembered* Hannah and her request.

- What was it about Hannah that you believe caused the Lord to remember her?
- What can we do to make it more likely that the Lord will remember us and grant our requests?



Read verses 24-28 of this passage.

- What is the significance of Hannah giving her son to the Lord?
- What life lesson can we learn from what Hannah did with her blessing from God?
- What should we do with the blessings that God gives us?

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

- Could it be that the Lord allows doors to be closed in our lives so that He can open them and we can see how mighty He is?
- Think of a situation in your own life that clearly showed you that it was God who intervened on your behalf. Describe what happened.

- **Lesson Learned:** *God gets the glory when we know that it was only by His hand that we were helped in our time of need.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



Psalm 130: 1-5
Matthew 11: 28-29
Matthew 7: 7-11
Matthew 9: 27-31
I Kings 3: 5-14
Philippians 4: 6-7

- **Lesson Learned:** *God is more likely to respond when He is pleased with the content of your prayers.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of crying out to the Lord. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

The difference between prayer and crying out to the Lord is...

The situation that I need to cry out to the Lord about is...

I realize that...

If I want my cries to the Lord to be heard and responded to I should...

The relationship between prayer and faith is...

I can improve my relationship and connection to God by...

When my prayers are not answered in the way I think they should be, I will...

For me, prayer is...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *God knows what you need before you even ask.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON SIX

Chasing After the Wind

What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?

— (Matthew 16:26 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

One of the major goals in your walk with Christ should be to gain more wisdom and understanding. As your perspective improves and evolves, you will see life in a way that actually improves your life. Your priorities will become more defined—and the things that are not important will be more easily identified and rooted out.

In the Old Testament, God granted King Solomon an abundant amount of divine wisdom. In fact, Solomon was the undisputed wisest man on Earth during his day. Studying his thoughts and writings can help us grow and understand more of what God would have us to know about the purpose of life.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, in my view, is a masterpiece. It tells the story of Solomon; a man who was Godly, powerful, rich, talented, and wise. He had everything that society says is important; and yet he still felt empty. That lack of contentment, led him on an exhaustive search to find the true meaning of life. It is the examination of Solomon's personal journey that can help us all find the meaning of life for ourselves.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read James 4:14

James compares the span of our lives to a mist or a vapor.

- How long do the vapors coming from a boiling pot of water last after the heating source is turned off?
- What life lessons can we learn from the analogy in this scripture?
- How does accepting that the span of your life is brief change your priorities?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*





LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

SOLOMON SEARCHES FOR SOMETHING MEANINGFUL IN LIFE



Read Ecclesiastes 1: 1-4, 11-14

Scripture in Review:

-  King Solomon uses his great wisdom to examine the purpose of life on Earth.
-  In his review, he notes that although man puts forth great effort in his work, that nothing is gained because inevitably man is going to die.
-  Solomon goes on to say that after a man dies, those who are living will soon forget him. He suggests that this cycle of living, dying, and being forgotten continues with each generation.
-  In Verse 14 of this passage, Solomon creates an analogy. He says that everything that happens in the world is meaningless, “a chasing after the wind.”

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

What do you think Solomon means by the things of this life are, “a chasing after the wind?”

What would happen if you actually tried to chase wind?










Name a famous person who accomplished great things during their life, but is now dead. Think about them for a moment.

- Name some of the things they accomplished.
- The world may still enjoy what they left behind, but what do the things they worked to achieve mean to them now that they are gone?

Do you agree with Solomon's declaration that people are forgotten soon after they die? Why or why not?

If you accept that people are forgotten soon after they die, does that change your view of what is important in your own life? If so, how?

Scripture in Review:

-  Solomon's journey to find meaning takes him to all the places that human beings today travel in their own quest to find fulfillment.
-  Through scripture, we see that Solomon tries: pleasure, laughter, alcohol, work, hobbies, servants, money, entertainment, women, power, knowledge, and excess.
-  In verse 11 of this passage, Solomon says that after he experienced all that man could desire, he found that, "everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."
-  In verses 12-16, Solomon examines the value of his wisdom. He finds that wisdom is also meaningless because in the end, both the wise and unwise die and will be forgotten.
-  In verses 17-22, Solomon concludes that everything that he has worked for in life is meaningless because he is going to die.
-  He says that when he dies, everything he has accomplished and acquired will have to be left to someone who comes after him.
-  In verse 23, Solomon speaks to the problems that keep him up at night. He says that those, too, are meaningless.
-  In verses 24-26, Solomon says that while we are on Earth, the best thing we can do is to live an enjoyable life.
-  Solomon acknowledges that God is the source from which good things come.

- **Lesson Learned:** *There is nothing wrong with having nice things, but we should use a Godly perspective in how we prioritize them in our lives.*

Character Questions: (*journal and/or share your insight and experiences*)

- Do you agree with Solomon’s assertion that ultimately life on Earth is meaningless?
 - How does Solomon’s philosophy about the value of his accomplishments affect your thoughts about the ultimate value of your own accomplishments?
 - Do you think that in our current society we place too much emphasis on our achievements?
-
-
-

Think about a relative or friend who has died.

- What do their worldly or secular life achievements mean to them now?
 - How do the problems they had in their life affect them now?
 - What is the life lesson for those of us who are living?
-
-
-

Solomon encourages us to enjoy life.

- Are you doing enough of the things you enjoy?
 - List some of the activities you need to spend more time doing so that you are enjoying your life more.
 - List some of the things you need to spend less time and energy on so that you are enjoying your life more.
-
-
-

- **Lesson Learned:** *There is nothing better for man to do while on Earth than to serve God and enjoy life.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*



Read Ecclesiastes 3: 1-13.

- What season is it in your life now? How does Solomon’s philosophy that, “there is a time for everything” affect your view of the times of difficulty we all experience in our lives?
- Which season do you, in faith, believe is on the horizon in your life?



Read Ecclesiastes 12:13.

- How does the end to Solomon’s search for meaning affect your perspective of life?
- How can you alter your life priorities to mirror what is truly lasting and important?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



- Ecclesiastes 4: 1-6**
- Ecclesiastes 5: 10-12**
- Ecclesiastes 5: 15-16**
- Ecclesiastes 8: 12-15**
- Ecclesiastes 9:9**

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of the meaning of life. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

My life on Earth is...

When my life on Earth is over, my life accomplishments...

When my life on Earth is over, my life possessions...

When my life on Earth is over, my life issues and problems...

The things I want most in life are...

When I really think about it, the following things I am currently focused on are really not that important:

Enjoying my life on Earth is...

The thing that will matter to me most after my life on Earth is over is...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *Your relationship with God is the only thing that will matter when you die.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON SEVEN

Defeating The Evil Adversary

The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

— Revelation 12:9 (NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

We are in the midst of a war. Good versus Evil. Right versus Wrong. We all need to accept that there is no way to completely avoid being touched by the reality of spiritual warfare.

As Christians, we can expect to be confronted by evil. It can come in the form of a tragic event. Evil can show itself in the spirit of the supervisor at your job. It can even reside within a loved one in your household. There is no escaping the fact that we live in a world that is full of evil. Everywhere you look you can see the thumbprint of Satan, himself.

The devil is real. He's not a cartoon character. He's not a myth. He's not dead. Our enemy is alive, active, and continues to wreak havoc on the lives of God's children everyday.

It is inevitable that we are going to come face to face with our enemy and his forces from time to time in our lives. Therefore, it is in our best interest to understand who and what we are really dealing with. In order to defeat the enemy, you must know him. You must understand how he operates. With our Father in heaven helping us, we can withstand the devil and his schemes. Ultimately, we know that at the end of the war that God and His children will be victorious.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read I Peter 5: 8-10

The Bible describes the devil as a prowling, roaring lion. By comparing the devil to a lion, God is trying to help us better understand how our enemy operates.

- Think about the characteristics of a lion. How are a lion and the devil similar?

Verse 9 in this passage instructs Christians to resist the devil “standing firm in the faith.”

- What does it mean to resist the devil?
- What does it mean to stand firm in the faith?

Verse 10 of this passage seems to acknowledge that, at times, the devil will cause Christians to suffer. However, the Word also promises that after we suffer for a little while that God will provide relief and restoration.

- Can you think of a time when the devil caused you to suffer for a little while and then God intervened and gave you relief?
- Meditate on the goodness of God in the midst of your personal storm.

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*

LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*








THE DEVIL IN DISGUISE

Read Genesis 2: 15-17, 20-22

Read Genesis 3: 1-13

Scripture in Review:

-  Adam and Eve are placed in the Garden of Eden and given authority over God's other creations.
-  God blesses them with everything they need and only withholds from them the fruit from one particular tree in the middle of the Garden.
-  The serpent entices Eve to disobey God's command.
-  Eve gives in to the serpent and eats the forbidden fruit. She also gives the fruit to Adam to eat.
-  Adam and Eve set the precedent for disobedience to God. Sin is born into the world and as a result, mankind is forever changed.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

The Bible describes the serpent as being “crafty.”

- Based on your knowledge and experience with the devil, describe him in your own words.

In Genesis 3:1, the devil has disguised himself as a serpent and sets out on a mission to cause Adam and Eve to betray God.

- Why must the devil disguise himself in order to be effective?













Read Genesis 3: 3-6.

What specific tactics did the serpent use to get Eve to sin against God? Why was Eve attracted to the proposition of partaking of the fruit?

- What was Satan's goal in his dealings with Adam and Eve?
- What do you believe were the lasting consequences for mankind?
- What consequences do we potentially subject ourselves to when the devil successfully entices us to sin against God?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *The devil is a chameleon. He changes his form quickly and often.*

Scripture in Review:

-  Goliath is a Philistine champion fighter. He is described in scripture as being nine feet tall, intimidating, arrogant, and defiant.
-  Unprovoked, Goliath shouts that he wants God's people, the Israelites, to choose a man to come down and fight him.
-  King Saul and the Israelites were being taunted and terrorized daily by Goliath. They had a *giant* problem on their hands and they didn't know what to do.
-  David, the youngest son of Jesse, volunteers to face Goliath in a one-on-one battle on behalf of the people of Israel.
-  King Saul is skeptical of David's ability to defeat Goliath, but David is confident he will win because of his previous experience in successfully killing a lion and a bear.
-  David has faith because God has delivered him from tough situations before and he is certain that God will deliver him again.
-  King Saul agrees to allow David to fight and dresses him in armor. The armor is too cumbersome for David to wear so he takes it off and goes into battle instead with five smooth stones as his weapon.
-  David faces Goliath and tells the giant that he is coming to battle in the name of the Lord Almighty.
-  Unafraid, David runs to the battle line to meet Goliath. David threw a stone, it hit Goliath on the forehead and killed him.
-  David was victorious over the Philistine and became a hero amongst the Israelites.

Character Questions: (*journal and/or share your insight and experiences*)

Goliath is obviously evil. Without provocation, he treats God's people with contempt and disdain.

- Have you ever had an evil person unjustifiably mistreat you?
- Briefly describe the situation.
- What were your thoughts and emotions?

David verbally declared to Goliath that he was coming to fight him in the name of the Lord Almighty.

- Can you see a relevant life application as you face evil the next time in your life?

David runs to the battle line to meet Goliath. It's apparent that David is looking forward to this fight!

- What can we learn for ourselves from David's attitude and level of confidence when facing evil?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Evil comes in many forms. You must learn to identify the traps of the devil and his accomplices.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

At times, it can feel as if we are too small to confront evil. The story of David and Goliath shows us that with God on our side, we are strong enough to defeat the giants in our lives.

- Think about an evil force that you are facing in your life right now. How should you change your attitude toward the situation to reflect the power that you have through your connection to your Father in heaven?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



Matthew 4: 1-11
Ephesians 6: 10-18
Genesis 6: 5-6
Proverbs 24: 19-20
James 4:7
Matthew 6:13

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of evil. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

My enemy, the devil is...

The evil that is challenging me now is...

I recognize that evil is most effective against me when it is camouflaged or hidden. The thing in my life that could be evil in disguise is...

Some of the emotions the devil wants me to have are...

The devil desires to accomplish the following specific goal in my life:

Some of the tactics the devil has used to accomplish his goals with me are:

Some of the things I can do to better deal with evil situations and evil people are to:

The work I commit to do is to...

I believe...

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *The fight is fixed. God and His people will defeat the devil in the end.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON EIGHT

The Sin Addiction

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it

— (Genesis 4:7 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Undoubtedly, there is one thing we all have in common. It is our weakness to sin. I can't think of anything more frustrating to a person who loves God than the harsh reality that says it is impossible to be sinless. Our true desire is to avoid sin and yet, there is an undeniable urge that we have to partake in it. I have concluded that disobedience to God and His Word is the greatest conflict that we face in our quest to be all that He would have us to be.

Sin is an addiction. When you really take time to examine it for what it is, you will find many similarities to the common addictions that plague mankind today. Sin begins as a good time, but the person who is experimenting with it later finds himself to be hooked. Gradually, the good time becomes a nightmare.

How can we be so enticed by something that aims to destroy us? The power of sin is truly one of the great mysteries of life. As Christians, we must learn how to fight against that which stands between us and a healthy relationship with God.

While it may be unrealistic to say that we can walk this Earth and be perfect, the Word of God clearly admonishes us to avoid sin using love, wisdom, and strength. Our ability to resist the devil and his traps rests in the power we have through our connection to Jesus Christ. With the Lord on our side, we cannot be defeated.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read James 1: 13-15

Sin is portrayed as a disease festering within us that gradually grows in strength. When we allow ourselves to be deceived and give into our fleshly desires, the end result is never good. Guilt, shame, and a separation from God are inevitable consequences for Christians who dabble in sin.

— Think about a sin that you have committed that started off small, but grew over time.

- What were the consequences of allowing that sin into your life?
- Describe your mindset while you were in the depths of sin?
- How was your relationship with God affected?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*





LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

PAUL STRUGGLES WITH SIN



Read Romans 7: 15-25

Scripture in Review:

-  The Apostle Paul is God's man, but like all of us, he is struggling with sin.
-  In his heart, he does not want to defy God's law.
-  He acknowledges that the goodness in his heart is not strong enough to keep him from the desires of his flesh.
-  Paul is in conflict. The lure of sin is a formidable foe even for the man of God.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

When reading the words of Paul, you can tell that he is in conflict with himself. It's almost as if he is not in control of the things he does.

- Can you relate to him? Have you fought against sin only to find yourself once again giving in to it?
- Describe the emotions that are involved in the decision to sin and the emotions you experience after the sinful act is complete.
- Think about the concepts of oppression and bondage. How do those concepts relate to sin?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Sin wants to destroy your life.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Make a list of common addictions.*

- What similarities do you see between those addictions and our struggle with sin?
- How can understanding the nature of sin help prepare you to fight against it?

Think about someone you know whose addiction to sin sent their life into a tailspin of negativity and self-destruction. Write about or discuss their situation (without divulging their name).

- What do you think they witnessed and experienced as it relates to the dangers of sin?
- What advice would you give yourself about the sin you struggle with?

CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*










DAVID, BATHSHEBA, AND URIAH



Read 2 Samuel 11: 1-17, 26-27

Read 2 Samuel 12: 9-14

Scripture in Review:

-  King David remains in Jerusalem at a time when kings normally go off to war. It is clear that he is not where he is supposed to be.
-  David sees Bathsheba bathing and is captivated by her beauty. He inquires about her and finds out that she is a married woman.
-  Despite knowing that she is Uriah's wife, David pursues and sleeps with Bathsheba.
-  Bathsheba becomes pregnant. David knows she is carrying his child. He attempts to cover up the fact that he is the father of the unborn child by attempting to get Uriah to leave the war and go home and lay with Bathsheba.
-  After a few unsuccessful attempts to get Uriah to go home, David gives up and instead has him killed.
-  The Lord sends Nathan, the prophet, to rebuke David for his sinful behavior. He learns that there will be a series of serious consequences for his actions.
-  David confesses that he has sinned.
-  David marries Bathsheba and she gives birth to a son.
-  The son born to David and Bathsheba is stricken with illness and dies.

Character Questions: (*journal and/or share your insight and experiences*)

King David was in Jerusalem when he should have been fighting in a war.

- What message is God sending us about the danger of being in places where we should not be?
-
-
-



Read James 1: 13-15.

David sees Bathsheba bathing and his lust for her begins a cycle of sin that grows out of control.

- How does the process of sin described in this passage mirror the events that transpired in David's situation?
- What could David have done to stop the cycle of sin before it caused so much damage?
- What is the message for us regarding our own sin?

The more David tried to cover up his sin, the worse things got.

- What does this say about the long-term effectiveness of hiding sin?
-
-
-

David was God's choice to be King because of his good heart.

- What does the descent of a Godly man into the pit of sin say about the power sin can have over us if we are not careful?
 - What life lessons can we learn from observing David's fall?
-
-
-

- **Lesson Learned:** *Sin will take you places you never thought you would go.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

Think about the sin that exists in our world today.

- What would the world be like without sin?
- Give an estimate of the percentage of the problems in the world that would be solved if everyone abided by God's law?

Think about your life.

- How would your life change if you were to remove sin from it?
- Would you have a better life?
- What sin are you willing to eliminate in order to come closer to the healthy life that you desire?

- **Lesson Learned:** *God knows we are imperfect, but He expects us to fight against our flesh.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*



Galatians 5: 19-21

Isaiah 59:2

I John 2: 1-2

2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

Romans 6: 1-2

Hebrews 10:26

James 5:16

Hebrews 12:1

- **Lesson Learned:** *What will you do about the specific sin that is your weakness?*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of sin. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

The mission of sin is to...

I acknowledge...

Sin is...

I can better avoid sin if I...

My prayer is...

I've made up my mind that...

With God's help, I...

Grace is...

Forgiveness from God is...

I forgive myself because...

The work I commit to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *We are not alone in our struggle against sin. God knows we need Him and He is there for us.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON NINE

Surviving the Knockout Punch

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts
in Him, and I am helped*

— (Psalm 28:7 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

It has happened. The situation you just weren't ready to face is now part of your reality. You don't understand how things could have taken such a dramatic, unexpected turn for the worse—but they did. Now what? How do you go on with your life when going on feels impossible? Whether the situation was circumstantial or a purposeful blow delivered by the enemy, you have been hit hard and you don't know if you'll ever fully get up again.

If you have never faced a time in your life when you felt like you couldn't get up, count yourself as blessed. It may not be your turn just yet. However, if you live long enough, at some point, you will likely find yourself among those of us who have experienced an excruciating trial.

God loves His children. While we don't understand the suffering we sometimes endure, we can be sure that the Lord will be our comforter in times of significant trouble. His plan is perfect. His plan includes pain. If we continue to have faith in Him, His plan, and His love, He will help us survive the life punches that have the potential to knock us out.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read Ruth 1: 1-5

Naomi has experienced significant loss in her life. Due to famine, she has left her homeland. Her husband has died and she has also lost her two sons.

- Try to imagine yourself in Naomi's position. You are in a foreign land and your entire immediate family is suddenly gone.
 - What emotions do you think you would experience?
 - What do you think it would feel like to face the next day?
 - Dig deep into Naomi's predicament. How severe is the "life punch" she is enduring?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*








LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

JESUS ENCOUNTERS A MAN WHO IS SUFFERING



Read John 5: 2-15

Scripture in Review:

-  While traveling to Jerusalem, Jesus comes to a healing pool where disabled people sought to be relieved from their suffering.
-  He meets an invalid who has been unable to use his arms and legs for thirty-eight years.
-  Considering that the man has been in his condition for a long period of time, Jesus asks him if he wants to get well.
-  The man then explains to Jesus that he has not had the opportunity to get into the healing pool because nobody will help him.
-  Jesus tells him in verse 8, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”
-  Instantly, the man is cured. He doesn’t know the identity of who healed him.
-  Jesus finds the man in the temple and tells him that now that he is well that he should stop sinning or something worse could happen to him.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

The man has experienced a significant life blow. He cannot use his arms and legs. However, he was sitting on the edge of a healing pool and yet, he never found the strength to get in the water.

- Do you believe that he tried hard enough to get to the pool? Why or why not?

- Is he responsible for getting up after he has been knocked down by life circumstances?
- What is the message for us as we deal with our personal pain?

Jesus tells the man to get up and walk.













- What do you believe Jesus would say to those of us who have been in a sad condition for a long period of time?

In verse 14, Jesus warns the man that there is a cause and effect relationship between unfortunate life events and sin.

- How can this knowledge help us to avoid some of the punches that life throws our way?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *We must be active in our healing process.*

Scripture in Review:

-  King David is the father of Tamar, Amnon, and Absalom.
-  Tamar is the sister of Absalom and the half-sister of Amnon.
-  Amnon becomes literally lovesick over Tamar.
-  Jonadab, devises a deceptive plan to help Amnon gain access to Tamar.
-  Amnon does as Jonadab suggests and successfully maneuvers to get Tamar alone.
-  Amnon forcefully propositions his sister, Tamar, for sex. She begs Amnon not to disgrace her, but he rapes her anyway.
-  Following the rape, Amnon hates Tamar and is furious. He throws Tamar out of his house, despite her pleas for him not to send her away.
-  Tamar has been raped by her own brother. She is in shock. She is devastated. Her virginity is gone. She has been violated. She has been disgraced. In an instant, her life has dramatically changed for the worse.
-  Tamar's brother, Absalom, sees her distress, comforts her and allows her to live with him.
-  In verse 20, the Bible says that Tamar was a desolate woman after she was raped. She was inconsolable, withdrawn, and depressed.
-  Absalom hates his brother Amnon for what he has done to Tamar.
-  Absalom later seeks revenge and kills Amnon.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Think about the time period in which Tamar lived and what it meant to have your virginity taken away before marriage. Consider the fact that Tamar is from a well-known family and her half-brother committed the rape.

- How might these circumstances have affected the severity of the emotions she was experiencing?

What role does sin play in the story of Tamar, Amnon, Absalom, and Jonadab?

- As you examine what occurred between the characters, where do you see sin lurking?

► **Lesson Learned:** *Sin causes much of the pain we endure.*

Amnon, through his evil actions, delivered a life punch that had the power to knockout Tamar. The Bible paints a picture of her grieving incessantly after her rape. In Scripture, we never see her rebound from her pain.

- Do you believe that Tamar ever recovered?
- In your view, was she able to go on with her life in a healthy way?
- If you were counseling Tamar, what advice would you give?
- How should she go about the process of moving forward in her life? Be as specific as you can with your recommendations.

- **Lesson Learned:** *With the help of God, you can experience joy again.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

- Travel back to the time of your own “knockout punch.”
- Have you recovered from that blow?
- If so, how did you survive?
- If you have not yet recovered, what can you do to promote your healing?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*

James 1: 2-4

Psalm 40: 1-2

Mark 1:35

Romans 8:17

John 16:33

Psalm 29:11

John 14: 1-4



- **Lesson Learned:** *God is able to provide the relief you need.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of dealing with significant life challenges. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

The knockout punch I survived is...

The biggest lesson I learned in the midst of my personal pain is that...

I accept that...

It is my responsibility to...

Some of the things that I can do to better cope with my personal pain are:

My faith in God is...

I want...

I know that in time, I...

LESSON TEN

Doing a Great Work

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as
working for the Lord, not for men*

— (Colossians 3:23 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

One of the certainties of life is that every now and then we are going to be challenged. While the hurdles we face may be difficult, they are not impossible to overcome. We should see our challenges as a great opportunity to demonstrate our strength and commitment.

God enjoys helping us climb the mountains that exist in our life. The more significant the challenge, the more glory He receives when we are victorious. The Bible is filled with stories of mortal human beings accomplishing great things with the help of the Lord. It's exciting to know that we are capable of seemingly impossible feats because our Father is there to support, guide, and assist our efforts.

Most of us have something challenging that we want to accomplish. It could be a personal, professional, or spiritual goal. The fact that it remains to be done is evidence that you need God to step in and give you the power to persevere and fulfill your destiny. There are some things that are just not meant for us to do alone. Ask God to be your partner in achieving the desires of your heart.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word.*



Read Matthew 17:20

Believing that which seems impossible is the essence of faith.

— Think about a challenge you are facing in your life now.

- What do you desire to happen?
- In faith, what do you believe will happen?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:







Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*

LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*



Read Nehemiah 1: 1-11

Scripture in Review:

-  The walls of Jerusalem are broken down. Nehemiah's countrymen are vulnerable and in great need of help.
-  When Nehemiah hears of their distress, he is devastated. He weeps, mourns, and seeks God's guidance.
-  Nehemiah confesses sin. He acknowledges that he and his people have been disobedient to God's commands.
-  He asks God to remember His promise to restore the exiles when they repented.
-  Nehemiah desires to return to Jerusalem, but he needs the permission of King Artaxerxes.
-  Nehemiah asks God to give him success in petitioning the King.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Nehemiah mourns upon hearing the bad news about his country. He is displaying a normal human reaction to tragic life events.

- Mourning is a normal part of processing life's disappointments, but after he grieves, what does Nehemiah do next?
- What is the message for us as we begin to deal with our major life challenges?

Nehemiah pleads for the Lord's attention to his prayer and then he confesses sin.

- Why is acknowledging sin an important thing for him to do?
- Why is confessing sin an important thing for us to do in our prayers?

Nehemiah reminds God that He promised to restore the exiles when they repented of their wicked ways.

- What is the relationship between our repentance from sin and God restoring our lives to a good place?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Repentance and confession work together to bring us closer to God.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Name something that you really want to accomplish. Think about how God desires to help you accomplish that goal.*

- Make a commitment to solicit the help of the Lord through prayer.
- Create a plan to accomplish your goal.
- Set a time to begin your great work.

CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

NEHEMIAH'S GREAT WORK:



Read Nehemiah 2: 1-20

Read Nehemiah 3: 1-8
















Read Nehemiah 4: 1-12

Read Nehemiah 4: 16-23


Read Nehemiah 6: 1-4, 9


Read Nehemiah 6: 15-16

Scripture in Review:

-  King Artaxerxes grants Nehemiah permission to return to Judah to begin rebuilding the walls.
-  Nehemiah realizes that the King has granted all of his requests because of God's intervention and favor.
-  Nehemiah sets a time to begin his journey to Jerusalem.
-  When Nehemiah gets home, he keeps his plans in his heart. He does not share his vision with anyone.
-  Rebuilding the wall was a massive project. Before he begins the work, Nehemiah makes preparations and plans. He acquires materials, recruits workers, and examines the walls.
-  Nehemiah and his men begin the rebuilding project. Several doubters surface. Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem mock and ridicule the efforts of the builders.
-  Undeterred, Nehemiah knows that success in this work will come from God.
-  The work starts to take form. Section by section the wall is repaired.
-  The closer they get to accomplishing their goal, the more opposition Nehemiah and his men endure.
-  As the workers become fatigued, the opposition intensifies their efforts to put an end to the rebuilding project.
-  Nehemiah and his men continued working with all their hearts. During much of the rebuilding, they worked with one hand and fended off possible attackers with the other hand.
-  When the wall was near completion, Sanballat and Geshem conspired to harm Nehemiah.
-  They pretended as if they wanted a friendly meeting with him, but they were really planning to attack Nehemiah.
-  Nehemiah refused their meeting requests repeatedly. He knew the conspirers were up to no good.
-  Nehemiah sent them back messages saying that he refused to leave the work that God gave him to do.

Scripture in Review, continued:

 When he grew weary, Nehemiah asked the Lord to strengthen his hands. With the help of the Lord, the wall of Jerusalem was rebuilt in fifty-two days!

 The enemy nations were afraid when they saw the magnitude of what Nehemiah and his men had accomplished. They knew it could only have happened with the help of God.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

A theme in the story of Nehemiah is his devotion to prayer. He prays before he acts.

- How can you better incorporate prayer in the pursuit of your life goals?

Notice that Nehemiah set a time to begin the work and did not procrastinate.

- What roles do you believe planning, preparation, and dedication played in Nehemiah's success?

Nehemiah has people who doubt him and oppose his efforts to rebuild the wall.

- What life lessons can we learn from how Nehemiah handled the attempts by Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem to destroy the work?

Rebuilding the wall was a big project. At times, Nehemiah and the builders got weary.

- What was it that inspired them to keep going?
- What will inspire you to continue your great project when you get weary?

- **Lesson Learned:** *When you are doing something good, there will be opposition.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

Nehemiah makes it known that the work can only be accomplished with the help of God.

- Discuss why it is important to give God the glory when we achieve the improbable.
- How do you give God the glory for your life blessings and achievements?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Always give God the glory. He deserves it.*

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey? .*



Ephesians 3: 20
2 Timothy 1:7
Matthew 7: 7-11
James 2: 14-18
I John 5: 14
Romans 8: 31-32

- **Lesson Learned:** *With God, the impossible is possible.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of accomplishing one's goals. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

The great work I seek to accomplish is...

My challenges are...

The challenges I am facing are an opportunity for me to...

My prayer is...

With God's help, I...

The relationship between faith and success is...

I understand that...

I want...

In order for me to accomplish my goal, I need...

When I am victorious, it will be because...

Glory to God means...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

Lesson Learned: *God wants you to win!*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON ELEVEN

The Forgiveness Factor

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

— (Colossians 3:13 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Part of achieving the sense of perfect peace we desire in our lives resides in our ability to forgive. When we hold onto negative emotions from the past, they invade our thoughts and hinder us from pressing forward to be all that we can be.

Most of us have dealt with the disappointment and anger that occurs as a result of being emotionally hurt by someone. Maybe you were disrespected, betrayed, or abused in some way and although time has passed, the pain still has some impact on you. In your heart, you know it's best to let it go—but *you just don't know how*.

One of the reasons that people have a hard time forgiving is that they still struggle with the concept of what forgiveness actually means. Forgiving someone means to release them from the debt they owe you. Consider this—let's say that a close relative owes you \$500.00 and years have passed and they still haven't paid you back. Their debt has caused you to become frustrated and to have ill feelings. For your own sake, you decide to forgive them and cancel the debt. While they are no longer indebted to you, your act of forgiveness does not necessarily mean that you should loan them money again.

Whatever your particular situation may be, forgiveness simply means that you have canceled the debt that is owed to you and thus have moved on with your life.

Holding on to pain, hurt, and anger does nothing but cause you stress. You are not hurting the other person by harboring these emotions. You are only hurting yourself. If you want the relief you deserve, make the choice to forgive those people who have trespassed against you.

God prepared the way for us to learn the concept of forgiveness by giving us the example of His son, Jesus. We forgive because He first forgave us. What has the Lord forgiven you of? Can you count the number of times He has canceled your debts? He expects us to extend that type of grace and mercy to others. Forgiveness is a cycle. God forgives us. We forgive others. Others forgive us. Forgiveness is a gift to be given and received. Embrace it. We all need to be forgiven.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read Matthew 6: 14-15

Jesus declares that in order to receive forgiveness from God, we must forgive others.

- We all know that we continuously need God's forgiveness because we are sin-prone, imperfect, mortal human beings.
- Why, then, do others need our forgiveness?
- Why do we need others to forgive us?
- What is God saying about humanity?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*






LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY



Read John 8: 1-11

Scripture in Review:

-  The Pharisees and teachers of the law bring before Jesus a woman who was caught in adultery.
-  They anxiously want to see how Jesus will deal with the conflict between the law against sin and His instruction to forgive.
-  Jesus casually deals with the issue by asking those without sin to cast the first stone at the woman.
-  The Pharisees and teachers of the law all leave because they know that they, too, have sinned.
-  Jesus tells the woman that he does not condemn her, but he admonishes her to leave her life of sin.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

- How does the attitude of the Pharisees and teachers of the law towards the woman compare with our attitude towards people who have made significant mistakes in their life?
- What should our attitude be when we encounter people who have sinned?

— Jesus forgave the woman and cautioned her to leave her life of sin.

- What is Jesus telling us about the past sins we have committed?
- What would Jesus tell us to do about the current sin in our lives?

— Discuss our desperate need for forgiveness from God, but our difficulty extending that same forgiveness to others.

- Why do you believe this irony exists?

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *We all need to be forgiven for our sins and mistakes.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Write about a situation in which someone hurt or trespassed against you.*

- How have you been impacted emotionally by what happened?
- What would be the benefit to you if you forgave the person?
- What, if anything, would you lose if you forgave them?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Holding on to emotional pain is unhealthy.*











CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

THE PRODIGAL SON



Read Luke 15: 11-24

Scripture in Review:

-  The man has two sons. The younger son is discontent at home with his father. He is seeking something more adventurous for his life.
-  Desire is pulling him away from home.
-  Not long after he gets his share of the estate, he sets out for a foreign country and spends all of his inheritance in sinful living.
-  There is a severe famine in the land. He has no money. He has no food. The young man is now in great need. He longs to eat with the pigs so that he won't starve to death.
-  His misfortune causes him to think about his behavior and helps him realize how good he had it at home.
-  Because of his sin, he feels unworthy of his father's love and forgiveness.
-  He decides, for his own good, he will try to go back to his father's house. He hopes that his father will at least allow him to come back as a servant.
-  He heads home and before he can get into the yard, his father sees him in the distance.
-  The man runs to his estranged son and embraces him.
-  He gives his son the royal treatment and calls for a celebration.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

- Think about the relationship between a parent and a child.
 - How do you think the responsible and loving father in this passage felt when his son decided that he wanted his money and was leaving home?
 - What would your emotions have been if your child prematurely wanted their inheritance from you so they could leave home and live a wild lifestyle?
-
-
-

- The young man went to a distant country and engaged in ungodly behavior. He wasted the inheritance his father worked hard for. When all of his money was gone, the Bible says that the son longed to eat with the pigs.
 - What is Jesus saying about the self-destructive depths that sin will take us to?
-
-
-

- Think about the theme of forgiveness. Discuss the example God is showing us as we witness the reunion between the man and his estranged son.
 - What is the Lord suggesting that we do when others hurt us?
 - What is the Lord showing us that He will do in the times when we are estranged from Him but want to come back home?
-
-

- **Lesson Learned:** *God loves you regardless of the mistakes you have made.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

The young man felt unworthy of his father's love and forgiveness, and yet the father ran to welcome his son back home. Think about your own need for God's forgiveness.

- How can this story help us to forgive ourselves when we fall short of obeying God's law?
- Think about the things you still need to forgive yourself of.
- Don't delay. Forgive yourself today.

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*

Matthew 18: 21-22

Luke 17: 3-5

Luke 23: 32-34

Acts 10:43

I John 1: 9-10

Philippians 3: 13-14



- **Lesson Learned:** *Forgiveness is the key to your inner peace.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of forgiveness. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

The person I need to forgive is...

What hinders me from forgiving the person I need to forgive is...

The fact that I have not yet forgiven them has caused me to feel...

If I forgive them, the likely outcome for me is that I...

I need God's forgiveness because...

When I think of God's forgiveness for my sin...

God's grace is...

I believe God wants me to...

Forgiveness is a...

The work I commit myself to do is to...

I believe...

- **Lesson Learned:** *Forgiveness requires some work, but the relief you will receive in return is worth the effort.*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

LESSON TWELVE

What Must I Do to Be Saved?

*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but
whoever does not believe will be condemned.*

— (Mark 16:16 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

The ultimate goal of our life-long walk with the Lord is to receive the gift of salvation. All of us need to be saved from our sins. Our God recognizes that we are fragile human beings. Even when we are at our spiritual best, we still fall incredibly short of His standard. He made us. He understands the challenges we face in our desire to be holy.

God sent His one and only Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves. Jesus preached the Word and then lived the Word so that we would have a great example of how to live a life that pleases God. Christ, then, died a brutal death so that we would have the chance to be saved. He took the punishment we deserved so that our soiled slate could be wiped clean. We are all so blessed to have the active love of Jesus in our lives.

The Lord made the sacrifice. His work is done. Salvation is ours to claim. We are just steps away from an eternity with God. That is the *Good News of Jesus Christ*, which is actually great news! If we are to receive our gift of eternal life, there are things we must do *in this life*. The Bible outlines a plan for us to redeem the prize that God has waiting for us.

As frail human beings, we are limited in what we know. Therefore, it is often debated amongst us what the plan of salvation is and what we must do to gain entrance into heaven. There are some things that are to come that we just are not supposed to understand. However,

in His Word, God gives us the information we need. Each person is responsible for their own soul. To that end, each of us is also responsible for understanding the Bible as it relates to the plan of salvation. Learning God's Word requires that we study. Living God's Word requires a commitment for the rest our lives.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read Acts 2: 38-41

Identify steps that you see in this passage that are necessary for the forgiveness of sin.

- Which of these steps have you completed?
- Which steps are you working on?

Read Acts 2: 42-47. Examine the specific behaviors of the people once they were baptized and became Christians.

- Which of these behaviors are you now practicing?
- Which ones do you believe you should incorporate into your life to please God?

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*









LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS



Read Matthew 3: 1-6
Read Matthew 3: 11, 13-17

Scripture in Review:

-  John the Baptist is spending his life preaching to people the need for repentance and baptism.
-  The people are responding by confessing their sins and being baptized.
-  John prophesizes the coming of Christ.
-  When Christ arrives and seeks to be baptized, John knows he is unworthy to baptize the Son of God.
-  Jesus insisted that His baptism was necessary to fulfill God's wishes.
-  After Jesus was baptized, He came up out of the water.
-  Immediately Jesus felt the presence of His Father in heaven.
-  God declared His love for His Son and said He was pleased with Him.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Think about the God-given mission of John the Baptist and the baptism of Christ.

- How did His work contribute to the saving of souls?
Compare His mission to the important work of ministers and evangelists today.

- When Jesus arrives, John feels unworthy to baptize Him. Why was the baptism of Jesus necessary when He had no sin? What message is God sending by showing us Christ being baptized?

Read the beginning of verse 16 and imagine Christ being baptized.

- What do you see?
- Is Christ submerged into water?
- What message is God sending us about how we should be baptized?

Think about the presence and reaction of God following the baptism of His Son.

- What does this say about God's likely reaction after we are baptized?

► **Lesson Learned:** *God gave us the plan of salvation in His Word.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Consider the steps to your salvation.*



Read Romans 10: 9-17

Read Mark 16:16

Read Galatians 5: 19-25

Read Luke 13:3

List the steps to salvation as recorded in the above scriptures.

- Are there still steps you need to complete for your own salvation process?
- If so, what do you need to do?











CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH IS BAPTIZED



Read Acts 8: 26-39

Scripture in Review:

-  An angel of the Lord told Philip, a disciple of Christ, to go down a certain road.
-  While traveling, Philip meets an Ethiopian eunuch who is a high-ranking governmental official.
-  The eunuch had just finished worshipping in Jerusalem and was sitting in his chariot reading the Word of God.
-  Philip sees the eunuch and stops. He asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading.
-  The eunuch acknowledges that he needs help and guidance in his study of the Scriptures.
-  Philip assists the eunuch in his understanding of the Word and tells him about Jesus.
-  As Philip and the eunuch traveled together they came upon some water. The eunuch stops and asks Philip about being baptized.
-  The two men went down into the water and Philip baptized the eunuch.
-  After the eunuch was baptized, the Spirit of God led Philip away.
-  The eunuch continued his journey and rejoiced.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

The angel of the Lord sent Philip down the road that would lead him to encounter the eunuch.

- What does God's intervention in this situation say about the desire He had for the eunuch to learn the Word and be baptized?
 - What do you believe is God's desire for mankind as it relates to understanding the Word and being baptized?
-
-
-

The eunuch acknowledges that he can't understand the Word of God without some help.

- What responsibility do we have to assist others who are seeking a better understanding of the Word?

While in Jerusalem, the eunuch worshipped God. On his way back home, he stopped to read the Word.

- What does the eunuch's act of worship and study of the Word say about his spiritual walk and desire to know God?
- Do you believe that worship and Bible study were enough for the eunuch to complete the process of salvation?
- If so, why was Philip sent to minister to him?
- What is the message for people who have not been baptized, but worship God and study His Word?

- **Lesson Learned:** *God has done His part. Salvation is yours for the taking.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*



Read Acts 8: 36-39.

When they came to some water, Philip proceeded to baptize the eunuch. The Bible says they went down into the water.

- Do you believe the description indicates that the eunuch was submerged in water during his baptism?
- What is the message for those who are being baptized into Christ?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*

Acts 16: 13-15, 30-33

Philippians 2:12

John 11: 25-27

2 Timothy 2:22



I Thessalonians 4: 7-8

I Timothy 1: 12-17

I Corinthians 15: 1-2

Ephesians 2: 8-9

Luke 23: 33-43

- **Lesson Learned:** *Work out your own soul salvation. Eternal life awaits you.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of salvation. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

Salvation is...

My belief in Christ is...

Baptism in water is...

The steps to salvation that I can clearly identify in the Bible are...

The baptism of Jesus provides an example of...

The steps to salvation I have completed are...

The steps to salvation I need to complete are...

Scripture tells me that...

Sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ is...

After baptism, the things I need to do to protect my salvation are...

LESSON THIRTEEN

Set Apart

If the Lord delights in a man's way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand

— (Psalm 37: 23-24 NIV)

INTRODUCTION:

Wearing the name of Christ is an incredible honor. As *Christians*, we have been blessed with the opportunity to forever tie ourselves to the bloodline of God Almighty. It is an amazing thought that He would accept us as His children and give us the family name.

As children of the Most High, we have a responsibility to live our lives in a way that represents our Father. Our attitudes and actions are being observed by others. When we take on the name of Christ, we commit ourselves to living in a way that reflects His character. We should be unique in our daily walk.

Throughout our life's journey, we will be confronted with situations that test whether or not we are truly different than others. We cannot be perfect, but we can be *different*. When we accept Christ and obey the Gospel, we are then set apart from the World. While our physical existence is in the World, our spiritual existence is rooted in the Word of God. People should see in our behavior that we have the Spirit of God at *work within* us. Let us commit ourselves to being set apart for His glory.

Meditation Moment: *Open your Bible, quietly reflect and prepare yourself for the study of God's Word*



Read I Peter 2: 9-12

Peter describes God's people as "chosen."

- What does it mean to belong to God?
- What are some of the privileges of being His child?
- What are some of the responsibilities?
- How can the World tell the difference between a person who is in darkness and one who is in the light?
- Can people in your everyday environment tell that you belong to God? Explain your position.

You can reflect upon the questions above, or you can write your answers below:

Opening Prayer: *Once you have completed your meditation exercise, offer a study prayer, either individually (quietly or aloud), or as a group. Give thanks and ask for divine wisdom and insight into the Word.*






LESSON LAUNCH!: *Get excited! You are about to take a journey through Scripture!*

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO
REFUSE TO WORSHIP A FALSE GOD.



Read Daniel 3: 1-18

Scripture in Review:

-  King Nebuchadnezzar set up a golden statue to represent a false god and demanded that people fall down and worship before it or face being tortured in a pit of fire.
-  The leaders and their people all conformed to the King's decree and worshipped the golden image.
-  Despite the threats of being burned alive, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship the King's statue because of their loyalty to God and His commandments.
-  The three boys proclaimed in faith, that God was able to save them if they were thrown into the fiery furnace.
-  The boys refused to give in and worship the false god.

Wisdom Within the Word: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

Everyone, including the leaders, obeyed the King's decree and worshipped the golden statue.

- Think about situations you have experienced in your own life where it seemed that nearly everyone around you was doing the wrong thing.
 - Describe the challenges of being set apart from what the crowd is doing.
 - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were able to successfully set themselves apart and hold on to their standards and faith despite the terrible threats of the King. What life lessons can we learn from the way they handled their predicament?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Standing up for what is right can be a challenge.*

Empowerment Exercise: *Think about a time when you took a stand for what you believed was right.*

- What was the outcome of the situation?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What do you believe is God's expectation for His children as it relates to standing up for good in a world that has so much evil?

- **Lesson Learned:** *As a child of God, you are special and unique.*










CHARACTER STUDY: *God gave us Bible characters to demonstrate the human application to His Word. Let us learn from the experiences of the men and women the Lord designated to be our examples.*

JOSEPH'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS TESTED BY POTIPHAR'S WIFE.



Read Genesis 39: 1-23

Scripture in Review:

-  Joseph, who appears in this passage, is not to be confused with Joseph, the earthly father of Christ. They are two different people.
-  Joseph was a righteous man. He was special. He had the gift of prophecy through his dreams. His gift made his brothers jealous and they sold him into slavery.
-  Joseph was bought by a man named Potiphar.
-  Potiphar had power and influence because he was one of Pharaoh's key men.
-  Even in the midst of his difficult days as a slave, Joseph was still blessed by God. He became a trusted and valued servant of Potiphar.
-  Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph, but he rejects her advances. Joseph wants to do what is right in the sight of God and remain loyal to Potiphar.
-  When Potiphar's wife intensifies her efforts to sleep with Joseph, he runs away and leaves his cloak behind.
-  Incensed by Joseph's rejection of her, Potiphar's wife falsely accuses him of sexual assault and he is sent to prison.
-  The Lord was with Joseph in prison and gave him favor and success.

Character Questions: *(journal and/or share your insight and experiences)*

How do you believe most men would have reacted to Potiphar's wife and her advances? How, then, are Joseph's actions *different or set apart* from most men?

Describe Joseph's overall character.

- Is his character consistent with the character of most people today? Explain your position.

Joseph endured unfortunate consequences for doing the right thing. Think about your life experiences.

- Have you ever had evil come to you because of your good works?
- If so, explain how it feels to do what is right and receive evil in return.

The Lord blessed Joseph even when he was enslaved and later imprisoned.

- What does this say about God's relationship with those who He considers to be righteous?

- **Lesson Learned:** *Our character is revealed in how we handle our life dilemmas and challenges.*

Personal Reflection: *Use your life situations and experiences to guide your spiritual growth*

- Describe yourself.
- What godly characteristics do you have that set you apart from the people in the World who you come in contact with?
- How are you different?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego demonstrated godly character in the midst of their ordeal with King Nebuchadnezzar.

- As you look back on your own challenging life situations, what do you observe about your character?

REVELATIONS: *Think about your past, present, and future. What wisdom does God reveal to you when reading these passages? How can you use the knowledge gained in each passage to guide you while on your spiritual journey?*



Matthew 5: 14-16

I Peter 1: 13-16

Hebrews 12: 5-11

Titus 2: 11-14

Psalm 34:15

Psalm 37:25

- **Lesson Learned:** *With God, it is possible for you to be holy.*

WORKING WITHIN: *Ponder your life now. Complete the following statements after having studied God's Word on the subject of being set apart. Write as much as you wish.*

I know that God...

Being set apart means that I...

God wants me to...

I can show that I am *different* in the life situation I am now facing by...

God is pleased when...

Being righteous means...

I can be righteous if I...

If I work hard to be righteous, I believe God will...

The work I commit to do is to...

I believe...

➤ **Lesson Learned:** *Let your light shine!*

Closing Prayer: *Give thanks and ask for forgiveness, guidance, blessings, protection, and the motivation to continue studying His Word.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank God for everything He has done for me. I have been blessed in so many ways and I know, without a doubt, that my favor has come from the Lord. This book of Bible lessons literally would not have been possible without the divine inspiration I received from God. I give Him all credit and honor for producing this work.

I have had so many people encourage me over the years. My wife, daughters, mother, siblings, relatives, and friends have shown me unconditional love and support. I want all of you to know that I love and appreciate you.

My church family has also played an important role in my growth and development. I would like to thank, in particular, my minister, for allowing God to use him to call me into His service. I will never forget that day. It, forever, changed my life for the better.

During my lifetime, I have been blessed with some great examples of what it means to live a righteous life. My late, but *great* maternal grandmother was a constant example of what it means to truly love the Lord. Somehow, I believe that in her heart, she knew that I would one day grow up to serve God. After her death, God blessed me with another example and reminder of how to live a Christian life. The late, but *never forgotten*, elder of my church congregation provided a blueprint of what it means to be a man of God. He, too, had confidence that I could teach the Word in my own way. At times, when I doubted myself, he seemed to know that I had it in me to be a servant.

To my teachers, students, colleagues, and clients—I remain inspired by the positivity you have brought to my life. I hope that I can return what you have given me by giving you this book.

To the team who helped me edit, produce, and market *The Work Within*—thank you for your dedication to this project. I appreciate you going above and beyond the call of duty to make God's vision a

reality. For every life that is impacted positively by this work, you, too, share in that success.

Finally, I want to say thank you to the community of Bible believers who will use and support this book. Ultimately, God inspired me to write this for you. My prayer is that this workbook will help you do your *work within* and that you will become stronger, wiser, and more at peace because of the truths revealed to you in God's Word. May the Lord always dwell within your heart, mind, and soul.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CARL E. CAREY, JR., is a Bible teacher, college professor, and sports agent who resides in Houston, Texas. He is an active member of the non-denominational, Church of Christ. Dr. Carey has a passion for helping others to realize their potential and navigate their life challenges. He believes that a deeper connection to God and His Word is the answer we all need. Carl has the joy of being surrounded by a village of supporters, which include his wife, two daughters, and a host of relatives, church members, and friends.