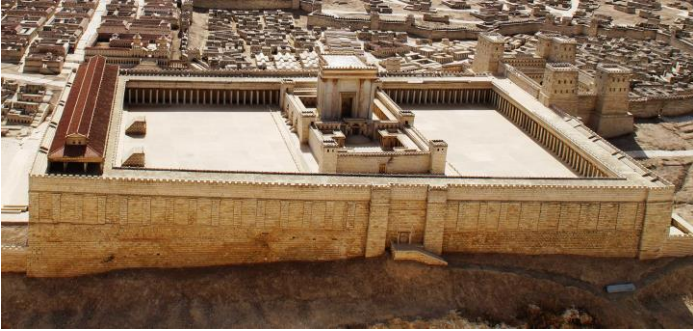


The Nature of God in Proverbs



THE NATURE OF GOD IN PROVERBS

The Proverbs Path

WWJD (“What would Jesus do?”) is a saying that became popular in the United States in the early 1900’s. It had a resurgence in the 1990’s as a reminder that moral behavior demonstrates the love of Jesus Christ. The deeper question is ‘Why would Jesus do what He did’? This Bible study explores the attributes of God as revealed in Scripture and in creation, and contrasts societal norms of the past and present.

Ray Leblond

The Nature of God in Proverbs

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The Proverb's Path

It's early in the morning and the first thoughts of the day vie for time. The immediate need wrestles with the importance of quiet time with God. The struggle intensifies as thoughts of worldly expectations converge on the front lines of the battlefield. Standing ready are the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, waiting for the call to action.

Will my call come in time? The outcome of the day is in the balance. What happens next will determine the course of my day.

[Galatians 5:17] For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

Fear of the Lord

Wisdom, knowledge, and understanding come from You Lord. I will look to You alone for these.

[Proverbs 9:10] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

There is none like you Lord! My deepest desire is to please You this day. I am preparing for the onslaught of thoughts and concerns that draw the 'eyes of my heart' from You. It is through Your wisdom that I can push aside the cares that pull me away from You, and it is the deep intimate relationship with You that is my shield. I've come to Your throne of grace this morning and am ready for the day.

Pride

Will pride, the gateway to many sins, overcome humility? Will the purpose that I was created for rule over my personal desires? Will it be 'I' and 'my', or 'thee' and 'thy'?

[Proverbs 16:18] Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

Oh pride, you're a deceptive one. Appealing to my desires and concealing it with an outer covering of good will towards others. I know your tactics oh so well, and today I have decided not to be deceived. I will not follow your path to destruction, instead I will pray for the Holy Spirit to guide my heart. You won't go away easily, and I know we'll meet again tomorrow for another round.

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Humility

I've planned my day with knowledge of what lays ahead and now I place my trust in You and say, 'Not my will, but Yours be done.'

[Proverbs 15:33] The fear of the LORD is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor.

Humility gently raises a hand to pay attention to a friend in need. Arrogance shuts it down with thoughts of looking out for number one. As arrogance seems to be getting the upper hand there is an unexpected event. In the depths of the soul interceding prayer pushes arrogance to the side. Humility triumphs as arrogance retreats waiting for an opportune moment to strike again.

Integrity

This day integrity will be tested. It can be lost in a moment and not gained back in a lifetime.

[Proverbs 14:2] Whoever lives with integrity fears the LORD, but the one who is devious in his ways despises him.

I will raise my shield this day against corruptible actions that can cause ineffectiveness to be my life sentence. I will not taint the integrity that the Lord has given me but will rely on the Holy Spirit to bring to mind God's Word to counter the challenges of the day. I will bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Discipline

My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in me. Today, I will discipline my mind and body to be a useful vessel for the kingdom.

[Proverbs 3:12] For the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

I know that as much as the old nature works to convince me I'm good, there is nothing good that dwells in my flesh. Gladly will I receive your correction knowing Your deep love is the motive. I will ask that You examine my heart and see if there is anything displeasing, and I will turn from it. I will discipline my mind to pray continuously and rejoice in the joy that You have put in my heart.

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Tongue

Help me understand the power of the words I speak today. Guide my thoughts that my words would glorify You.

[Proverbs 10:20] The tongue of the righteous is pure silver; the heart of the wicked is of little value.

The greatest challenge I will face today is ruling over the restless evil power of the tongue. It waits for a moment to strike with venomous poison unconcerned for others who are created in the image of God. Today I will not give the keys of the tongue to the flesh but will be slow to speak and quick to listen. I will resist the temptation to use my tongue as a weapon of great destruction, but instead use it as an envoy for the Lord of glory.

Peace

It is the peace of God that I will seek today because there is no peace apart from Him. I will anticipate the world to challenge my peace.

[Proverbs 3:1-2 NKJV] 1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; 2 For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

Peace, why are you so elusive? Is it that I've considered my thoughts and plans before entering the throne of grace this morning? I will not be deceived by the peace the world offers but will cling to Your word and keep Your commands as I face the difficulties this day will bring. Your peace is entrenched deep within, guarding my heart and mind. My heart will not be troubled, for it is Your peace that is the source of my joy.

Patience

There will be a time of testing today. In the moment of testing, I will pray to diminish the natural response in order to produce a response that glorifies God.

[Proverbs 16:32] Patience is better than power, and controlling one's emotions, than capturing a city.

I will not allow the temporal to rule the eternal, instead I will replace my anxious thoughts with prayers to the Most High. I will recognize that the testing my faith is necessary and produces endurance. I will embrace the testing of my faith as an opportunity to display a God-glorifying response to those in need of encouragement.

The Nature of God in Proverbs

Kindness

I will be kind to those that You bring in my path today. The indelible mark of kindness will be my legacy as a Christ follower.

[Proverbs 19:17] Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and he will give a reward to the lender.

How could I possibly overlook an opportunity to show an act of kindness as a way to preach the gospel without words. I will recognize the opportunity is from You Lord. Today I will look upon all who I encounter as those made in the image of God. I will show kindness to encourage fellow believers, and kindness that leads to repentance to the lost.

Goodness

My goodness is nothing apart from You, Lord. Today, I will look to the leading of the Holy Spirit to be an example of goodness.

[Proverbs 20:6] Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?

My goodness is like filthy rags in your presence, Lord. It falls short. I am not good enough, and that brings me to the throne of grace this morning. It is the goodness of God to me that is on display in the goodness of God through me. I will look to your word today to equip me for every good work, and to the Holy Spirit to lead me in goodness.

Faithfulness

I will be faithful today. Faithful to speak the truth in love to a friend and faithful to the calling to preach the gospel.

[Proverbs 3:3] Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

Today will be fraught with danger and temptation, yet You never leave me nor forsake me. You are always with me. I will remain faithful to friends, family, and all who You bring into my path. Danger and temptation will not depart but neither will Your faithfulness. Because of Your faithfulness I am able to remain faithful.

The Nature of God in Proverbs

Gentleness

I will consider my words carefully, knowing that gentle words can lower defenses, allowing the Word of God to teach, rebuke, correct, and train in righteousness.

[Proverbs 15:1] A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

I will avoid the temptation to use harsh words that turn away those you've brought my way. God is the guide of my path, so I will seek Him and His word this morning to be prepared for a gentle response using words and actions. I will take Your yoke upon me for You are gentle and humble in heart.

Self-Control

I must give up self-control to be Spirit-controlled. I will not live for myself, but for Christ who lives in me. I will live by faith in the Son of God.

[Proverbs 25:28] A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

The wrestling match starts as the day begins. The flesh brings into the ring thoughts of pleasure and personal gain, while the Spirit is laying out a path for glory in eternal life to come. The Spirit will prevail as my first thoughts of the day focus on God's word. Self will not win the battle today. I will be Spirit-controlled by remaining in continuous prayer as the day unfolds.

Joy

I will look past the trials and difficulties that lie ahead today to the joy set before me. My rock and my salvation, my joy is secure in the Lord.

[Proverbs 10:28] The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

The world will tell me the lie that joy is happiness found in self. I will avoid that path today and seek joy in the eternal world. I will rejoice along with the heavenly hosts when one comes to repentance. I will count it all joy when I suffer for your namesake to reach the lost. Today, I will be a vessel to encourage the downhearted and reach the lost with joy that never fades in Christ Jesus.

The Nature of God in Proverbs

Love

They will know you are my Lord by my love. I will love you Lord with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength, and I will love others in this way.

[John 15:12-13] 12 This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.

God is love. There is no other way to love except to love as God loves. I will look to others with eyes of compassion and a heart to help. I will deny myself and take up the cross of Christ and follow His leading. Today I will look at others as eternal beings, created in the image of God, in need of encouragement in their walk with Christ, to find a relationship with the God of the universe.

Each morning Proverb's path presents opportunities to love God and love what God loves. The choice to stay on the path has rewards beyond earthly measure. If only we could see the angelic hosts cheering the saints to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let us join together with all creation to proclaim the glory of God.

The Nature of God in Proverbs

Prior to beginning this project, I sensed the Holy Spirit leading me to consider the world today and in the past, and how each aligns with the nature of God. It began with the simple question: Can ethics change in society over time? The answers I found are contained in the lessons of this Bible study. The inspiration and leading of the Holy Spirit made this project possible.

Fellowship Baptist Church was an answer to prayer, allowing us the use of their facility to hold this Bible study. My many thanks to Steve Simmons and the pastors and staff at Fellowship Baptist Church.

I also thank our Church Family for their tireless support. I am truly blessed and grateful to my wife Laurie for her diligence in reviewing and providing feedback. This project was only possible with her support!

The Nature of God in Proverbs

Introduction

Much emphasis today is placed on knowledge, and society is delivering it at a breakneck speed. No longer must one wait for information when mobile communication devices deliver it the moment it is desired. Is the widespread availability of knowledge an improvement or a detriment to society?

Unabated information bombards western culture. The pathologies of the unfiltered flow of information are deeply disturbing. Wisdom and understanding, the intended gatekeepers of knowledge, are cast aside on the superhighway of the delivery of knowledge.

There is a difference between knowledge revealed in creation and that of the secular humanistic approach. God has revealed His knowledge to man through Scripture and Creation. Psalm 19 reveals that the heavens declare the glory of God, and that creation pours out speech and continuously communicates knowledge. There is no place where their words are not heard. Worldly knowledge is when man draws information from Creation and interprets it for his own purpose.

For Christians, is the exposure to worldly knowledge impacting our intimate relationship with the Creator of the Universe? Worldly knowledge is a worthy and powerful opponent in the battlefield of the mind. The weapons to fight the battle are found in an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

[2 Corinthians 10:3-5] 3 For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, 4 since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments 5 and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ may seem a daunting task. It requires that we understand what it means to have a relationship with our Creator. When we realize that God is always with us, and that He not only provides knowledge, but also gives us wisdom and understanding, then we are driven to draw closer to Him.

A victorious life has at its core a foundation grounded in the nature of God. He provides everything required for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The source not only for knowledge, but for wisdom and understanding, is the Lord (Proverbs 2:6).

The Nature of God in Proverbs

In **The Nature of God in Proverbs** we will begin a journey to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of God throughout Scripture. Our study will include passages from every book in the Bible. We will also size up the battle by examining our society today and at the founding of the United States of America.

The Nature of God in Proverbs is a project intended for Bible Study groups, although it can be used by individuals. The initial use of this Bible Study was conducted by The Church Family Fellowship in Riverside, California. (www.thechurchhome.com). In addition to the material included herein, accompanying messages for each lesson are available at The Church Family Fellowship's YouTube channel ([\(83\) Proverbs - Bible Study Series - YouTube](#)).

The theme of the messages is "Realize, Recognize, and Reinforce".

1) Realize Society is Changing – God is Not

- a) Godly knowledge, wisdom, discipline, and instruction have not changed.
- b) [Hebrews 13:8] "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."
- c) [Revelation 1:8] "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'"
- d) [James 1:17] "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."
- e) Realize people today are increasingly indoctrinated into false beliefs by the abundance of secular knowledge that is available everywhere, for everyone. Many have little exposure to Biblical truths.

2) Recognize our Citizenship

- a) "As long as we are on this earth, we possess dual citizenship. On one hand we owe allegiance to our nation and are called to be good citizens. But we are also citizens of the kingdom of God. Our supreme loyalty is to Him." - Billy Graham
- b) [Philippians 3:20] "Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."
- c) Our hope is not in a political or economic solution. We look to God, the author and finisher of our faith.

3) Reinforce our Walk

- a) Godly wisdom, knowledge, and instruction are available 24/7. Godly discipline will guide us when necessary.
- b) [Colossians 1:10] "... so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God."
- c) [2 John 1:6] "This is love: that we walk according to his commands. This is the command as you have heard it from the beginning: that you walk in love."

It is my sincere hope that this Bible Study will draw the church family closer together in unity with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

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Lesson 1: Introduction to the book of Proverbs

"When you recognize God as Creator, you will admire Him. When you recognize His wisdom, you will learn from Him. When you discover His strength, you will rely on Him. But only when He saves you will you worship Him." ~ Max Lucado⁽¹⁾

Forward:

The major theme of the book of Proverbs can be given in one word: Wisdom. In ancient cultures, every ruler had his council of "wise men" whom he would consult when making important decisions. For King Solomon, the author of Proverbs, wisdom came from God Himself. The book of Proverbs wrestles with some of the most difficult questions of life. Its approach is to understand life's problems from God's point of view.

It is interesting that the word 'wise' or 'wisdom' occurs at least 125 times in the book of Proverbs, while the words 'repent', 'forgive(ness)', and 'salvation' are not mentioned. 'Sin' is mentioned three times, 'grace' and 'confess' once. There are at least eighteen references to "the fear of the Lord", setting the tone for living a life pleasing to God.

According to J. Vernon McGee, *"The proverbs of man contradict one another because men's ideas differ. An example would be "Look before you leap" contrasted with "He who hesitates is lost"; or "you get what you pay for" contrasted with "the best things in life are free". The book of Proverbs does not contradict itself. The book of Proverbs then is a collection of sayings, without particular regard for orderly arrangement that convey Godly wisdom."* ⁽²⁾

What is the book of Proverb's purpose? It is indeed to impart wisdom and teach us about the nature of God. But there is more. Proverbs not only reveals the nature of God but has much to say about what to do and what to avoid. This idea may sound like a doctrine of works, but as Ephesians 2:8-9 explains: *8 "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift -- 9 not from works, so that no one can boast."* We are saved by grace through faith, but it is for a purpose, as verse 10 states: *[Ephesians 2:10] 10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."*

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 1:1] "The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel."

Why study the book of Proverbs?

The book of Proverbs is not only a collection of principles, but it is also a type of writing called wisdom literature. Proverbs raises questions of values, moral behavior, the meaning of human life, and correct conduct. Its theological foundation is that the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge *[Proverbs 1:7] 7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline."*

Wisdom literature exist that predate Proverbs, written by sages. A sage in classical philosophy is someone who has attained wisdom. The term has also been used interchangeably with a 'good person' [Greek: agathos] and a 'virtuous person' [Greek:

spoudaios]. The sage is one who lives "according to an ideal which transcends the everyday" ⁽³⁾.

The wisdom literature from Sumeria and Babylonia are among the most ancient in the world, with the Sumerian documents dating back to the third millennium BC and the Babylonian dating to the second millennium BC.

We often study wisdom literature that has stood the test of time, seeking guidance. But we should ask what, or who, is its source. Solomon, the author of Proverbs, was given wisdom and knowledge from God (1 Kings 3:12).

- Proverbs is inspired by the One True God. Proverbs is the book of Godly wisdom. Warren Wiersbe sums it up: "The book of Proverbs is about Godly wisdom, how to get it, and how to use it." ⁽⁴⁾

Solomon's uniqueness

Proverbs' beginnings can be found in 1 Kings chapter 2, where we read that King David gave his son Solomon advice. It's interesting that David, a man after God's own heart, gave advice to Solomon, who became the wisest person to ever live. However, it wasn't Solomon's earthly father, but his Heavenly Father, Who gave him wisdom. In 1 Kings 3:5 we read: *5 "At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night. God said, "Ask. What should I give you?"* Solomon's response acknowledged that God had placed him on the throne. However, recognizing his reliance upon God, he made this request: *[1Kings 3:9] "So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?"* His request pleased God: *[1Kings 3:11-13] 11 "So God said to him, "Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, 12 "I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again. 13 "In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be your equal during your entire life."*

The nature of God in Proverbs

Our journey through Proverbs primarily studies the nature of God. We'll investigate how culture affects our thoughts and ultimately, our actions. Solomon asked God to give him a receptive heart to judge His people and to discern between good and evil. That will be a common theme throughout this study.

How can we take practical steps so that others can see the nature of God within us? First, we should recognize that our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19); and second, that we were bought at a price to glorify God. (1 Corinthians 6:20). The apostle Paul, in Galatians 5:16, says that we are to walk by the Spirit, and we will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Paul goes on to list the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The fruit of the Spirit, usually cited in Galatians, is also mentioned throughout Proverbs. The fruit of the Spirit are not achieved by works, but are developed in us through faith. Unlike gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit are available to every Christian.

Review Questions:

1. Why did Solomon ask for wisdom instead of power or wealth or victory over his enemies?

2. Why did God grant his request and give him even more than he asked for?

3. What New Testament scripture reflects God's generosity in this manner? (hint: Ephesians)

4. A person can be a smart fool, but not a wise atheist. Explain why this statement is true. (hint: James 1:5, Proverbs 1:7, Psalm 14:1)

5. In Proverbs, the word "wise" or "wisdom" is used at least 125 times, because the aim of the book is to help us acquire and apply God's wisdom to the decisions and activities of daily life. Read Proverbs 1:7.
 - a. What does it mean to fear the LORD?

 - b. What does the fool despise? Why?

PRAY

A follower of Jesus Christ, equipped with Godly wisdom, can dramatically impact the world to the glory of God. Pray that God would put it on your heart to seek wisdom from above every day.

Father God, search my heart and see if there is anything offensive in me, and replace it with godly motives. Lord, pour out your wisdom in my heart that I might glorify you this day.

Key Takeaways:

The source of knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7)

Solomon's uniqueness. (1Kings 3:9-13)

Seeking Wisdom. (James 1:5)

Scripture References:

[1Corinthians 6:19-20] 19 Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

[Galatians 5:16] 16 I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.

[Galatians 5:22-23] 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.

[Ephesians 1:3-14] 3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. 5 He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he richly poured out on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 He made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he purposed in Christ 10 as a plan for the right time -- to bring everything together in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth in him. 11 In him we have also received an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of the one who works out everything in agreement with the purpose of his will, 12 so that we who had already put our hope in Christ might bring praise to his glory. 13 In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed. 14 The Holy Spirit is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of his glory.

[James 1:5] 5 Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God -- who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly -- and it will be given to him.

[Proverbs 1:7] 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.

[Psalm 14:1] 1 The fool says in his heart, "There's no God." They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good.

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017)

Footnotes

1. "Max Lucado Quotes about God." *Lib Quotes*, <https://libquotes.com/max-lucado/quotes/god>.
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Lesson 2: To Know Wisdom

"Life's Tragedy is that we get old too soon and wise too late." ~ Benjamin Franklin⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 1:2-4] 2 "For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings; 3 for receiving prudent instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity; 4 for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced, knowledge and discretion to a young man –"

Let's start with the good news! Godly wisdom is something a believer can obtain. However, challenged by the cares of this world, we neglect to seek God.

There are warnings, such as in Colossians 2:8, which tell us to avoid deceptive philosophy (*Colossians 2:8: "8 Be careful that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elements of the world, rather than Christ."*). Jesus, speaking about the end times (Matthew 24:4-14), warns his disciples three times about deception.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, became a leader in the early church, and in Acts 15 we see him as a leader in the council of Jerusalem. From the gospel accounts, Jesus' brothers didn't believe in Him until after His resurrection. James did not believe Jesus was the Messiah until after He was crucified (Mark 15:40). So, what wisdom does he share with believers in his epistle, written in approximately 49AD? He makes this statement: *[James 1:5] "Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God -- who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly -- and it will be given to him."* Now, James is a very reliable source, but we need to define wisdom.

Clearly, the Bible's instruction is to gain wisdom. So where do we start? Has wisdom evolved over time? How do we discern wisdom from folly? In this lesson we will (by the grace of God and the authority of His word) address this important subject.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "wisdom" was defined then and now.

Definition of Wisdom:

Webster's Dictionary (current):⁽²⁾

- Ability to discern inner qualities and relationships (Insight)
- Good sense (Judgment)
- Generally accepted belief challenges what has become accepted wisdom among many historians (Robert Darnton)
- Accumulated philosophical or scientific learning (knowledge)
- A wise attitude, belief, or course of action
- The teachings of the ancient wise men

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽³⁾

- In Scripture, human learning; erudition; knowledge of arts and sciences. Moses was learned in all the *wisdom* of the Egyptians. [Acts 7:10](#).
- Quickness of intellect; readiness of apprehension; dexterity in execution; as the *wisdom* of Bezaleel and Aholiab. [Exodus 31:3](#).
- Natural instinct and sagacity. [Job 39:17](#).
- In Scripture theology, *wisdom* is true religion; godliness; piety; the knowledge and fear of God, and sincere and uniform obedience to his commands. This is the *wisdom* which is from above. [Psalms 90:12](#). [Job 28:12](#).
- Profitable words or doctrine. [Psalms 37:30](#).
- The *wisdom* of this world, mere human erudition; or the carnal policy of men, their craft and artifices in promoting their temporal interests; called also fleshly *wisdom* [1 Corinthians 2:1](#). [2 Corinthians 1:12](#).
- The *wisdom* of words, artificial or affected eloquence; or learning displayed in teaching. [1 Corinthians 1:17](#) and 2.

Review Questions:

1. The definition of wisdom has changed since 1828. What changed? Why do you think it changed?
 - a. "The teachings of the ancient wise men" is one definition in the current edition of Webster's dictionary. What are your thoughts about this statement?

2. It is appropriate at this time to further define wisdom as either "worldly" or "godly". What does Jeremiah 9:23-24 state about godly wisdom?
 - a. Why should the Christian not boast, according to verse 23?

 - b. What does the Lord delight in?

3. Who does Paul tell the church in Corinth to not be deceived by in 1 Corinthians 3:18? What do you think he means by “let him become a fool so that he can become wise”?
 - a. What is worldly wisdom to God (1 Corinthians 3:19)?
4. Choose something you’ve heard or read that is worldly wisdom and explain why you believe it is foolish or even destructive.
5. According to James 3:14-15, wisdom that is not from above is from where?
 - a. How can we guard against bitter envy and selfish ambition?

Let’s turn the corner and consider wisdom from above

6. According to Psalm 111:10, the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. What does it mean to fear the LORD (see note)?
 - a. What does Proverbs 2:3-5 say about the fear of the LORD?

Note: The word LORD is translated Y^ehōvâh, It is the proper name of the one true God.

The word “Lord” is translated ’Ădônây, which is spoken in place of Yahweh. It would signify a personal relationship, as in Genesis 18:30 (“Let my lord not be angry...”)

7. According to a Google search of what is most valuable in today's world, *"Data has become the single most valuable commodity in today's business world. Perhaps one of the most important considerations in understanding the value of data is that it may not always directly translate into cash, but this doesn't make it any less valuable."*⁽⁴⁾ So, according to the search, data is the planet's most valuable commodity.

How valuable is wisdom, according to Proverbs 3:13-15?

- a. Is this something you truly believe?
 - b. How does one balance worldly treasure versus Godly wisdom?
8. Can Godly wisdom influence those around you? Explain. (Hint: 1 Kings 4:29-30, 1 Kings 10:1,3)
9. God is willing to generously give us wisdom. All we must do is ask, but we need to ask with the proper motive. What is the right motive, according to James 4:1-3?
10. How often do we need to seek godly wisdom?
11. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

PRAY

A follower of Jesus Christ equipped with Godly wisdom can dramatically impact the world to the glory of God. Pray that God would put it on your heart to seek wisdom from above every day.

Father God, search my heart and see if there is anything offensive in me, and replace it with godly motives. Lord, pour out your wisdom in my heart that I might glorify you this day.

Key Takeaways:

Wisdom is available to the believer. (James 1:5)

Has wisdom changed? Our nation's definition has changed. (Webster's 1828 dictionary)

Should we boast in our wisdom? If not, what should we boast in? (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Wisdom is from above. (James 3:15)

The wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. (1Corinthians 3:18)

Scripture References:

[Acts 7:10] 10 "and rescued him out of all his troubles. He gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over his whole household."

[Exodus 31:1-3] 1 "The LORD also spoke to Moses: 2 'Look, I have appointed by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 I have filled him with God's Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every craft.'"

[Job 39:13-17] 13 "The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but are her feathers and plumage like the stork's? 14 She abandons her eggs on the ground and lets them be warmed in the sand. 15 She forgets that a foot may crush them or that some wild animal may trample them. 16 She treats her young harshly, as if they were not her own, with no fear that her labor may have been in vain. 17 For God has deprived her of wisdom; he has not endowed her with understanding."

[Psalm 90:12] 12 "Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts."

[Job 28:12-13] 12 "But where can wisdom be found, and where is understanding located? 13 No one can know its value, since it cannot be found in the land of the living."

[Psalm 37:30-31] 30 "The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom; his tongue speaks what is just. 31 The instruction of his God is in his heart; his steps do not falter."

[1Corinthians 2:1-2] 1 "When I came to you, brothers and sisters, announcing the mystery of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom. 2 I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

[2Corinthians 1:12] 12 "Indeed, this is our boast: The testimony of our conscience is that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you, with godly sincerity and purity, not by human wisdom but by God's grace."

[1Corinthians 1:17-18] 17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel -- not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ will not be emptied of its effect. 18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved."

[Jeremiah 9:23-24] 23 " 'This is what the LORD says: The wise person should not boast in his wisdom; the strong should not boast in his strength; the wealthy should not boast in his wealth. 24 But the one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me -- that I am the LORD, showing faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things. This is the LORD's declaration.'"

[1Corinthians 3:18-20] 18 "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become a fool so that he can become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, since it is written, He catches the wise in their craftiness; 20 and again, The Lord knows that the reasonings of the wise are futile."

[James 3:14-15] 14 "But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't boast and deny the truth. 15 Such wisdom does not come down from above but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic."

[Psalm 111:10] 10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his instructions have good insight. His praise endures forever."

[Proverbs 2:3-5] 3 “Furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God.”

[Proverbs 3:13-15] 13 “Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, 14 for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire can equal her.”

[1Kings 4:29-30] 29 “God gave Solomon wisdom, very great insight, and understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore. 30 Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.”

[1Kings 10:1, 3] 1 “The queen of Sheba heard about Solomon's fame connected with the name of the LORD and came to test him with riddles. ... 3 So Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too difficult for the king to explain to her.”

[James 4:1-3] 1 “What is the source of wars and fights among you? Don't they come from your passions that wage war within you? 2 You desire and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and wage war. You do not have because you do not ask. 3 You ask and don't receive because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Footnotes

1. “Benjamin Franklin Quotes.” *BrainyQuote*, Xplore, https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/benjamin_franklin_132004.
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3. Webster, Noah. *Webster's Dictionary: Unabridged*. 1828.
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Lesson 3: Wisdom's Plea

"Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom."

~ Charles Spurgeon⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 1:20-21] 20 Wisdom calls out in the street; she makes her voice heard in the public squares. 21 She cries out above the commotion; she speaks at the entrance of the city gates.

In our nation's first dictionary Noah Webster defined wisdom in this way: "In Scripture theology, wisdom is true religion; godliness; piety; the knowledge and fear of God, and sincere and uniform obedience to his commands. This is the wisdom which is from above."⁽²⁾ The foundation of the world is God's wisdom: *[Jeremiah 10:12] "He made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and spread out the heavens by his understanding."*

David Guzik says of Proverbs 1:20-21: "Solomon presents wisdom as a person, a woman who offers her guidance and help to the world. Her cry is aloud, but often ignored... **Wisdom presents herself to everyone in every place.**"⁽³⁾ (emphasis added). We are reminded that Solomon was the wisest person to ever live, so we could conclude that he is a subject matter expert.

Warren Wiersbe says: "The greatest tragedy is that there is so much noise that people can't hear the things they really need to hear. God is trying to get through to them with the voice of wisdom, but all they hear are the confused communications clutter, foolish voices that lead them farther away from the truth."⁽⁴⁾

For the Christian, distraction is the tactic used by the opposition to gain the advantage and possibly win the battle, though not the war. (*Romans 8:37 "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."*) The word "commotion" used in Proverbs 1:21 could be defined by many terms, such as trouble or noise, all of which pit themselves against wisdom. How many times have you embarked upon a task only to be distracted, and possibly not complete it?

The non-believer often does not rise above the commotion to hear from the one true God who speaks to him/her through His creation, His saints, and the Word of God.

We can draw the conclusion that with godly wisdom everywhere and for everyone, there can be no excuse for not hearing God unless it is by choice. God wants everyone to know Him and to draw near to Him. In this lesson, we will look at the pervasiveness of God's revealing of wisdom and why some choose to ignore it.

Review Questions:

1. Read Proverbs 3:19. Creation itself shows great wisdom by a brilliant designer. This fact is exhibited in visible features (like weather patterns) and unseen ones (like the blood clotting system).
 - a. Share something from God's creation that demonstrates His wisdom.

2. God's creation is an exquisite design with interdependencies working in unison that demonstrate His wisdom. Read Psalm 19:1-4. What do the heavens declare?
 - a. Is there any place this declaration is not heard?

3. Proverbs 1:20-21 mentions that wisdom calls out, and in some cases cries out, over the commotion. Do we hear wisdom as an audible voice out in the street or in public? If it is not audible, then how is wisdom understood?
 - a. Verse 21 mentions that wisdom cries out above the commotion. What do you believe the author is saying here?

4. It is a good practice to read Psalm 139 often and pray and meditate on it. Let's do that now. Consider verses 23-24. Write down your thoughts.
 - a. Seeking God's wisdom often is the way of the Christian. Read Proverbs 17:24 and share your thoughts.

5. Many have experienced listening to a radio station and suddenly hearing static, which makes hearing difficult. Sometimes it causes us to turn off the radio or change stations. The static may be caused by being too far from the signal or because the radio requires tuning. That may also be the case for the Christian who is struggling.

Note: Hebrews 12:1 mentions *"Lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us."* Sin can hold us back, but there are also things that may not be sin but are hinderances that can keep us from an effective Christian walk.

- a. Is there something today that is a hinderance for you? What are you doing about it?

6. Some hinderances are life-changing trials, and they can sideline a Christian. They can either cause you to draw closer to God or to push you away. Notice that God does not move. Share from your personal experience how God has turned a distraction into something that drew you closer to Him.

- a. How can God use this for His glory [see 2 Corinthians 1:4]?

7. Some in society today make the claim that there is no absolute truth, and in doing so influence many. What God has created is under attack at breakneck speed. As a Christian we grieve over this, yet it does not change our mission to preach the gospel. God has brought people into our path that are caught in this deception. Write their names here and throughout this week continue to pray for each of them by name.

- a. In Proverbs 4:10-11 we see a father teaching wisdom to his son. Could this also apply for mentoring relationships? How are mentoring relationships developed?

8. The conversion of the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit *[John 16:8] "When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment."* Read Romans 1:20-25. What excuse can a person have for not acknowledging the one true God?

- a. How do Godly wisdom and worldly wisdom divide a society?

9. Read Proverbs 8:1-4. How far-reaching is Godly wisdom?

10. Wisdom's plea is heard throughout the entire world. We read in Proverbs 2:6 that "the LORD gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." Wisdom is revealed through creation and through the Word, yet many have not yet recognized or understood it.

In John 18:37 Jesus reveals why he came into the world: "I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." Then Pontius Pilot asked Jesus this question in verse 38: "What is truth?" How would you explain truth to someone seeking it?

11. In John chapter 3 we see the heart of God. *[John 3:16-17] 16 "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* Consider those that are on your list to pray for. It is comforting to know that wisdom calls out to everyone, everywhere. Yes, even those for whom you are praying. Pray for them now and ask God to intervene and to reach them. Maybe He is calling you to be His hands and feet. Share any thoughts.

12. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

PRAY

Wisdom calls out to everyone, everywhere. The Holy Spirit reveals wisdom to the heart of a believer. *[Hebrews 12:1] "Let us lay aside every hinderance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us."*

Father God, Your Word says if any lack wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously and ungrudgingly – and it will be given to him. I pray that my heart would be filled with Your wisdom and that I would use it to bring You glory. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. (Charles Spurgeon)

God founded the world by wisdom. (Proverbs 3:19)

Wisdom presents herself to everyone in every place. (Proverbs 1:20-21)

Creation is pouring out the work of his hands – day and night. (Psalm 19:2)

Scripture References:

[Proverbs 3:19] The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding.

[Psalm 19:1-4] 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. 3 There is no speech; there are no words; their voice is not heard. 4 Their message has gone out to the whole earth, and their words to the ends of the world.

[Proverbs 1:20-21] 20 Wisdom calls out in the street; she makes her voice heard in the public squares. 21 She cries out above the commotion; she speaks at the entrance of the city gates:

[Psalm 139:23-24] 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

[Proverbs 17:24] 24 Wisdom is the focus of the perceptive, but a fool's eyes roam to the ends of the earth.

[Hebrews 12:1] Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us,

[2Corinthians 1:4] He comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any kind of affliction, through the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

[Proverbs 4:10-11] 10 Listen, my son. Accept my words, and you will live many years. 11 I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths.

[Romans 1:18-25] 18 For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, 19 since what can be known about God is evident

among them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse. 21 For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles. 24 Therefore God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.

[Proverbs 8:1-4] 1 Doesn't wisdom call out? Doesn't understanding make her voice heard? 2 At the heights overlooking the road, at the crossroads, she takes her stand. 3 Beside the gates leading into the city, at the main entrance, she cries out: 4 "People, I call out to you; my cry is to the children of Adam.

[John 18:37-38] 37 "You are a king then? " Pilate asked. "You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." 38 "What is truth? " said Pilate. After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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2. Webster, Noah, William Torrey Harris, F. Sturges Allen, and Albert Bushnell Hart. *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language*. Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1928.
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Lesson 4: The Beginning of Knowledge

"The end of all learning is to know God, and out of that knowledge to love and imitate Him." ~ John Milton (author of "Paradise Lost")⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 9:10] "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Defining the Beginning of Knowledge

When did knowledge begin? (Selah - *pause and ponder*). This is not a difficult question for the believer. The non-believer might align with ancient philosophers who claim knowledge comes from "self-knowledge," or with the current body of knowledge that is accepted as truth. From generation-to-generation knowledge obtained through humankind increases.

Godly knowledge is complete and does not change over time.

Previously we studied that by wisdom God created everything (*[Proverbs 3:19] The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding.*) A.W. Tozer wrote in *The Pursuit of God*, "He is omniscient, which means that He knows in one free and effortless act all matter, all spirit, all relationships, all events."⁽²⁾ Godly wisdom is inextricably linked to Godly knowledge.

God reveals knowledge through His creation (*[Psalm 19:1-2] 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.*) **Selah.** Knowledge also comes through scripture. (*[2 Timothy 3:16] All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.*)

Plato was the first philosopher in the Western world to think seriously about the nature of knowledge. To him, we owe most, if not all, of our basic philosophical thoughts on the subject. *For Plato, the beginning of knowledge was self-knowledge. The "self" is the essence of a person: his thoughts, feelings, actions, experiences, beliefs, values, principles, and relationships. The "self" includes a person's life purpose, meaning, and aspirations.* ⁽³⁾

The Biblical and Secular view of the beginning of knowledge are opposed to each other. According to secular humanism, all reality and life center upon human beings. Biblical knowledge centers upon God, His nature, and a personal relationship with Him.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828.⁽⁴⁾ There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "knowledge" was defined then and now.

Definition of Knowledge:

Webster's Dictionary (current): ⁽⁵⁾

- The fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or *association*.
- Acquaintance with or understanding of a science, art, or technique.
- The fact or condition of being aware of something.
- The range of one's information or understanding "*answered to the best of my knowledge.*"
- The circumstance or condition of *apprehending* truth or fact through reasoning : **COGNITION**
- The sum of what is known: the body of truth, information, and principles acquired by humankind.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:

- A clear and certain perception of that which exists, or of truth and fact; the perception of the connection and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of our ideas.
 - We can have no *knowledge* of that which does not exist. *God has a perfect knowledge of all his works. Human knowledge is very limited, and is mostly gained by observation and experience*
- Acquaintance with a person.
- Learning; illumination of mind.
 - Ignorance is the curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven. (*William Shakespeare*)

Review Questions:

1. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7). Proverbs 9:10 mentions the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

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- a. Compare these verses and share your thoughts. Describe the difference between wisdom and knowledge.

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- b. Review commentaries and other resources and write down your observations. (*Online commentaries can be found at www.blueletterbible.org.)*

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- c. What is the relationship between knowledge and wisdom? What about understanding?

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2. Read the definition of knowledge based upon the current version of Webster's dictionary. Compare it to Webster's 1828 dictionary. List your observations.
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3. According to Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, God has perfect knowledge of all His works. Human knowledge is extremely limited and is mostly gained by observation and experience. The Scientific Method is an empirical method of acquiring knowledge. It is a continuous process of observation, research, hypothesis, testing, analysis, and conclusions.
 - a. Read Proverbs 1:28-31. Can the Scientific Method be an effective tool for the Christian to gain knowledge?
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 - b. How about for the non-Christian?
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4. Those that reject Godly wisdom reject Godly knowledge. Secular humanistic wisdom and knowledge can oppose Godly wisdom and knowledge. Sometimes they will agree when human pursuits find Godly knowledge accidentally, but credit won't be given where it's due. What will be the result of their pursuits according to Proverbs 1:31?
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 - a. How does this impact Christians?
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5. Proverbs 18:15 describes a hunger for more knowledge for the believer. *[Proverbs 18:15] The mind of the discerning acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks it.* David Guzik's commentary on this verse states: *"The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge: Wisdom desires more wisdom and knows how to get it. They show their prudence (wisdom) by seeking and getting more knowledge."*⁽⁶⁾ What is the danger in hearing, but not applying, God's word?
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 - a. Share something you've done to allow God's Word to make a profound change in your life.
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6. Food, water, and shelter are basic human needs that in western culture require money. Money is necessary, but the love and excessive pursuit of it can be sinful (1 Timothy 6:10). Is it an either or? We must work enough to provide for our needs, but never seek wealth at the expense of our relationship with God. Share the advice that Proverbs 2:1-6 gives to keep a proper perspective between worldly wealth and Godly knowledge.

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7. Proverbs 8:1 says *“Doesn't wisdom call out? Doesn't understanding make her voice heard?”* Much communication in the information age requires authentication. You must prove your identity to communicate. As a believer, your authentication to receive Godly wisdom is in Jesus Christ, who is the author and finisher of your faith. Your relationship with Him, and the Holy Spirit within you, allows you to receive and understand Godly knowledge. Read Proverbs 8:8-10.

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- a. When Godly wisdom calls out, knowledge is revealed. What does verse 8 reveal?

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- b. How does this differ from knowledge gained through the Scientific Method?

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- c. Think about verse 10. Refer to Matthew 16:24-27. Share your thoughts.

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8. Man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and with the need to know Him (Acts 17:26-27). Without a connection to the Creator, the creation wanders aimlessly with no direction and no purpose. Distractions fill the void that was designed for Godly knowledge. When we accept Jesus Christ as LORD, the Holy Spirit takes residence within and fills us with wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and He doesn't leave us alone. Proverbs 2:10 describes what that moment is like. Share your experience.

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- a. What does Philippians 4:6-7 add to this?

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9. The ultimate purpose of gaining knowledge is to know God more intimately. What is eternal life, according to John 17:3?

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10. Share one or more key takeaways from this week's lesson.

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PRAY

A follower of Jesus Christ, equipped with Godly knowledge, can dramatically impact the world to the glory of God. Pray that God would give you more knowledge of Him through His creation and His Word.

Father God, I want to know You more. I pray that You would increase my knowledge of You and put a burden on my heart to share this with others. Lord, You direct my path and I ask that You open the door for me this week, that I could share with someone what it means to know God.

Key Takeaways:

Godly wisdom is inextricably linked to Godly knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10)

Godly knowledge is revealed in His creation and His Word. (Psalm 19:1-2, 2 Timothy 3:16)

God has a perfect *knowledge* of all His works. Human *knowledge* is very limited and is mostly gained by observation and experience. (Daniel Webster's 1828 dictionary)

The ultimate purpose of knowledge is to know God. (John 17:3, John Milton)

Scripture References:

[Proverbs 1:7] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline.

[Proverbs 9:10] "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

[Proverbs 1:28-31] 28 "Then they will call me, but I won't answer; they will search for me, but won't find me. 29 "Because they hated knowledge, didn't choose to fear the LORD, 30 "were not interested in my counsel, and rejected all my correction, 31 "they will eat the fruit of their way and be gluttoned with their own schemes.

[1Timothy 6:10] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

Proverbs Path

Lesson 4

The Beginning of Knowledge

[Proverbs 2:1-6] 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; 3 furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God. 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

[Proverbs 8:8-10] 8 "All the words from my mouth are righteous; none of them are deceptive or perverse. 9 "All of them are clear to the perceptive, and right to those who discover knowledge. 10 "Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold.

[Matthew 16:24-27] 24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. 25 "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it. 26 "For what will it benefit someone if he gains the whole world yet loses his life? Or what will anyone give in exchange for his life? 27 "For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each according to what he has done.

[Genesis 1:27] So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

[Acts 17:26-27] 26 "From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. 27 "He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

[Proverbs 2:10] For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will delight you.

[Philippians 4:6-7] 6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[John 17:3] "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent -- Jesus Christ."

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 5: Perceiving the Words of Understanding

"Father, write Your Word in our heart; make us men and women who understand Your truth." ~ Alistair Begg⁽¹⁾

Verse:

[Proverbs 2:10-11] 10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will delight you. 11 Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you.

The source of understanding for the believer can be found in Job chapter 32. *[Job 32:8] But it is the spirit in a person-- the breath from the Almighty-- that gives anyone understanding.* As we begin our study of understanding, we need to recognize the differences between the World's definition and the Christian's definition.

The current⁽²⁾ and 1828⁽³⁾ dictionary definitions of "understanding" are quite different. The current dictionary definition focuses on understanding within a person, or common ground between others. The definition in the original dictionary for our country (1828 version) is based upon the Bible's explanation of understanding.

Jesus acknowledges that there are those who do not understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew chapter 13. We see Jesus' response when His disciples asked why He spoke in parables to the people. *[Matthew 13:10-11] 10 Then the disciples came up and asked him, "Why are you speaking to them in parables? " 11 He answered, "Because the secrets of the kingdom of heaven have been given for you to know, but it has not been given to them." (My emphasis added)*

It was Albert Einstein who said "I speak to everyone in the same way, whether he is the garbage man or the president of the university."⁽⁴⁾ As Christians, we are called to preach the gospel to everyone: *[Mark 16:15-16 NLT] 15 And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. 16 Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned."* It is doubtful that everyone Albert Einstein spoke to understood quantum physics. The same is true for the Christian speaking the Word of God to a non-believer. It is not the job of a Christian to reveal understanding, but to share the gospel and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "understanding" was defined then and now.

Definition of Understanding:

Webster's Dictionary (current):

- A mental grasp
- The power of comprehending
 - The capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars
 - The power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories
- A mutual agreement not formally entered into but in some degree binding on each side
- Friendly or harmonious relationship
- An agreement of opinion or feeling: adjustment of differences

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:

- The faculty of the human mind by which it apprehends the real state of things presented to it, or by which it receives or comprehends the ideas which others express and intend to communicate. The *understanding* is called also the intellectual faculty. It is the faculty by means of which we obtain a great part of our knowledge. [Luke 24:45](#). [Ephesians 1:18](#).
- By *understanding* I mean that faculty whereby we are enabled to apprehend the objects of knowledge, generals or particulars, absent or present, and to judge of their truth or falsehood, good or evil.
- *There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding* [Job 32:8](#).

Review Questions:

1. The definition of understanding has changed since 1828. What changed? Why do you think it changed?
 - a. "The power of comprehending" is one definition of understanding in the current edition of Webster's dictionary. Where does this comprehension come from?
2. If the Holy Spirit guides the believer in understanding, what guides the non-believer?
 - a. How can this be problematic in a society (consider the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution)?
3. Proverbs 3:5-6 mentions our own understanding and to not lean upon it. What are we to do instead? What will be the result?
4. Godly understanding comes from above [\[Job 32:8\]](#). What is the purpose of Godly understanding according to 1 John 5:20?
 - a. The first "know" in this verse is the Greek word *eidō* and means to perceive with the eyes or other senses, or to notice, discern, or discover. The second "know" is the Greek word *ginōskō* and is the same term used in John 17:3. It is a deep intimate knowledge that we will have with God for eternity. Review 1 John 5:20 and John 17:3 and share what you see these have in common.

5. We can expect suffering in this life. In John 16:33 we read, “You will have suffering in this world.” Although we may experience suffering, God safeguards the believer [1Peter 1:5-6]. We may not understand why we must suffer, yet we will not go through it alone (see Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:9). Read these verses and share your thoughts.

a. How does God view the suffering of his children? (See Lamentations 3:32-33)

6. Proverbs 2:11 says that “Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you.” Read Proverbs 2:12-15 and describe how understanding will guard you.

a. Did you have a “friend” growing up that would get you into trouble? That’s a good reminder that choosing those in our inner circle is important for the believer. Proverbs 27:6a says *“The wounds of a friend are trustworthy.”* Do you have friends like this? How have they helped your Christian walk?

7. “Science is defined knowledge or a system of knowledge covering general truths or the operation of general laws especially as obtained and tested through the Scientific Method.” ⁽⁵⁾ Without knowledge from the one True God any pursuit of Godly understanding will be futile. What does 1 Corinthians 3:19 and Romans 1:28 say about this?

a. Science should naturally lead to the Creator of all things. Why do you suppose that some that pursue science would deny God?

8. Our understanding can be influenced by our earthly father. A godly father will train up a child in the way he/she should go. Discipline and correction are necessary. Some earthly fathers are not godly, and their discipline and correction might not have been aligned with the Heavenly Father's ways, but God was always with you.

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- a. What does Proverbs 3:11-12 say about discipline from God's perspective?

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- b. How does Proverbs 3:11 change your perspective of Godly discipline?

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9. Proverbs 8:1 asks the question, "Doesn't understanding make her voice heard"? Adam Clarke made this observation: *"There are, it is true, temples, synagogues, churches, chapel, etc.; but hundreds of thousands never frequent them, and therefore do not hear the voice of truth: **Wisdom, therefore, must go to them**, if she wishes them to receive her instructions. Hence the zealous ministers of Christ go still to the highways and hedges, to the mountains and plains, to the ships and the cottages, to persuade sinners to turn from the error of their ways, and accept that redemption which was procured by the sacrificial offering of Jesus Christ."*⁽⁵⁾

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- a. A believer in Jesus Christ will have a heart for the lost because Jesus does. We might say "If I could only get them to come to church to hear the preacher." That is good, but what does 1 Peter 3:15 say?

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10. There is another benefit to understanding that we find in Philippians: *"[Philippians 4:6-7] 6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 **And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding**, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* "This peace doesn't just surpass the understanding of the worldly man, it surpasses **all understanding**. Even the godly man cannot comprehend this peace ⁽¹⁾." God's peace seems more apparent to the believer during difficult times. Share what you have learned from difficult times.

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11. The apostle Paul had a heart for the lost. He also had a special place in his heart for believers. Paul shared his prayer life for those in Colossae in his letter: *"[Colossians 1:3-4] 3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, 4 for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints."* Paul concludes his prayer in verse 9: *"[Colossians 1:9] For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."* We can take a lesson from Paul when we pray for believers who God has brought into our path. It can be encouraging to hear that someone is praying for you. Take a moment to pray for someone in the manner that the apostle Paul shares, and like Paul, let them know.

a. Paul shares his motive for sharing the gospel in Colossians 2:2-3. Share your thoughts.

12. Understanding that comes from God can have common ground with worldly understanding. That can be helpful when talking to a non-believer. Share one or two thoughts of how you could engage a non-believer when sharing the gospel.

13. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

Digging Deeper (Optional): Read Exodus 35:30-35 and list the abilities and gifts that God gives to His people.

PRAY

Knowing God and making Him known is the desire of the committed Christian's heart. God desires a close intimate relationship with you! Pray that your knowledge and understanding of God would increase.

Father God, I want to know You more. I want to know Your ways and share them with all those you bring into my path. Lord, you know my heart and my struggles, but You also know my desire to draw closer to You. Draw me close to You now, this I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN

Key Takeaways:

Understanding is from God. (Job 2:8)

Understanding will guard you. (Prov 2:11)

The world will not understand the ways of God. (Matthew 13:11)

Trust God and do not lean on your own understanding. (Proverbs 3:5)

The peace of God surpasses all human understanding. (Philippians 4:7)

Scripture References:

[Luke 24:45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

[Ephesians 1:18 NLT] I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called--his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

[Job 32:8] But it is the spirit in a person-- the breath from the Almighty-- that gives anyone understanding.

[Proverbs 3:5-6] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

[1John 5:20] And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true one. We are in the true one -- that is, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

[John 17:3] "This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent -- Jesus Christ.

[John 16:32-33] 32 "Indeed, an hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. 33 "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world."

[Deuteronomy 31:6] "Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For the LORD your God is the one who will go with you; he will not leave you or abandon you."

[1Peter 1:5-6] 5 You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials

[Joshua 1:9] "Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

[Lamentations 3:32-33] 32 Even if he causes suffering, he will show compassion according to the abundance of his faithful love. 33 For he does not enjoy bringing affliction or suffering on mankind.

[Proverbs 2:11] Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you.

[Proverbs 2:12-15] 12 It will rescue you from the way of evil -- from anyone who says perverse things, 13 from those who abandon the right paths to walk in ways of darkness, 14 from those who enjoy doing evil and celebrate perversion, 15 whose paths are crooked, and whose ways are devious.

Proverbs Path

Lesson 5

Perceiving the Words of Understanding

[1Corinthians 3:19] For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, since it is written, He catches the wise in their craftiness;

[Romans 1:28] And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right.

[Proverbs 3:11-12] 11 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; 12 for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

[Proverbs 8:1] Doesn't wisdom call out? Doesn't understanding make her voice heard?

[1Peter 3:15] but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

[Colossians 2:2-3] 2 I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all the riches of complete understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery -- Christ. 3 In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[Exodus 35:30-35] 30 Moses then said to the Israelites: "Look, the LORD has appointed by name Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 31 "He has filled him with God's Spirit, with wisdom, understanding, and ability in every kind of craft 32 "to design artistic works in gold, silver, and bronze, 33 "to cut gemstones for mounting, and to carve wood for work in every kind of artistic craft. 34 "He has also given both him and Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach others. 35 "He has filled them with skill to do all the work of a gem cutter; a designer; an embroiderer in blue, purple, and scarlet yarn and fine linen; and a weaver. They can do every kind of craft and design artistic designs.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 6: Following Instructions

"The Bible was not given for our information but for our transformation." ~ Dwight L. Moody⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

"[Proverbs 3:11] Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline."

The Bible is a collection of books sometimes referred to as **Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. John Chrysostom appears to be the first writer to use the Greek phrase *ta biblia* ("the books") to describe the Old and New Testaments together (in his *Homilies on Matthew*, delivered between 386 and 388)⁽²⁾.

Noah Webster's definition of "instruction" includes a biblical reference. *"The act of teaching or informing the understanding in that of which it was before ignorant. [Proverbs 8:10] 'Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold.'"*⁽³⁾

Instruction defines a process to accomplish a task. Throughout the day we accomplish many tasks, some of them done subconsciously. That would suggest that within our mind we have an ability to complete tasks based upon instinctive knowledge, including the indwelling of God's Word. Did the apostle Paul have this in mind when he wrote in Romans chapter 12: *"[Romans 12:2] Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."* ? Renewing the mind must be a continuous process. The Christian must think differently!

Many verses in Proverbs (i.e., Proverbs 8:10) prioritize instruction above earthly gain. Earthly gain is not problematic unless it becomes the primary pursuit. **Godly instruction will provide insight to use earthly gain for the glory of God.** *"[Matthew 6:19-21] 19 'Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. 20 'But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. 21 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* The instruction of God's Word leads to our true treasure.

The Christian lives by grace. *"[Ephesians 2:8] For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift."* Since we are saved by grace, then how do instructions have a role in the way we live? Let's continue with Ephesians 2:10: *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."* The instruction in God's Word is for our protection, and for our own good. *"[Deuteronomy 10:13] Keep the LORD's commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good."*

Review Questions:

1. Instruction is defined as “a direction or order, detailed information telling how something SHOULD be done.”⁽³⁾ A command goes a step further and includes action. Read Deuteronomy 11:26-28 and notice the choices and repercussions of obedience and disobedience for the nation of Israel.

“It is important to recognize that we, in Jesus Christ, do not have an Old Covenant relationship with God. We expect to be blessed, not because of our obedience, but because of our position in Jesus. The curse we deserved was laid upon Him ([Galatians 3:10-14](#)). Though there may be an inherent curse of consequences in our disobedience or even in the correcting hand of God, under the New Covenant, He does not punish us or curse us - because all that we deserved, past, present, and future, was poured out upon Jesus.” – David Guzik⁽⁴⁾

How should we view the instructions and commands in the Old Testament? See Romans 7:12, 8:3-4, 15:4

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- a. What did Jesus have to say about the law? See Matthew 5:17-18.

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- b. Share your thoughts on Matthew 5:19.

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2. Proverbs 8:10 places instruction above worldly wealth. Worldly wealth is temporal and the pursuit of it can easily take the Christian off-track, if it is without godly instruction. A good reminder comes from Mark 8:36. Worldly wealth can provide for some of our needs and desires, but not all. Describe how Proverbs 8:10 values godly instruction and worldly wealth.

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- a. What should be the Christian’s view of earthly wealth? See 1Timothy 6:17-19.

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3. Instruction guides our personal actions, but is also on display in society through laws and ordinances. Godly instruction can be opposed by the laws of society. Thus, conflict exists. Proverbs 7:2 speaks of the importance of guarding God's instructions. "[Proverbs 7:2] *Keep my commands and live, and guard my instructions as you would the pupil of your eye.*" Warren Wiersbe states: "*We protect our eyes because they're valuable to us, and so should we honor and protect God's Word by obeying it.*"⁽⁵⁾ The eye has a natural defense from the eyelid that protects it. Protecting the eye is instinctive, but guarding the heart is more complex. How do Proverbs 4:6, 13, and 23 instruct us to protect ourselves?

- a. What advice does Paul give in 2 Timothy 1:14? Why did Paul give this advice?

4. Discipline is better received when we know the one administering it is looking out for our good. Instruction for discipline is one purpose of the book of Proverbs: "[Proverbs 1:2] *For learning wisdom and discipline; for understanding insightful sayings.*" Paul shares an interesting perspective on self-discipline in 1 Corinthians 9:27. Why was this issue so important to Paul and for us as well?

5. "*For a majority of Americans, the Ten Commandments are not set in stone. According to a USA Today poll, 'Sixty percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments.' In fact, it is amazing what Americans do know by comparison:*

- *74% of Americans can name all three Stooges -- Moe, Larry, and Curly.*
- *35% of Americans can recall all six kids from the Brady Bunch.*
- *25% of Americans can name all seven ingredients of McDonald's Big Mac*

Here is the sad news: Only 14% can accurately name all Ten Commandments. Yet 78% of Americans are in favor of public displays of the Commandments. How ironic. Americans affirm the Ten Commandments but cannot name them."⁽⁶⁾

The Bible is God's Word and provides instructions for godly living, yet Bible illiteracy is prevalent even in the Christian community. [Proverbs 8:33] "*Listen to instruction and be wise; don't ignore it.*" Time for a closed book test. Write down the 10 commandments. How did you do?

6. As we live for Christ, we have opportunities to reach the lost. Proverbs 13:13-14 mentions a wise person's instruction and how it can change the course of life for those God brings into his/her path. The Holy Spirit does the work of conversion, but God allows Christ followers to participate. Share your thoughts on the rewards mentioned in this verse.

7. *"Every Christian should live a God-guided life. If you are not guided by God, you will be guided by something else."* – Eric Liddell.⁽⁷⁾ We are either moving forward or backward in our Christian walk, there is no standing still. *"[Psalm 119:15-16] 15 I will meditate on your precepts and think about your ways. 16 I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word."* Meditating upon God's Word creates a deeper understanding of the will of God. Take time to meditate on Proverbs 3:11-12 this week and share your thoughts.

8. *In 2021, Gallup shared that for the first time ever, church membership dropped below 50% nationally. Among millennials, 36% identify with a church.*⁽⁸⁾ We've read before a comment from Adam Clarke: *"There are, it is true, temples, synagogues, churches, chapel, etc.; but hundreds of thousands never frequent them, and therefore do not hear the voice of truth."*⁽⁹⁾

God is in control, so is this news to Him? It is not a question of numbers; that is the work of the Holy Spirit. The question is about you and me. What can we do? How can we make a difference? Edward Everett Hale makes this statement, *"I am only one, but still, I am one. I cannot do everything, but still, I can do something; and because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do something that I can do."*⁽¹⁰⁾ As we take a step of faith to do what we can, we should remind ourselves that we are not fighting for victory, but from victory.

It has been said that you can't lead someone to a place that you've never been. As a committed Christian, we are on a path that brings glory to God. We accept correction and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit who instructs us. Read Proverbs 10:17, 17:17, and 27:6, and share how we can help others that have gone astray.

9. As much as we strive to live by God's instruction manual, we will not measure up. It is said that the Christian is not sinless, but he/she will sin less. Correction may come from God's Word, or through a friend. Accountability with others close to you is important. Describe your accountability system.

10. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

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PRAY

God's Word truly is an instruction manual for Christ followers. Allow God's Word to sink deep in your heart so that you can be His representative to reach the lost and build up the saints. Pray diligently to know and understand the Word of God.

Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word that provides wisdom, knowledge, and instruction so that we can live a life worthy of our calling. I pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to lead me to follow Your instructions and to accept correction to stay on the right path. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Godly instruction is more valuable than worldly wealth. (Proverbs 8:10)

Our mind needs to be continuously renewed with Godly instruction. (Romans 12:2)

Jesus didn't come to abolish the law but fulfill it. (Matt 5:17-18)

Listen to Godly instruction and be wise. (Proverbs 8:33)

A wise person's instruction will turn people away from the snares of death (Proverbs 13:14).
(Reaching the lost – that is why Godly instruction is more valuable than worldly wealth!!!)

The Ten Commandments:

[Exodus 20:1-17] 1 Then God spoke all these words: 2 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery.

- I. Exodus 20:3 Do not have other gods besides me.
- II. Exodus 20:4 Do not make an idol for yourself, whether in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. 5 Do not bow in worship to them, and do not serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the fathers' iniquity, to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, 6 but showing faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commands.
- III. Exodus 20:7 Do not misuse the name of the LORD your God, because the LORD will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses his name.
- IV. Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: 9 You are to labor six days and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work -- you, your son or daughter, your male or female servant, your livestock, or the resident alien who is within your city gates.
- V. Exodus 20:12 Honor your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.
- VI. Exodus 20:13 Do not murder.
- VII. Exodus 20:14 Do not commit adultery.
- VIII. Exodus 20:15 Do not steal.
- IX. Exodus 20:16 Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- X. Exodus 20:17 Do not covet your neighbor's house. Do not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Scripture References:

[Deuteronomy 11:26-28] 26 Look, today I set before you a blessing and a curse: 27 there will be a blessing, if you obey the commands of the LORD your God I am giving you today, 28 and a curse, if you do not obey the commands of the LORD your God and you turn aside from the path I command you today by following other gods you have not known.

[Galatians 3:10-14] 10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed. 11 Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith. 12 But the law is not based on faith; instead, the one who does these things will live by them. 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. 14 The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith.

[Romans 7:12] So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

[Romans 8:3-4] 3 What the law could not do since it was weakened by the flesh, God did. He condemned sin in the flesh by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh as a sin offering, 4 in order that the law's requirement would be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

[Romans 15:4] For whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures.

[Matthew 5:17-19] 17 "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. 19 "Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

[Proverbs 8:10] Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold.

[Mark 8:36] For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?

[1Timothy 6:17-19] 17 Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God, who richly provides us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do what is good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and willing to share, 19 storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of what is truly life.

[Proverbs 4:6] "Don't abandon wisdom, and she will watch over you; love her, and she will guard you.

[Proverbs 4:13] Hold on to instruction; don't let go. Guard it, for it is your life.

[Proverbs 4:23] Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.

[2Timothy 1:14 NLT] Through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us, carefully guard the precious truth that has been entrusted to you.

[1Corinthians 9:27] Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Following Instructions

[Proverbs 13:13-14] 13 The one who has contempt for instruction will pay the penalty, but the one who respects a command will be rewarded. 14 A wise person's instruction is a fountain of life, turning people away from the snares of death.

[Proverbs 3:11-12] 11 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; 12 for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

[Proverbs 10:17] The one who follows instruction is on the path to life, but the one who rejects correction goes astray.

[Proverbs 27:6] The wounds of a friend are trustworthy, but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.

[Pro 17:17] A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 7: Righteousness

"Our works do not generate righteousness, rather our righteousness in Christ generates works." ~ Martin Luther⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Genesis 15:6] Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

There is righteousness from our own efforts, and righteousness credited to us by God when we believe. Our sin nature renders human righteousness unworthy of God's standard *"[Isaiah 64:6 NLT] 6 We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags."* *"[Romans 3:10] as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one."* God's righteousness is credited to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ. *"[Romans 1:16-17] 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith."*

In Genesis 14, Abram ^(Note below) had just rescued Lot when, upon his return, he was met by Melchizedek. The name Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness". We know very little about him. *"[Hebrews 7:1-3] 1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham and blessed him as he returned from defeating the kings, 2 and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means king of righteousness, then also, king of Salem, meaning king of peace. 3 Without father, mother, or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever."* Abram's encounter with Melchizedek continues: *"[Genesis 14:18] Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine; he was a priest to God Most High."* It's possible that Melchizedek served Abram in a similar manner to the bread and wine of Passover, looking forward to the Lord's table of our redeeming sacrifice, Jesus Christ. *"[Genesis 14:19-20] 19 He blessed him and said: Abram is blessed by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, 20 and blessed be God Most High who has handed over your enemies to you. And Abram gave him a tenth of everything."* The New Testament affirms God's righteousness in the life of Abraham: *"[James 2:23] and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness, and he was called God's friend."*

The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision when it was revealed to him that he would become the father of many nations: *[Genesis 15:5] 5 He took him outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "Your offspring will be that numerous."* Abram's response was simply that he believed the LORD, and the LORD credited it to him as righteousness.

David Guzik: *"This is one of the clearest expressions in the Bible of the truth of salvation by grace, through faith. This is the first time 'believe' is used in the Bible and the first time 'righteousness' is used in the Bible. This is the gospel in the Old Testament, quoted four times in the New Testament."*⁽²⁾ (Romans 4:1-3; 4:9-10; 4:19-24; Galatians 3:5-7)

Note: When God made His covenant with Abram in Genesis 17:4-5, He changed his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning the father of many nations.

Righteousness

Righteousness comes by faith. “[[Romans 4:13](#)] *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*” The book of Proverbs has much to say about righteousness, using 86 references to ‘righteous’ or ‘righteousness’.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let’s see how “Righteousness” was defined then and now.

Definition of Righteousness:

Webster’s Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

- Acting in accord with [divine](#) or [moral](#) law : free from guilt or sin
- Morally right or justifiable [a righteous decision](#)
- Arising from an outraged sense of justice or [morality](#) [righteous indignation](#)
- *Slang* : GENUINE, EXCELLENT

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary⁽⁴⁾

- Purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the divine law. *righteousness* as used in Scripture and theology, in which it is chiefly used, is nearly equivalent to holiness, comprehending holy principles and affections of heart, and conformity of life to the divine law. It includes all we call justice, honesty and virtue, with holy affections; in short, it is true religion.
- Applied to God, the perfection or holiness of his nature; exact rectitude; faithfulness.
- The active and passive obedience of Christ, by which the law of God is fulfilled. [Daniel 9:7](#).
- Justice; equity between man and man. [Luke 1:75](#).
- The cause of our justification.
- The Lord our *righteousness* [Jeremiah 23:6](#).

Review Questions:

1. Read the current and original definitions of righteousness in Webster’s dictionary. What has changed (or Who has been omitted)?

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- a. In your opinion why was there a change?

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Righteousness

2. Some believe that if they live a “good” life and keep the ten commandments, they will make it to heaven. The Pharisees of Jesus’ day believed in keeping the law to achieve righteousness and might have used Deuteronomy 6:25 as proof. “[Deuteronomy 6:25] *“Righteousness will be ours if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us.”* However, looking back in Genesis 15:6, we find righteousness apart from the law. *“The faith that made Abram righteous wasn’t so much believing in God (as we usually speak of believing in God), as it was **believing** God. Those who only believe in God (in the sense of believing He exists) are merely on the same level as demons.”*(David Guzik)⁽⁶⁾ James 2:19 says, *“You believe that God is one. Good! Even the demons believe -- and they shudder.”* What does believing God mean? (See Hebrews 11:6 and Ephesians 2:8)

3. Romans 3:10 and 3:22-23 is often quoted to demonstrate the need for God’s righteousness. Verse 23 clearly reveals our position apart from Christ. However, the good news comes in verse 22. Also consider 2 Corinthians 5:21. Take time to reflect on this for a moment. We cannot do anything to earn the righteousness of God. What can we possibly do to show our gratitude? (See 1 Corinthians 6:20)

4. In Galatians 3:1-5, the Apostle Paul asks a series of rhetorical questions. What was his purpose in asking these questions?
 - a. Paul uses Galatians 3:6 to state that salvation is by faith alone, not faith plus works. Share your thoughts on Ephesians 2:10 and James 2:17.

5. Paul the apostle explains that the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ, and not through the law. “[Romans 4:13] *For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.*” What is the purpose of the law? (See Romans 3:20, James 2:10 and Galatians 3:24)

Righteousness

- a. God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18, after Abraham was ready to offer up his only son as a sacrifice to God. What is the promise? (See Galatians 3:16 and Romans 4:13)
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- b. Abraham had faith and believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. And this was 430 years before the law was given to Moses. How does this example of faith affect our daily walk? (See Hebrews 11:17-19).
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6. Jesus made it clear that He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. *“To show that he never meant to abrogate (do away with) the law, our Lord Jesus has embodied all its commands in his own life. In his own person there was a nature which was perfectly conformed to the law of God; and as was his nature such was his life.”* (Charles Spurgeon)⁽⁶⁾
 - a. What does Matthew 5:17-18 say about the law?
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 - b. Knowing that we will fall short of the law, how should we live our lives?
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7. Proverbs chapter 10 has much to say about the righteousness of God. Choose one or more of these verses and share your thoughts. What prompted you to choose this verse?
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 - a. [Proverbs 10:7] The remembrance of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.
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 - b. [Proverbs 10:11] The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
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 - c. [Proverbs 10:16] The reward of the righteous is life; the wages of the wicked is punishment.
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Righteousness

- d. [Proverbs 10:20] The tongue of the righteous is pure silver; the heart of the wicked is of little value.
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- e. [Proverbs 10:21] The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.
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- f. [Proverbs 10:28] The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.
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- g. [Proverbs 10:30] The righteous will never be shaken, but the wicked will not remain on the earth.
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- h. [Proverbs 10:31] The mouth of the righteous produces wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.
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- i. [Proverbs 10:32] The lips of the righteous know what is appropriate, but the mouth of the wicked, only what is perverse.
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- 8. Prayer is sometimes considered a last resort, yet it is a powerful tool for the righteous person, as stated in James 5:16. What two things are mentioned prior to the often-quoted James 5:16b? (NKJV)
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- a. Why is prayer sometimes treated as a last resort?
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Righteousness

9. A trait of a righteous person is to say what is appropriate with wisdom (Proverbs 15:28a). James 1:19 mentions we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger. This order is sometimes reversed and of course we regret it when it happens. What does James 1:20 say about human anger? How can we avoid this pitfall?
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 - a. There is a saying that it is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt. We sometimes want to verbally lash out and later regret it. Those words may have a long-lasting impact and cannot be retrieved. What can we take away from Proverbs 10:19?
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10. Parents will watch and listen to their children for the purpose of protection and correction. Our Heavenly Father does the same. Does that give you comfort or concern? Why?
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11. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.
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Closing Thoughts:

We should not conclude this study without considering the righteousness of a nation. In many ways our nation has turned away from Judeo-Christian values. As Americans we can look to the documents that launched our nation, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, as we should. These are foundational to our freedom and values as Americans. However, Scripture reveals that the characteristic that makes a nation great is righteousness.

[Proverbs 14:34] Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people. Individual righteousness is eroded when it is not cultivated in each generation. *[Proverbs 22:6 NKJV] Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* It should not be society's institutions, but the family, which should have the greater influence upon the next generation. When righteousness fails on a large scale, laws lose their force, judges fail in their powers, enforcement becomes impractical, and the laws are soon changed to reflect the currently acceptable level of morality.

Praying for our nation should not only occur in our churches, but by our elected officials. That may sound controversial, but it is demonstrated by our founding fathers. Benjamin Franklin reminded the Continental Congress at the beginning of the war with England that they prayed for divine protection, and their prayers were answered. We need godly elected officials that recognize the need for God to govern in the affairs of men.

Benjamin Franklin stated that it was his firm belief that without divine aid, the Constitutional Convention "would succeed in its political building no better than the builders of Babel, but would find themselves so divided and split by local interests that they would become a reproach to future ages." He then concluded: "I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers imploring the assistance of heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in the Assembly every morning before we proceed to business, and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service."⁽⁷⁾

As Kingdom citizens, what responsibility do we have to the earthly kingdom that we live in? John Calvin said it is the task of the church to make the invisible kingdom visible.⁽⁸⁾ We do that by living in such a way that we bear witness to the reality of the kingship of Christ in our jobs, our families, our schools, and in stewardship of the resources entrusted to us by God. We can lament over our nation's moral decline, but we must remember that our citizenship is in heaven and that God is in control.

PRAY

There is nothing you can do to be righteous. It is your faith in Jesus Christ and your trust in Him that makes you acceptable to God.

Father God, we are righteous in your sight by the righteousness of Your Son Jesus Christ. Lord, lead me by the Holy Spirit to be an example pleasing to you in all my ways. Lead me in the way everlasting. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

The remembrance of the righteous is a blessing. (Proverbs 10:7)

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. (Proverbs 10:11)

The reward of the righteous is life. (Proverbs 10:16)

The tongue of the righteous is pure silver. (Proverbs 10:20)

The lips of the righteous feed many. (Proverbs 10:21)

The hope of the righteous is joy. (Proverbs 10:28)

The righteous will never be shaken. (Proverbs 10:30)

The mouth of the righteous produces wisdom. (Proverbs 10:31)

Scripture References:

[Romans 4:1-3] 1 What then will we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? 2 If Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about -- but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness.

[Romans 4:9-10] 9 Is this blessing only for the circumcised, then? Or is it also for the uncircumcised? For we say, Faith was credited to Abraham for righteousness. 10 In what way then was it credited -- while he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? It was not while he was circumcised, but uncircumcised.

[Romans 4:19-24] 19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body to be already dead (since he was about a hundred years old) and also the deadness of Sarah's womb. 20 He did not waver in unbelief at God's promise but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 because he was fully convinced that what God had promised, he was also able to do. 22 Therefore, it was credited to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was credited to him was not written for Abraham alone, 24 but also for us. It will be credited to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.

[Galatians 3:5-7] 5 So then, does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law? Or is it by believing what you heard -- 6 just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness? 7 You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham's sons.

[Daniel 9:7] Lord, righteousness belongs to you, but this day public shame belongs to us.

[Luke 1:75] in holiness and righteousness in his presence all our days.

[Jeremiah 23:6] "In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. This is the name he will be called: The LORD Is Our Righteousness.

[Hebrews 11:6] Now without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

[Ephesians 2:8] For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift.

[Genesis 15:6] Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

[Romans 3:10] as it is written: There is no one righteous, not even one.

[Romans 3:22-23] 22 The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, since there is no distinction. 23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

[2Corinthians 5:21] He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

[1Corinthians 6:20] for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.

[Galatians 3:2-3] 2 I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh?

[Galatians 3:1-5] 1 You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2 I only want to learn this from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh? 4 Did you experience so much for nothing -- if in fact it was for nothing? 5 So then, does God give you the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law? Or is it by believing what you heard –

[Galatians 3:6] just like Abraham who believed God, and it was credited to him for righteousness?

[Ephesians 2:10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

[James 2:17] In the same way faith, if it doesn't have works, is dead by itself.

[Romans 3:20] For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.

[James 2:10] For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.

[Galatians 3:24] The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith.

[Galatians 3:16-18] 16 Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ. 17 My point is this: The law, which came 430 years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously established by God and thus cancel the promise. 18 For if the inheritance is based on the law, it is no longer based on the promise; but God has graciously given it to Abraham through the promise.

[Genesis 22:18] "And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command."

[Galatians 3:16] Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ.

[Romans 4:13] For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would inherit the world was not through the law, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

[Hebrews 11:17-19] 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He received the promises and yet he was offering his one and only son, 18 the one to whom it had been said, Your offspring will be called through Isaac. 19 He considered God to be able even to raise someone from the dead; therefore, he received him back, figuratively speaking.

[Matthew 5:17-18] 17 Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

[James 5:16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

[Proverbs 15:28a] The mind of the righteous person thinks before answering.

[James 1:19] My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger,

[James 1:20] for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

[Proverbs 10:19] When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent.

[1Peter 3:12] because the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do what is evil.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 8: Discipline

"Why is discipline important? Discipline teaches us to operate by principle rather than desire. Saying no to our impulses (even the ones that are not inherently sinful) puts us in control of our appetites rather than vice versa. It deposes our lust and permits truth, virtue, and integrity to rule our minds instead." ~ John F. MacArthur⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 3:12] for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

Does the word “discipline” have negative connotations to you? Is there a difference between godly and worldly discipline? Let’s look at one example of worldly discipline. I have one brother and usually neither one of us would confess to anything that would have a disciplinary consequence. More often than not, if I were the transgressor, I would remain silent to avoid discipline, instead of confessing. There were other times when I was the innocent party yet received the disciplinary action. The response I received when I protested this was typically, “This is to make up for the time you were guilty.” In contrast, Godly discipline is administered only to the one who needs it. Although Godly discipline may hurt, it is not harmful, and always draws us to a closer relationship with Him.

We should expect Godly discipline. The primary reason is the battle with sin that rages within all believers. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, describes it this way: “[Galatians 5:17] *For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.*” For the believer, the war is waged in the battlefield of the mind. The flesh comes armed with thoughts that are pleasing to our sin nature. Paul acknowledges that there is no ability in the flesh to do what is good. “[Romans 7:18] *For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it.*” The opposition to the flesh comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “[John 14:17] *He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him because he remains with you and will be in you.*” The worldly response to discipline differs greatly from a believer’s response. Usually, the world will respond in anger and avoidance. The believer might initially go down that path, but soon seeks God’s will, knowing that God’s motive for discipline is love. “[Proverbs 3:11-12] *11 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; 12 for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.*” It bears repeating that the motive for God’s discipline is love.

C.S. Lewis illustrates God’s discipline in this way, “An artist may not take much trouble over a picture drawn to amuse a child, but he takes endless effort over his great work of art that he loves.”⁽²⁾

God’s purpose for discipline is to draw us close to Him because of the love He has for us. Should that not also be our purpose for those God has entrusted to us? We face many challenges today in training up our children in the way they should go. The most significant challenge is to impart our values to them before culture claims this role. Proverbs 22:15 tells us that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. A child is not born as a morally neutral

being but has a sin nature already. That is evidenced by the fact that our children will naturally sin without being taught to do it. The term “rod” in Proverbs 22:15 represents physical correction. While that may be necessary at times, consideration should also be given to the advice in Proverbs 4:1-9: The purpose of discipline administered with the proper motive of love is understanding.

Throughout Proverbs, Solomon shares his wisdom with his son, revealing his heart by using the endearing term “my son” twenty-three times. (*See the page entitled “My Son” at the back of the lesson*). These verses provide valuable insight into parenting. Our motive for discipline should be that of our Heavenly Father’s – love.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let’s see how “discipline” was defined then and now.

Definition of Discipline:

Webster’s Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

- Control gained by enforcing obedience or order
- Orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior
- Training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary⁽⁴⁾

- Education; instruction; cultivation and improvement, comprehending instruction in arts, sciences, correct sentiments, morals and manners, and due subordination to authority.
- In ecclesiastical affairs, the execution of the laws by which the church is governed, and infliction of the penalties enjoined against offenders, who profess the religion of Jesus Christ.
- **Rule of government; method of regulating principles and practice; as the discipline prescribed for the church.**
- To execute the laws of the church on offenders, **with a view to bring them to repentance and reformation of life.**

Review Questions:

1. Read the current and original definition of discipline in Webster’s dictionary. What has changed (or Who has been omitted)?

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- a. Share your thoughts.

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2. There are times God disciplines us because we have rebelled and have not confessed our sin. Can a Christian avoid Godly discipline? Explain.

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- a. What are the consequences of ignoring God's correction, according to Proverbs 13:18?

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- b. What do the following verses say about the result of avoiding God's discipline and continuing in sin?

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- i. Proverbs 28:9 and Jeremiah 31:33

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- ii. Isaiah 59:2 and Ezra 9:6

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- c. What is the best course of action to deal with unconfessed sin, according to 1 John 1:9?

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3. Did you wake up this morning and say, "I just can't wait for God's discipline"? Maybe not, but we do ask for His will to be done, and that we would follow the path of His leading. Would we acknowledge that the motive for His discipline is love, as we see in Proverbs 3:12?

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What do these verses say about discipline?

- a. Proverbs 4:1

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b. Proverbs 12:1

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c. Revelation 3:19

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4. Godly discipline's motive is love from the One who has intimate knowledge of us. It is incredible to consider that God even knows our thoughts. Matthew Henry, in his commentary for Psalm 139 says, *"David here lays down this great doctrine, that the God with whom we have to do has a perfect knowledge of us, and that all the motions and actions both of our inward and of our outward man are naked and open before him."*⁽⁵⁾ We cannot hide anything from the One who created us. Discipline's goal is to mold us into the image of God, and it begins in the heart. It has been said that the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart. Consider Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Psalm 139:23-24 and share your thoughts.

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5. To the non-believer, suffering is one proof that God either doesn't care, is ambivalent, or doesn't exist. God's discipline may hurt, but its purpose is for our protection. Read and comment on Elisabeth Elliot's quote: *"God will never disappoint us... If deep in our hearts we suspect that God does not love us and cannot manage our affairs as well as we can, we certainly will not submit to His discipline. ...To the unbeliever the fact of suffering only convinces him that God is not to be trusted, does not love us. To the believer, the opposite is true."*— Elisabeth Elliot, **Discipline: The Glad Surrender**.⁽⁶⁾

a. Share your thoughts on Hebrews 12:5-7 and 13:5b.

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b. We read in Daniel 4:30-33 of King Nebuchadnezzar's fall. Why did God discipline him?

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c. Read Daniel 4:34-37. What three things did Nebuchadnezzar do in verse 34?

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What was the result in Daniel 4:36?

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Looking at verse 37, what three things did Nebuchadnezzar do and what was his conclusion?

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6. Nebuchadnezzar found that God can humble those who walk in pride. The lesson is plain: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). A proud look is number one on the list of God’s most hated sins (Proverbs 6:16-19). Share your thoughts on how to guard against the sin of pride. See Proverbs 29:23 and Romans 12:16.

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a. Why do you think God resists the proud? (See Matthew 11:29)

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7. Read Hebrews 12:9-11. Human parents, even with the best of intentions, can only discipline imperfectly because they lack perfect knowledge, and do not know what is in the heart. The all-knowing God can discipline us perfectly with lasting results. What does Godly discipline produce according to Hebrews 12:11 and Isaiah 32:17?

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8. The world is in desperate need of Godly parents. A Godly parent will acknowledge his/her complete dependence upon the Lord. Consider a Godly parent's influence. It can and in many cases does go beyond their children to others that God brings into their path. Daniel mentored Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:19-20), who humbled himself before God. Mordecai mentored Esther (Esther 4:13-14), who was encouraged to defend her people. Priscilla and Aquila mentored Apollos (Acts 18:26), and this resulted in a much-improved ministry for Apollos. 1 Corinthians 11:1 shares the primary message of mentoring. What does Paul say?

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- a. Paul did what he told his young associate Timothy to do. What does Paul say in 1 Timothy 4:12?

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- b. Some might say "Don't look at me, look at Jesus." It is true that we should ultimately look to Jesus. What are your thoughts on that statement?

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9. Becoming a Godly parent or mentor begins with discipline. It starts with a commitment to daily prayer, reading and meditating upon God's word, and seeking His will. According to a study produced by the European Journal of Social Psychology, on average it takes 66 days for a new behavior to become automatic⁽⁷⁾. So, the goal is consistency. Developing a God-pleasing behavior (a fear of the LORD) builds spiritual understanding and is preparation for serving the kingdom of God.

- a. What does Proverbs 4:1-2 and 15:32 say about discipline?

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- b. Define the three-step process in Proverbs 6:23. What does the final step suggest?

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10. Godly discipline's motive is love, and its purpose is to keep the Christian on the path that glorifies God. Jesus tells us the path that leads to life is narrow and few find it (Matthew 7:13-14). Proverbs has much to say about this path. Choose one or two verses and provide your thoughts.

a. Proverbs 2:7-8

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b. Proverbs 3:5-6

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c. Proverbs 4:18

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d. Proverbs 4:26

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e. Proverbs 15:10

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11. How do we counter the negative impact of society on our children? Proverbs 22:6 shares a principle, but not an absolute promise. In it, we are told to train up a child in the way he/she should go. We should recognize that our children have their own gifts and abilities, and no two children are alike. *"The sense of the Hebrew phrase 'the way he should go' speaks of the child's individual traits and inclination. It speaks of discerning a child's strengths and weaknesses and parenting in a way that takes those into account."* (David Guzik)⁽⁸⁾

Family is the basic social unit for transmitting values. Solomon provides sound advice in Proverbs 3:1-4, but notice it requires action by the child. Do these things and you have done well! Share any thoughts that might be encouraging to the group.

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12. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

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PRAY

It is Godly discipline that will keep us on the right path. We must discipline ourselves to remain faithful to continuous prayer, daily reading of God's word, and spending time in prayer. Godly discipline is a way of life for the Christian.

Father God, allow me to respond to your correction with a heart devoted to You. Search me God and see if there is anything that is offensive in me and lead me on the path that gives you glory. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

God's motive for discipline is love. (Proverbs 3:12)

Godly discipline is for our benefit. (Proverbs 13:18)

The result of loving Godly discipline is understanding. (Proverbs 4:1, 12:1)

Godly discipline's purpose is to keep believers on the right path. (Proverbs 15:10)

“My Son”

[Proverbs 1:8] Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and don't reject your mother's teaching,

[Proverbs 1:10] My son, if sinners entice you, don't be persuaded.

[Proverbs 1:13-15]- 13 "We'll find all kinds of valuable property and fill our houses with plunder. 14 "Throw in your lot with us, and we'll all share the loot" -- 15 my son, don't travel that road with them or set foot on their path,

[Proverbs 2:1-5] 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 listening closely to wisdom and directing your heart to understanding; 3 furthermore, if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, 4 if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and discover the knowledge of God.

[Proverbs 3:1-4] 1 My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; 2 for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being. 3 Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people.

[Proverbs 3:11-12] 11 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; 12 for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

[Proverbs 3:21-23] 21 Maintain sound wisdom and discretion. My son, don't let you lose sight of them. 22 They will be life for you and adornment for your neck. 23 Then you will go safely on your way; your foot will not stumble.

[Proverbs 4:10-11] 10 Listen, my son. Accept my words, and you will live many years. 11 I am teaching you the way of wisdom; I am guiding you on straight paths.

[Proverbs 4:20-23] 20 My son, pay attention to my words; listen closely to my sayings. 21 Don't lose sight of them; keep them within your heart. 22 For they are life to those who find them, and health to one's whole body. 23 Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life.

[Proverbs 5:1-2] 1 My son, pay attention to my wisdom; listen closely to my understanding 2 so that you may maintain discretion and your lips safeguard knowledge.

[Proverbs 5:20-21] 20 Why, my son, would you lose yourself with a forbidden woman or embrace a wayward woman? 21 For a man's ways are before the LORD's eyes, and he considers all his paths.

[Proverbs 6:1-3] 1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor or entered into an agreement with a stranger, 2 you have been snared by the words of your mouth trapped by the words from your mouth. 3 Do this, then, my son, and free yourself, for you have put yourself in your neighbor's power: Go, humble yourself, and plead with your neighbor.

[Proverbs 6:20-22] 20 My son, keep your father's command, and don't reject your mother's teaching. 21 Always bind them to your heart; tie them around your neck. 22 When you walk here and there, they will guide you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; when you wake up, they will talk to you.

[Proverbs 7:1-3] 1 My son, obey my words, and treasure my commands. 2 Keep my commands and live, and guard my instructions as you would the pupil of your eye. 3 Tie them to your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.

[Proverbs 19:27] If you stop listening to correction, my son, you will stray from the words of knowledge.

[Proverbs 23:15-16] 15 My son, if your heart is wise, my heart will indeed rejoice. 16 My innermost being will celebrate when your lips say what is right.

[Proverbs 23:19-21] 19 Listen, my son, and be wise; keep your mind on the right course. 20 Don't associate with those who drink too much wine or with those who gorge themselves on meat. 21 For the drunkard and the glutton will become poor, and gogginess will clothe them in rags.

[Proverbs 23:26] My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.

[Proverbs 24:21-22] 21 My son, fear the LORD, as well as the king, and don't associate with rebels, 22 for destruction will come suddenly from them; who knows what distress these two can bring?

[Proverbs 27:11] Be wise, my son, and bring my heart joy, so that I can answer anyone who taunts me.

Scripture References:

[Proverbs 22:15] Foolishness is bound to the heart of a youth; a rod of discipline will separate it from him.

[Proverbs 4:1-9] 1 Listen, sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding, 2 for I am giving you good instruction. Don't abandon my teaching. 3 When I was a son with my father, tender and precious to my mother, 4 he taught me and said: "Your heart must hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live. 5 "Get wisdom, get understanding; don't forget or turn away from the words from my mouth. 6 "Don't abandon wisdom, and she will watch over you; love her, and she will guard you. 7 "Wisdom is supreme -- so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding. 8 "Cherish her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you. 9 "She will place a garland of favor on your head; she will give you a crown of beauty."

[Proverbs 13:18] Poverty and disgrace come to those who ignore discipline, but the one who accepts correction will be honored.

[Proverbs 28:9] Anyone who turns his ear away from hearing the law -- even his prayer is detestable.

[Jeremiah 31:33 KJV] But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

[Isaiah 59:2] But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.

[Ezra 9:6] And I said: My God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift my face toward you, my God, because our iniquities are higher than our heads and our guilt is as high as the heavens.

[1 John 1:9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[Proverbs 3:12] for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

[Proverbs 4:1] Listen, sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding,

[Proverbs 12:1] Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but one who hates correction is stupid.

[Revelation 3:19] "As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be zealous and repent.

[Jeremiah 17:9-10] 9 The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable -- who can understand it? 10 I, the LORD, examine the mind, I test the heart to give to each according to his way, according to what his actions deserve.

[Psalm 139:23-24] 23 Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.

[Hebrews 12:5-7] 5 And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons: My son, do not take the Lord's discipline lightly or lose heart when you are reprov'd by him, 6 for the Lord disciplines the one he loves and punishes every son he receives. 7 Endure suffering as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?

[Hebrews 13:5] Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.

[Daniel 4:30-33] 30 the king exclaimed, "Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory? " 31 While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared that the kingdom has departed from you. 32 "You will be driven away from people to live with the wild animals, and you will feed on grass like cattle for seven periods of time, until you acknowledge that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms, and he gives them to anyone he wants." 33 At that moment the message against Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people. He ate grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with dew from the sky, until his hair grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

[Daniel 4:34-37] 34 But at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised the Most High and honored and glorified him who lives forever: For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. 35 All the inhabitants of the earth are counted as nothing, and he does what he wants with the army of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can block his hand or say to him, "What have you done? " 36 At that time my sanity returned to me, and my majesty and splendor returned to me for the glory of my kingdom. My advisers and my nobles sought me out, I was reestablished over my kingdom, and even more greatness came to me. 37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

[James 4:6] But he gives greater grace. Therefore he says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

[Proverbs 6:16-19] 16 The LORD hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him: 17 arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil, 19 a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.

[Proverbs 29:23] A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor.

[Romans 12:16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

[Matthew 11:29]"Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

[Hebrews 12:9-11] 9 Furthermore, we had human fathers discipline us, and we respected them. Shouldn't we submit even more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time based on what seemed good to them, but he does it for our benefit, so that we can share his holiness. 11 No discipline seems enjoyable at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

[Isaiah 32:17] The result of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quiet confidence forever.

[Daniel 1:19-20] 19 The king interviewed them, and among all of them, no one was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they began to attend the king. 20 In every matter of wisdom and understanding that the king consulted them about, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and mediums in his entire kingdom.

Righteousness

[Esther 4:13-14] 13 Mordecai told the messenger to reply to Esther, "Don't think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews because you are in the king's palace. 14 "If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jewish people from another place, but you and your father's family will be destroyed. Who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this."

[Acts 18:26] He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. After Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately.

[1Corinthians 11:1] Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.

[1Timothy 4:12] Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

[Proverbs 4:1-2] 1 Listen, sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding, 2 for I am giving you good instruction. Don't abandon my teaching.

[Proverbs 15:32] Anyone who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever listens to correction acquires good sense.

[Proverbs 6:23] For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way to life.

[Matthew 7:13-14] 13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it."

[Proverbs 22:6] Start a youth out on his way; even when he grows old he will not depart from it.

[Proverbs 2:7-8] 7 He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity 8 so that he may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of his faithful followers.

[Proverbs 3:5-6] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

[Proverbs 4:18] The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday.

[Proverbs 4:26] Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established.

[Proverbs 15:10] Discipline is harsh for the one who leaves the path; the one who hates correction will die.

[Proverbs 3:1-4] 1 My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; 2 for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being. 3 Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people.

Footnotes

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Lesson 9: Integrity

"Integrity, the choice between what's convenient and what's right." - Tony Dungy⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 14:2] Whoever lives with integrity fears the LORD, but the one who is devious in his ways despises him.

Integrity is the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles, a valuable attribute that is found in God and desirable by man. It is the measuring stick of a person's character. Integrity requires a moral code to live by, which provides a set of standards to which you hold yourself. A person of integrity will not betray his moral principles in order to preserve his own interests.

Both believers and non-believers alike can have integrity. The primary difference between Godly and worldly integrity lies in the moral code of each. A Christian's moral code is revealed in God's Word and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The world's moral code can change over time, as the values of society change. What is morally correct in the world is what is currently acceptable to those in power, or to the majority of society.

An example of the believer's moral code is found in *Job 1:8*: *"Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.'"*

Integrity should be guarded. The loss of integrity impacts personal relationships, vocational pursuits, and even one's life. Christian history is replete with stories of those who have made supreme sacrifices rather than betray their personal integrity.

A failure in integrity will impact the Christian's relationship with God. However, God will not leave the believer in that condition. King David wrote in Psalm 51:6 that God desires integrity in the inner self. The story of David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba and its cover-up is recorded in 2 Samuel 11. David's sin was revealed by the prophet Nathan (2 Sam 12:7-12). The impact of David's loss of integrity is found in Psalm 32:4: *"For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat."* David's relationship with God was restored when he confessed his sin (2 Sam 12:13-14). The good news for the Christian is that a momentary lapse in integrity is covered by the righteousness we have in Jesus Christ.

The most pernicious lie is the one a person tells himself. Those without integrity tend to lie to themselves about their actions. It was Abraham Lincoln who said *"You can fool some of the people all of the time, and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time"*.⁽²⁾ Of course, you cannot fool God any of the time.

Failure of integrity can befall a nation as well. Ultimately, God will judge a nation for the purpose of restoring a right relationship with Him. It was Billy Graham who made this statement in 1965, "If God doesn't soon bring judgement upon America, He'll have to go back and apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."⁽³⁾

Integrity

Even in God's judgment we see His desire for restoration. God judged Israel when they failed to maintain a right relationship with Him. *[Jeremiah 32:30-31] 30 "From their youth, the Israelites and Judeans have done nothing but what is evil in my sight! They have done nothing but anger me by the work of their hands" -- this is the LORD's declaration -- 31 "for this city has caused my wrath and fury from the day it was built until now. I will therefore remove it from my presence."* In Jeremiah 32:36 we read that God handed His people over to Babylon through sword, famine, and plague. In the very next verse, the prophet shares God's plan for restoration. *Jeremiah 32:37: "I will certainly gather them from all the lands where I have banished them in my anger, rage and intense wrath, and I will return them to this place and make them live in safety."* When God restored His people, he said, *"I will give them integrity of heart and action so that they will fear me always."* *[Jeremiah 32:39].*

In previous lessons, we discussed that knowledge is from God, and that wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. We could conclude that integrity is doing what is right, based on knowledge and wisdom, guided by the Holy Spirit, and in concert with the Word of God. The decision to maintain integrity is made daily, and it is the Holy Spirit that guides us. *[1 Corinthians 2:10] "Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."*

Review Questions:

1. God places a high importance on integrity. Satan is looking to destroy it. In a discussion with Satan, God commends Job for his perfect integrity. *Job 1:8: "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? No one else on earth is like him, a man of perfect integrity, who fears God and turns away from evil.'"* Read also Job 1:9-19.

Job 1:20-22 provides further insight as to how Job maintained his integrity. Share your thoughts on what Job did and how it should apply to us today.

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2. A conclusion we can draw from this encounter in Job chapter one is that God is aware of the integrity of men. It could be said that perfect integrity qualified Job for what he would encounter. Share your thoughts on 2 Chronicles 16:9a.

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- a. Does it give you comfort or concern that God is always aware of your integrity?

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Integrity

3. Keeping one's integrity requires continuous effort, in public and in private life. It cannot be achieved without the leading of the Holy Spirit and our cooperation.

Webster's 1828 dictionary defines Integrity as "An unimpaired state of any thing, particularly of the mind; moral soundness or purity; incorruptness; uprightness; honesty. Integrity comprehends the whole moral character..."⁽⁴⁾

The saying, "The bigger they are, the harder they fall" could be restated as, "The more worldly success, the greater the fall from a lack of integrity." Worldly success has claimed many who veer off course, only to find themselves wondering how this could have happened. Consider the Old Testament account of Samson, recorded in Judges chapters 13-16. (Key verses are Judges 13:5, 16:17, and 16:20.) Samson ignored the rules of his Nazarite vow. How are integrity, or a lack of it, and sin related?

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- a. Why is Samson mentioned in Hebrews 11:31-32?

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4. A lack of integrity can lead to temptation, but temptation itself is not sin. The perfect example is given in Matthew 4:1-11 where Satan tempts Jesus. David Guzik states in his commentary: *"After identifying with sinners in His baptism, Jesus then identified with them again in severe temptation. This was a necessary part of His ministry, so He truly was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness."*⁽⁵⁾ Now at this point some will mention James 1:13: *"No one undergoing a trial should say, 'I am being tempted by God,' since God is not tempted by evil, and he himself doesn't tempt anyone."* It is true that the Holy Spirit cannot tempt us, but the Holy Spirit, or our own flesh, may lead us to a place where we will be tempted. What do these verses say about maintaining integrity?

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- a. Psalm 119:11.

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- b. Proverbs 2:7.

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Integrity

5. Is there something in your past that you've repented from, but is still in your mind? You may think about it from time to time, and you might experience the repercussions from it still. You know that God has forgiven you, but the memory is still there.

[1John 1:9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. How does God view confessed sin? (See Hebrews 8:12, Isaiah 43:25)

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- a. Why do we choose to remember what God decides to forget?

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- b. What advice does the Apostle Paul give us in Philippians 3:13?

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6. We have discussed that Integrity is doing the right thing. C.S. Lewis adds this twist: "Even when no one is watching."⁽⁶⁾ Is it more difficult to maintain integrity when we are alone? What does Psalm 139:2-4 remind us of?

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7. Is the source of integrity man or God? Review the following verses then share your thoughts. Jeremiah 32:38-39. Ezekiel 11:19. Proverbs 10:9. Proverbs 11:3. Proverbs 20:7.

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8. Godly integrity is not always welcomed by society. In fact, it will bring division. Colorado baker Jack Phillips was fined and ordered to re-train his staff when he declined to make a cake for a same-sex wedding⁽⁷⁾. The Colorado Civil Rights Commission ruled against him, and its decision was upheld by the Court of Appeals. The case made it to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in Phillips' favor.

The battle for integrity can be costly! Since the initial case, Jack Phillips has been targeted nonstop and has found himself in court defending his religious beliefs. Phillips' attorney states *"It's one thing to be sued repeatedly; it's another to watch your family suffer harassment and face death threats, be forced to lay off longtime employees, and lose a substantial part of your business"* ⁽⁷⁾. What do these verses reveal about maintaining integrity?

- a. Proverbs 13:6

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Integrity

b. Psalm 26:1

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c. Psalm 41:12

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d. Psalm 84:11

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9. Integrity can be compromised if we give into temptation. What did Jesus do when he was tempted? He used the word of God. We should follow that example. Satan chose three temptations, and in each case, Jesus used the Word of God to respond. What temptations do you struggle with, and what scripture verses do you store in your mind to counter these temptations? God's word is powerful. *[Hebrews 4:12] "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints, and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."* If you have not done so, consider memorizing verses for the most common temptations you encounter.

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10. Share one or more takeaways from this week's lesson.

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Closing Thoughts:

PRAY

It is my desire to live a godly life and that people would recognize that I am a servant of the Most High God. I pray that my thoughts and actions would always be guided by the Holy Spirit and that Your will be done.

Father God, I pray that my mind would be renewed so that I would be a reflection of Your Son Jesus Christ, who lived a perfect life. Lord, let me be an example of integrity to those around me. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

The source of Integrity is God. (Jeremiah 32:39, Ezekiel 11:19)

Man can compromise his integrity. It must be guarded. (Job 27:6, James 1:14-15)

God desires to protect the integrity of His children. (Proverbs 2:7, Proverbs 13:6, 1 Corinthians 10:13)

God is looking for those who have integrity, and will use them. (Job 1:8, 2 Chronicles 16:9)

Scripture References:

[Psalm 51:6] Surely you desire integrity in the inner self, and you teach me wisdom deep within.

[2 Samuel 12:7-12] 7 Nathan replied to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD God of Israel says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from Saul. 8 "I gave your master's house to you and your master's wives into your arms, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah, and if that was not enough, I would have given you even more. 9 "Why then have you despised the LORD's command by doing what I consider evil? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife as your own wife -- you murdered him with the Ammonite's sword. 10 "Now therefore, the sword will never leave your house because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own wife.' 11 "This is what the LORD says, 'I am going to bring disaster on you from your own family: I will take your wives and give them to another before your very eyes, and he will sleep with them in broad daylight. 12 "You acted in secret, but I will do this before all Israel and in broad daylight.' "

[2 Samuel 12:13-14] 13 David responded to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Then Nathan replied to David, "And the LORD has taken away your sin; you will not die. 14 "However, because you treated the LORD with such contempt in this matter, the son born to you will die."

[Jeremiah 32:36] "Now therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to this city about which you said, 'It has been handed over to Babylon's king through sword, famine, and plague'".

[Jeremiah 32:39] "I will give them integrity of heart and action so that they will fear me always, for their good and for the good of their descendants after them."

[Job 1:9-19] 9 Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 "Haven't you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. 11 "But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face." 12 "Very well," the LORD told Satan, "everything he owns is in your power. However, do not lay a hand on Job himself." So Satan left the LORD's presence. 13 One day when Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, 14 a messenger came to Job and reported: "While the oxen were plowing and the donkeys grazing nearby, 15 "the Sabeans swooped down and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you! " 16 He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported: "God's fire fell from heaven. It burned the sheep and the servants and devoured them, and I alone have escaped to tell you! " 17 That messenger was still speaking when yet another came and reported: "The Chaldeans formed three bands, made a raid on the camels, and took them away. They struck down the servants with the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you! " 18 He was still speaking when another messenger came and reported: "Your sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house. 19 "Suddenly a powerful wind swept in from the desert

and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on the young people so that they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you!"

[Job 1:20-22] 20 Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and shaved his head. He fell to the ground and worshiped, 21 saying: Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will leave this life. The LORD gives, and the LORD takes away. Blessed be the name of the LORD. 22 Throughout all this Job did not sin or blame God for anything.

[2 Chronicles 16:9a] "For the eyes of the LORD roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him."

[Judges 13:5] "for indeed, you will conceive and give birth to a son. You must never cut his hair, because the boy will be a Nazirite to God from birth, and he will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines."

[Judges 16:17] he told her the whole truth and said to her, "My hair has never been cut, because I am a Nazirite to God from birth. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any other man."

[Judges 16:20] Then she cried, "Samson, the Philistines are here! " When he awoke from his sleep, he said, "I will escape as I did before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the LORD had left him.

[Hebrews 11:31-32] 31 By faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed. 32 And what more can I say? Time is too short for me to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets".

[Matthew 4:1-11] 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 Then the tempter approached him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 He answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 7 Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God." 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

[Psalm 119:11] I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.

[Proverbs 2:7] He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity.

[Hebrews 8:12] For I will forgive their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.

[Isaiah 43:25] "I am the one, I sweep away your transgressions for my own sake and remember your sins no more."

[Philippians 3:13] Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead.

Integrity

[Psalm 139:2-4] 2 You know when I sit down and when I stand up; you understand my thoughts from far away. 3 You observe my travels and my rest; you are aware of all my ways. 4 Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, LORD.

[Jeremiah 32:38-39] 38 "They will be my people, and I will be their God. 39 "I will give them integrity of heart and action so that they will fear me always, for their good and for the good of their descendants after them."

[Ezekiel 11:19] "I will give them integrity of heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove their heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh."

[Proverbs 10:9] The one who lives with integrity lives securely, but whoever perverts his ways will be found out.

[Proverbs 11:3] The integrity of the upright guides them, but the perversity of the treacherous destroys them.

[Proverbs 20:7] A righteous person acts with integrity; his children who come after him will be happy.

[Proverbs 13:6] Righteousness guards people of integrity, but wickedness undermines the sinner.

[Psalm 26:1] Vindicate me, LORD, because I have lived with integrity and have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

[Psalm 41:12] You supported me because of my integrity and set me in your presence forever.

[Psalm 84:11] For the LORD God is a sun and shield. The LORD grants favor and honor; he does not withhold the good from those who live with integrity.

Footnotes

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Lesson 10: Humility

"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." - C.S. Lewis⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 11:2] When arrogance comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom.

Humility is having a modest view of your own importance. Humility is probably not the first thing that comes to mind when you consider your goals in life, but it is vital for the Christian. Humility begins when we submit ourselves to God and His will. *[Proverbs 3:5-6] 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.* As we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6), He will lift us up in due time.

Humility is in the very nature of God. Matthew 11:28-29 describes Jesus' nature. *[Matthew 11:28-29] 28 "Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take up my yoke and learn from me, because I am lowly and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Jesus gives us insight into the nature of God when he says: "I am lowly and humble in heart." Some Bible translations use the word 'meek' instead of 'lowly.' "Humility and meekness are often interrelated as both are righteous traits for serving the will of God." – Brannon Deibert⁽²⁾ Jesus embodied humility from the time he came into the world, born in a manger, to His Crucifixion on the cross. *[Matthew 20:28] "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

What is the relationship between humility and submission? In Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary, humility is defined as "a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God... and submission to the divine will."⁽³⁾ Submission to the will of God should result in considering the needs of others above oneself. *[Philippians 2:3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.*

We can gain true insight into our level of humility by the thoughts that rush into our mind when we encounter someone less fortunate. Consider your initial thoughts about the person dressed in tattered clothing, pushing a shopping cart down the road. Is it possible that God has brought someone less fortunate along to test your heart? How did you do the last time you were tested in this? *"You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations – These are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit – immortal horrors or everlasting splendors."* – C.S. Lewis⁽⁴⁾

A condition that hinders humility may be at work, however: pride. Read Daniel 4:4-37 about Nebuchadnezzar's struggle with pride. Note Nebuchadnezzar's statement about God in verse 37: *"all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride."* Now read Proverbs 8:13: *"To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech."* To hear that God hates anything grabs

our attention. God hates arrogant pride. Arrogant pride can develop over time, one thought at a time, until it is a permanent condition. The mind must be guarded against it.

Humility leads to freely submitting to the Lord's will. The person who volunteers for military service out of patriotic duty has a different motive than the one pressed into service involuntarily. Submitting to a noble cause is putting principles, values, and people above one's own well-being. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus demonstrated this submission, praying to the Father in a moment so profound that His sweat turned to blood. *[Matthew 26:39] Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*

Earlier we studied 'To Know Wisdom' and 'Wisdom's Plea.' We learned that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs 11:2 makes it clear that humility brings wisdom: *[Proverbs 11:2] When arrogance comes, disgrace follows, but with humility comes wisdom.* It is a reminder that an impediment to a close relationship with God is arrogance or pride.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "humility" was defined then and now.

Definition of Humility:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁵⁾

- Freedom from pride or arrogance: the quality or state of being humble.
- // accepted the honor with *humility*.
- // The ordeal taught her *humility*.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽³⁾

- In ethics, freedom from pride and arrogance; humbleness of mind; a modest estimate of one's own worth. In theology, *humility* consists in lowliness of mind; a deep sense of one's unworthiness in the sight of God, self-abasement, penitence for sin, and **submission to the divine will**.
- Before honor is *humility*. *Proverbs 15:33.*
 - *[Proverbs 15:33] The fear of the LORD is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor.*
- Serving the Lord with all *humility* of mind. *Acts 20:19.*
 - *[Acts 20:19] "serving the Lord with all humility, with tears, and during the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews."*

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of humility includes theological aspects that are not mentioned in the current definition of humility. What are they?

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- a. What are the implications of leaving out the theological content from the definition of humility?

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2. Humility is demonstrated by words and actions, which are the outward signs that others see and draw conclusions from. God can see humility of the heart. God's love for us is great and He will not leave us in a place where a lack of humility will negatively affect our relationship with Him. How do the following verses describe God's actions toward His people to keep them on the right path? (Deuteronomy 8:2, 16; 2 Samuel 22:28)

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- a. What lesson did God want them to learn? (Deuteronomy 8:3)

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- b. Share how God has developed humility in your life.

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- c. How do these verses reflect the steps people can take to humble themselves? (2 Chronicles 7:14, Ezra 8:21, Proverbs 29:23)

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3. Most companies have mission and vision statements that help them to focus on their goals. Amazon's mission statement is to "serve consumers through online and physical stores and focus on selection, price, and convenience." Amazon's vision statement is "to be Earth's most customer-centric company."⁽⁶⁾

Do you have a personal mission statement? The Christian's mission statement will help us to humbly submit to God's will for us. Using scripture, choose a mission statement that God is putting on your heart and share why. Here are a couple to consider: (Micah 6:8; Matthew 22:36-40; Matthew 28:19-20)

- a. What does Micah 6:8 say that the LORD requires of you? Elaborate on each point.
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4. Moses went face to face with Pharaoh, the most powerful man in Egypt. At Mount Sinai, he received the laws Yahweh gave to the Israelites. He led Israel from the Egyptian captivity, and led them during their time in the wilderness. Yet we read that Moses was extremely humble: *[Numbers 12:3] Moses was a very humble man, more so than anyone on the face of the earth.* Like all of us, Moses was not without sin. In a single act of disobedience, Moses was prevented from entering the promised land (Numbers 20:8-12).
*“Moses not only took the rebellion of the people against the Lord too personally, he also over-magnified his own partnership with God: **Must we bring water for you out of this rock?** Moses spoke as if he and God would do the job, as if they divided the work fifty-fifty; as if God couldn’t bring water unless he was around to speak to the rock. His lapse into contempt for the people led him into a lapse of subtle pride.” - David Guzik⁽⁷⁾*
 - a. Moses was very humble, more than anyone on the face of the earth, yet subtle pride impacted his walk with God. What advice do these verses offer to avoid this sin? (Zephaniah 2:3; Proverbs 21:23; 22:5)
 5. The world tends to classify people by their social status, career achievements, or accumulated wealth. King Solomon had it all, and he records for us his conclusions on this matter: *[Ecclesiastes 2:10-11] 10 All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. 11 When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.* King Solomon was not only given wisdom, but riches and honor from God *[1 Kings 3:13]*. We are reminded in 1 Samuel 2:7 that it is the LORD Who gives riches, poverty, humility, and honor. The life pursuit of some is to seek worldly treasure, fame, or status, and that consumes their every thought. Others may only veer off the straight and narrow path periodically, and just need a gentle reminder to remain humble and give God the glory. Are you striving for something right now on your own strength? What do these verses say about this? (1 Samuel 2:7; Proverbs 16:19; James 4:10)

6. Jesus Christ was a great leader and example for us all. Zechariah 9:9a sets the scene: *“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout in triumph, Daughter Jerusalem! Look, your King is coming to you; he is righteous and victorious.”* So far, so good. The King is righteous and victorious. The rest of verse nine fills out the description: *“humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”* What do these verses say about humility and honor? (Proverbs 15:33; 22:4)

7. Does Godly humility come naturally? The answer is ‘no.’ The natural state of man is sinful. *[Romans 5:12] Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way death spread to all people, because all sinned.* Sin includes pride and arrogance, and a lack of recognition that our talents are God-given. Humility is the opposite of these.

For the Christian, the Holy Spirit teaches us true humility as we grow in faith, through the Word of God and the example of Jesus Christ. Paul may have recognized our need to pray continuously (*[1 Thessalonians 5:17] pray constantly*) in part to remain humble, and therefore a useful vessel for God.

Godly humility leads to joy. Many looking for happiness may not be aware that their true quest is for joy. Joy can be defined as ‘Jesus’, ‘Others’, and then ‘Yourself’. Read Isaiah 29:19 and share your thoughts.

8. How can we maintain humility? Humility reflects obedience to the will of God. *[Philippians 2:8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death -- even to death on a cross.* It begins with a deep sense of one’s unworthiness in the sight of God. If humility is to be a continuous behavior, one should expect opposition from our personal desires. What do these verses reveal about this conflict within the heart and mind? (Romans 7:18-19; Galatians 5:17)

9. How does the world view humility? A recent Psychology Today article revealed various views of humility. *“Confucius believed humility was knowing our place in a large social world; and in this, humility can greatly enhance social cohesion and a sense of belonging.”* The article went on to define humility in Christianity in this way: *“Humility takes the form of self-renunciation and submission to God’s will. It is associated with guilt, shame, sin, and self-abnegation (denial of oneself).”* The article then listed examples of humility in nature: *“If we could live more like plants, for example, we might discover how to exist in harmony with nature and not recklessly seek to exploit its resource.”* ⁽⁸⁾

Humility

- a. *Did the article get the definition of Christian humility right? (See John 13:13-16; Philippians 2:3-4; 5-8)*
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 - b. *What is the difference between the world's view of humility and the godly view of it?*
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10. The importance of humility is that it disarms pride. Humility and pride are inversely related. Complete submission to God disarms the desire to do things in opposition to God's will.
- a. Share your thoughts Psalm 25:9, specifically on how the LORD leads and teaches.
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 - b. Share your thoughts on what James 1:9-10 is saying.
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11. John Newton states: *"I am persuaded that love and humility are the highest attainments in the school of Christ and the brightest evidence that He is indeed our Master."* ⁽⁹⁾ When we consider the example of Jesus Christ throughout His ministry, we see that love and humility are closely linked together. While love is the motive, humility is the method to demonstrate it. Keeping Philippians 2:3 in mind, think of a recent time that you were able to demonstrate love and humility. *[Philippians 2:3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.* Consider the impact it made and share it with the group.
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A final thought...

Confidence versus Arrogance – Humility is the Difference

Godly confidence is knowing the skills and abilities you possess, giving God the credit for them, and seeking to use them to serve others. Arrogance is believing you are more important than others, and using those skills and abilities to benefit yourself at the expense of others. The difference between confidence and arrogance is humility. Like all sin, arrogance begins in the mind, and then becomes actions and words. The words in Hannah's prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10) are a testimony of God's work in her life and include a warning about pride: *[1 Samuel 2:3] Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by him.*

Closing Thoughts:

PRAY

To have the mind of Christ is my strong desire, so that I can embrace humility and make no room for arrogant pride. The result is living a life where others will see the love of God.

Father God, I acknowledge that I am not able in my strength to have true humility. I pray that you would fill my mind with what is pleasing to you, and that you would teach me humility in my thoughts, actions, and words. LORD, use me to reach others with love and humility so that all glory would be Yours. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Humility and submission are in the nature of God.

Humility disarms pride.

God will humble the proud.

Scripture References:

[1 Peter 5:6] Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time.

[Daniel 4:37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

[Deuteronomy 8:2] "Remember that the LORD your God led you on the entire journey these forty years in the wilderness, so that he might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.

[Deuteronomy 8:16] "He fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers had not known, in order to humble and test you, so that in the end he might cause you to prosper.

[2 Samuel 22:28] You rescue an oppressed people, but your eyes are set against the proud -- you humble them.

[Deuteronomy 8:3] "He humbled you by letting you go hungry; then he gave you manna to eat, which you and your fathers had not known, so that you might learn that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

[2 Chronicles 7:14] and my people, who bear my name, humble themselves, pray and seek my face, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, forgive their sin, and heal their land.

[Ezra 8:21] I proclaimed a fast by the Ahava River, so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us, our dependents, and all our possessions.

[Proverbs 29:23] A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor.

[Micah 6:8] Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.

[Matthew 22:36-40] 36 "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest? " 37 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 "This is the greatest and most important command. 39 "The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 "All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

[Matthew 28:19-20] 19 "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

[Numbers 20:8-12] 8 "Take the staff and assemble the community. You and your brother Aaron are to speak to the rock while they watch, and it will yield its water. You will bring out water for them from the rock and provide drink for the community and their livestock." 9 So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence just as he had commanded him. 10 Moses and Aaron summoned the assembly in front of the rock, and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels! Must we bring water out of this rock for you? " 11 Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff, so that abundant water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank. 12 But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me to demonstrate my holiness in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this assembly into the land I have given them."

[Zephaniah 2:3] Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who carry out what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be concealed on the day of the LORD's anger.

[Proverbs 21:23] The one who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself out of trouble.

[Proverbs 22:5] There are thorns and snares on the way of the crooked; the one who guards himself stays far from them.

[1 Kings 3:13] "In addition, I will give you what you did not ask for: both riches and honor, so that no king will be your equal during your entire life.

[1 Samuel 2:7] The LORD brings poverty and gives wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

[Proverbs 16:19] Better to be lowly of spirit with the humble than to divide plunder with the proud.

[James 4:10] Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

[Proverbs 15:33] The fear of the LORD is what wisdom teaches, and humility comes before honor.

[Proverbs 22:4] Humility, the fear of the LORD, results in wealth, honor, and life.

[Proverbs 29:23] A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor. Humility comes before honor.

[Isaiah 29:19] The humble will have joy after joy in the LORD, and the poor people will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

[Romans 7:18-19] 18 For I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my flesh. For the desire to do what is good is with me, but there is no ability to do it. 19 For I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do.

[Galatians 5:17] For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

[John 13:13-16] 13 "You call me Teacher and Lord -- and you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. 14 "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 "For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you. 16 "Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.

[Philippians 2:3-4] 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. 4 Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

[Philippians 2:5-8] 5 Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. 7 Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. And when he had come as a man, 8 he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death -- even to death on a cross.

[Psalm 25:9] He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

[James 1:9-10] 9 Let the brother of humble circumstances boast in his exaltation, 10 but let the rich boast in his humiliation because he will pass away like a flower of the field.

Footnotes

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Lesson 11: Pride

"According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind." – C.S. Lewis⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 16:18] Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

C.H. Spurgeon says this about pride: *"If there is a sin that is universal, it is this. Where is it not to be found? Hunt among the highest and loftiest in the world, and you shall find it there; and then go and search amongst the poorest and the most miserable, and you shall find it there. There may be as much pride inside a beggar's rags as in a prince's robe; and a harlot may be as proud as a model of chastity. Pride is a strange creature; it never objects to its lodgings. It will live comfortably enough in a palace, and it will live equally at its ease in a hovel. Is there any man in whose heart pride does not lurk?"⁽²⁾*

It should come as no surprise that Satan tempted Eve with the same thing that caused his fall - pride. In Genesis 3:5, the serpent told Eve that when she ate from the tree, "your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." David Guzik's commentary makes this statement: ***"The final enticement was the most powerful because it was how Satan himself fell, wanting to be equal with God. Eve tried to become a god by rebelling against God."***⁽³⁾ Eve's eyes went from looking at God to the tree as the source of wisdom: *[Genesis 3:6] The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom.* Sin entered the world. It would almost seem that Proverbs 8:13 was penned for this moment in the garden of Eden: *"To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech."*

What makes pride so pernicious is the progression we see in Genesis 3 with the temptation and the fall. The first step in the process was for the enemy to question the Word of God. *[Genesis 3:1] Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?* What was true in the garden is true today. The Word of God is under constant attack. Why? Because this tactic of the enemy is effective.

The next step was Eve having a discussion with the serpent: *[Genesis 3:2] The woman said to the serpent...* Engaging in a conversation with the enemy is a dangerous tactic. A better tactic can be found in God's word: *[James 4:7] Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Satan twisted scripture, just as he did when tempting Jesus in the wilderness. He pivoted on a lie ("you will not die"), then told a partial truth ("your eyes will be opened") : *[Genesis 3:4-5] 4 No! You will not die, the serpent said to the woman. 5 In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.* The conversation should never have gone this far. Satan gave enough of the truth so that Eve bought into it. It was the time for Eve to decide to follow God or Satan.

Pride

Eve surrendered to Satan's temptation. "First, she gave in to the lust of the flesh (saw that it was good for food), then she gave in to the lust of the eyes (pleasant to the eyes), then she gave in to the pride of life (desirable to make one wise)."⁽³⁾ - David Guzik commentary on Genesis 3:6). *[Genesis 3:6] The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.*

1 John 2:16: *For everything in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions -- is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

Pride can lead to many other sins, primarily because it elevates oneself above God. For the one that repents from pride there is forgiveness and even spiritual growth: *[Proverbs 29:23] A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor.* King Nebuchadnezzar's sin was pride: *[Daniel 4:30] The king exclaimed, "Is this not Babylon the Great that I have built to be a royal residence by my vast power and for my majestic glory?"* God judged him and he repented and was restored: *[Daniel 4:34] But at the end of those days, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven, and my sanity returned to me. Then I praised the Most High and honored and glorified him who lives forever: For his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.*

There is pride that leads to eternal separation from God, which is the pride of those who reject God. *[Proverbs 16:18a] Pride comes before destruction.* Satan's fall is found the book of Isaiah: *[Isaiah 14:14-15] 14 I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. 15 But you will be brought down to Sheol into the deepest regions of the Pit.*

God will take extreme measures to reach someone who is on a downward spiral from pride's allure. Consider God's intervention with King Nebuchadnezzar. He was banished from his kingdom to live among wild animals. He ate grass and his body was drenched with dew from the sky while his hair grew like eagle feathers. At the end of those days he praised the Most High God and honored and glorified Him. God restored him and his greatness was increased. God will not leave His children in the grip of pride, but He will discipline them as a loving Father.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "pride" was defined then and now.

Definition of Pride:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁴⁾

- The quality or state of being proud: such as:
 - Reasonable self-esteem: confidence and satisfaction in oneself.
 - Pleasure that come from some relationship, association, achievement, or possession that is seen as a source of honor.
 - Exaggerated self-esteem

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽⁵⁾

- Inordinate self-esteem; an unreasonable conceit of one's own superiority in talents, beauty, wealth, accomplishments, rank or elevation in office, which manifests itself in lofty airs, distance, reserve, and often in contempt of others.
- Pride goeth before destruction. *Proverbs 16:18*
- Pride that dines of vanity, sups on contempt. All pride is abject and mean.
- Those that walk in pride he is able to abase. *Daniel 4:37.*

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 Dictionary definition of pride includes theological aspects that are not mentioned in the current definition of pride. What are they?

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- a. What are the implications of leaving out the theological content from the definition of pride?

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2. The LORD God commanded Adam to eat from any tree in the garden with one exception: *[Genesis 2:16-17] 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die."* Satan enters the scene in Genesis chapter 3 and starts a discussion with Eve. *[Genesis 3:2-3] 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"* Something was lost in Eve's translation of God's instructions. What are the differences?

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- a. What do we learn from these differences?

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3. Pride leads to many other sins. Pride is so destructive because it takes our focus off God and places it upon ourselves. What can cause a believer to look to themselves instead of God? Read and comment on these verses:

- a. Proverbs 12:1

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- b. 1 Corinthians 8:1b

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c. John 15:5

d. From the above verses, how can knowledge both be desirable (Proverbs 12:1) and yet, the source of pride (1 Corinthians 8:1b)?

4. *I should have been the one promoted! I have more knowledge and experience. I can't understand why this is happening to me!* In the middle of the words “pride” and “sin” is “I”. Consider the story of Adonijah. Read the story of Adonijah found in 1 Kings 1:1 – 1 Kings 2:25. He violated a basic principle in the Scriptures — that we should let God exalt us rather than exalting ourselves.

a. What was Adonijah's first misstep, found in 1 Kings 1:5?

b. What can we learn from the story of Adonijah? Consider goals you may have set for yourself. Have you prayed and sought God during your pursuit of them?

c. We often tell ourselves that God is in control. Read 1 Samuel 2:7 and share your thoughts.

5. Pride can lead to arrogance and a false sense of security, as we've noticed in the story of Adonijah. It did not go well for Adonijah (1 Kings 2:24-25). Now let's take a look at the pride of a nation. The book of Obadiah reveals the story of the nation of Edom, and Obadiah's prophecy for it. Read Obadiah 1:1-18 and share your thoughts on the dangers of an arrogant heart. The prophesy against Edom is found in verses 10 and 18.

Note: The Edomites fought side by side with the Jews in the rebellion against Rome in A.D. 66-70 and were crushed by Rome, never to be heard of as a people again. The predictions of Obadiah 1:10 and 1:18 were proven true.

6. *Pride is the quintessential human sin—we think we can be our own gods...To the proud heart, what matters is simply what we want...Pride always leads to more sin as we arrogantly think more of ourselves and less of God and his revealed Word. It's really people shaking their fist at God to declare they are autonomous and can do whatever they want.*⁽⁶⁾ Pride drives a wedge in the relationship between the creation and the Creator. It is no wonder that God would hate pride.
 - a. We should love what God loves and hate what He hates. Share your thoughts on Proverbs 8:13.
 - b. Pride in society is like leaven in bread – it spreads and affects everything. Prideful, ungodly leadership can impact an entire society. We read over and over again of God's judgment of the nation of Israel. When judgment came, repentance followed. The cycle continues to this day. Read Judges 2:18-19 and Amos 6:8. What caused the nation of Israel to be judged by God?
7. Pride may begin innocently enough with the building up of one's ego. Left unchecked, it will develop into satisfying self over the will of God, leading to arrogant pride. Psalm 23:4 reminds us that God is with us, and that His rod and staff comfort us. Won't the Father use the rod of correction because of His love for His children? What do these verses say about God's response to strong or arrogant pride? (Proverbs 13:24, Leviticus 26:19a)
8. Was the Apostle Paul bragging in 2 Corinthians 5:12? *We are not commending ourselves to you again, but giving you an opportunity to be proud of us, so that you may have a reply for those who take pride in outward appearance rather than in the heart.* Paul tells the Corinthians of his weaknesses, his trials, and his struggles in living for Jesus Christ. He goes on to say he has "great pride" in the Corinthian believers: *[2 Corinthians 7:4] I am very frank with you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.* Is all pride sinful? Read these verses and share your observations:
 - a. Psalm 20:7
 - b. Galatians 6:4 (note, see Ephesians 2:10)

c. Contrast the above verses with 1 John 2:16

9. The prophet Habakkuk prophesied of the coming Babylonian army and its destruction of Judah. He asked God tough questions and recorded God's answers. Habakkuk was troubled by God choosing a nation more wicked than the people of Judah to bring judgment. God assured Habakkuk that He saw the proud and knew that they were not upright. Habakkuk 2:4 contrasts those who act pridefully with those who are righteous. Share your thoughts on the contrast found in Habakkuk 2:4.

a. How similar is this to Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38?

10. Pride can be especially dangerous among the people of God. Once a man came to John Bunyan after a sermon and told him what a fine sermon he had preached. *"You're too late," Bunyan answered. "The devil told me that before I stepped down from the pulpit."*⁽⁷⁾ – C. H. Spurgeon. Positive (or negative) feedback can be helpful for the affirmation of a spiritual gift. What can we do to keep feedback in the proper perspective? (See John 15:5; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 119:11; and Mark 1:35.)

A Final Thought:

Let's take a closer look at our key verse: *Proverbs 16:18 Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.*

Looking at Proverbs 16:18 gives us a glimpse into the pervasiveness of pride. Pride, like many qualities, can have a positive and negative connotation. Pride can be a feeling of satisfaction in our achievements that is justifiable, as it recognizes the reality that all good things come from God. This pride recognizes God's work in the Christian life (*2 Corinthians 7:4: I am very frank with you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.* It is not this pride that Proverbs 16:18 speaks of, however.

Pride often reflects too high an opinion of our abilities, and we fail to credit God with our successes and blessings, or recognize that our talents, abilities and opportunities are given by Him. *"One of the many ways that pride is evident is in a haughty spirit — an attitude that communicates superiority over other people. Those who think themselves higher than others are ready to fall under the fair judgment of God."*⁽⁸⁾ - David Guzik

Pride can take the Christian off-track but can lead to repentance, as was the case with King Nebuchadnezzar. (*Daniel 5:20) But when his heart was exalted and his spirit became arrogant, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken from him.* But Nebuchadnezzar came to his senses, as he described in Daniel 4:37: *Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.*

Pride, unchecked, can lead to eternal separation from God. *Matthew 7:13: Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few. Rather than teaching that a majority of the world will become Christians, Jesus seems here to be saying that those who are saved will be "few" in contrast to the "many" who travel toward eternal destruction.*" - Wayne Grudem

"God is opposed to the proud (James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5) and the proud man or woman is an abomination to God (Proverbs 16:5). With God so set against the proud, no wonder that pride goes before destruction."⁽⁸⁾ – David Guzik

Pride can begin with godly intent and slowly evolve into sinful behavior. The deception of pride that we can be like God, which appeals to our sinful nature, is the treacherous lie that the enemy will use to separate us from God. The saying, "We have found the enemy and he is us" could be re-stated as "I have found the enemy and it is pride within me."

Closing Thoughts:

PRAY

To have the mind of Christ is my strong desire, so that I can embrace humility and make no room for arrogant pride. The result is living a life where others will see the love of God.

Father God, I acknowledge that I am not able in my strength to resist pride. I pray that you would fill my mind with what is pleasing to you, and that you would guard my heart. I ask that you give me a heart to serve You in thought, action, and words. LORD, use me to reach others with love and humility so that all glory would be Yours. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Pride is the quintessential human sin – we think we can be our own gods.

Pride goes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

God hates arrogant pride.

Scripture References:

[Proverbs 16:18] Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall.

[Daniel 4:37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

[Proverbs 12:1] Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but one who hates correction is stupid.

[1Corinthians 8:1b] ...We know that "we all have knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

[John 15:5 CSB] "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

[1Kings 1:5] Adonijah son of Haggith kept exalting himself, saying, "I will be king! " He prepared chariots, cavalry, and fifty men to run ahead of him.

[1 Samuel 2:7] The LORD brings poverty and gives wealth; he humbles and he exalts.

[1 Kings 2:24-25] 24 "And now, as the LORD lives -- the one who established me, seated me on the throne of my father David, and made me a dynasty as he promised -- I swear Adonijah will be put to death today! " 25 Then King Solomon dispatched Benaiah son of Jehoiada, who struck down Adonijah, and he died.

[Obadiah 1:3-4] 3 Your arrogant heart has deceived you, you who live in clefts of the rock in your home on the heights, who say to yourself, "Who can bring me down to the ground? " 4 Though you seem to soar like an eagle and make your nest among the stars, even from there I will bring you down. This is the LORD's declaration.

[Obadiah 1:10] You will be covered with shame and destroyed forever because of violence done to your brother Jacob.

[Obadiah 1:18] Then the house of Jacob will be a blazing fire, and the house of Joseph, a burning flame, but the house of Esau will be stubble; Jacob will set them on fire and consume Edom. Therefore no survivor will remain of the house of Esau, for the LORD has spoken.

*[Proverbs 8:13] "To fear the LORD is to hate evil. **I hate arrogant pride**, evil conduct, and perverse speech.*

[Judges 2:18-21] 18 Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, the LORD was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The LORD was moved to pity whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them. 19 Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act even more corruptly than their fathers, following other gods to serve them and bow in worship to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways. 20 The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he declared, "Because this nation has violated my covenant that I made with their fathers and disobeyed me, 21 "I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died.

[Amos 6:8] The Lord GOD has sworn by himself -- this is the declaration of the LORD, the God of Armies: I loathe Jacob's pride and hate his citadels, so I will hand over the city and everything in it.

[Psalm 23:4] Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff -- they comfort me.

[Proverbs 13:24] The one who will not use the rod hates his son, but the one who loves him disciplines him diligently.

[Leviticus 26:19a] "I will break down your strong pride.

[Psalm 20:7] Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the LORD our God.

[Galatians 6:4] Let each person examine his own work, and then he can take pride in himself alone, and not compare himself with someone else.

[1 John 2:16] For everything in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions -- is not from the Father, but is from the world.

[Habakkuk 2:4] Look, his ego is inflated; he is without integrity. But the righteous one will live by his faith.

[Romans 1:17] For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith.

[Galatians 3:11] Now it is clear that no one is justified before God by the law, because the righteous will live by faith.

[Hebrews 10:38] But my righteous one will live by faith; and if he draws back, I have no pleasure in him.

[John 15:5] "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

[Joshua 1:8] "This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.

[Psalm 119:11] I have treasured your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you.

[Mark 1:35] Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying.

Pride

[Isaiah 13:11] I will punish the world for its evil, and wicked people for their iniquities. I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant and humiliate the insolence of tyrants.

[2 Chronicles 32:26] Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart -- he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem -- so the LORD's wrath didn't come on them during Hezekiah's lifetime.

[Daniel 4:37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

[Psalm 20:7] Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the LORD our God.

[2 Corinthians 7:4] I am very frank with you; I have great pride in you. I am filled with encouragement; I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions.

[1 Corinthians 13:4] Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant,

[Luke 10:18] He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like lightning.

[Luke 22:40] When he reached the place, he told them, "Pray that you may not fall into temptation."

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 12: The Tongue

"A slip of the foot you may soon recover, but a slip of the tongue you may never get over." – Benjamin Franklin⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 10:20] The tongue of the righteous is pure silver; the heart of the wicked is of little value.

Which is worse, sticks and stones that may break bones, or words? Broken bones will heal, but what about the psychological effect of words? The human brain can retain words spoken or heard many years earlier, especially those that made an impact for good or bad.

It was Sigmund Freud who introduced the three-level mind model, in which he divided the mind into three levels: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. 'Conscious' defines all thoughts and actions within our awareness. 'Subconscious' defines all actions and reactions which are automatic, but which we can become aware of if we think about them. 'Unconscious' defines past events and memories that reside in our mind, yet we cannot access at will.⁽²⁾

Spoken words may cause great damage, but the ability of the unconscious mind to store and recall them increases their impact. The repercussions from past words spoken or received can have a profound impact upon the present. Memories, particularly those of a painful or hurtful nature, can influence thoughts, actions, and relationships. What can we glean from God's word to guide us with our words?

When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent. In an abundance of words sin is not absent (Proverbs 10:19). We may regret words spoken out of emotion, whether it is immediate or later after a time of reflection. Words can be hurtful and words can be sinful. With God there is always forgiveness, but He goes further. Billy Graham said: *"When God forgives us and purifies us of our sin, He also forgets it. Forgiveness results in God dropping the charges against us."*⁽³⁾ The prophet Micah was sent by God to deliver a message about judgment to Israel. *[Micah 7:19] He will again have compassion on us; he will vanquish our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.* Christians are called to forgive. *[Matthew 6:15] But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses.* If a hurtful memory is brought into the conscious mind, the best place for it is at the foot of the cross.

If actions speak louder than words, maybe less words are a good strategy. While that might be a prudent step, there is no avoiding verbal communication. God's word gives sage advice *[Proverbs 21:23] The one who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself out of trouble.* Words should be thoughtfully considered before speaking. *[Proverbs 15:28a] The mind of the righteous person thinks before answering.* In some cases, a verbal response is a knee-jerk or emotional response. A quick prayer and a review of James 1:19-20 may be helpful. *[James 1:19-20] 19 My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, 20 for human anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.*

The Tongue

Christ followers have an incredible responsibility and liability regarding their use of words. Careful consideration should be given to the spoken word. The book of Proverbs is about wisdom, and the tongue is one method to impart Godly wisdom. [\[Proverbs 10:31\] The mouth of the righteous produces wisdom.](#) The tongue has the power to encourage and to heal. [\[Proverbs 12:18\] but the tongue of the wise brings healing.](#) God has given each person a sphere of influence to make a difference. [\[Proverbs 15:2\] The tongue of the wise makes knowledge attractive.](#)

God has communicated with people by way of words since the beginning. By His word He created the heavens and the earth. We were created in His image with the purpose of knowing Him and making Him known. Consider the incredible gift of the tongue and its power to glorify God. We were created in His image with the purpose of knowing Him and making Him known.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "tongue" was defined then and now.

Definition of Tongue:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁴⁾

- A spoken language
- The power of communication through speech
- Ecstatic, typically unintelligible utterance occurring especially in a moment of religious excitement – usually plural.
 - It would be like the miracle described in the Acts of the Apostles, demonstrated with healing, speaking in tongues and other signs and wonders.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:⁽⁵⁾

- Speech, as well or ill-used. The tongue of the wise is health. [Proverbs 12:18](#)
- Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. [1 John 3:18](#)
- I will gather all nations and tongues. [Isaiah 66:18](#)

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of 'tongue' includes theological aspects that are not mentioned in the current definition of 'tongue'. What are they?
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2. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and scribes who were concerned about His disciples washing their hands when they eat. [\[Matthew 15:11\] It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth -- this defiles a person.](#) Jesus goes on to say that it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles a person, and that this comes from the heart. [\[Matthew 15:18-19\] 18 But what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For from the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slander.](#)

The Tongue

- a. What practical steps can be taken to ensure our words glorify God? See Proverbs 21:23.
-
3. Words come from the heart (emotion) and the mind (thought) and are heavily influenced by our surroundings. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 is a good reminder of the larger narrative. *[2 Corinthians 10:3-5] 3 For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, 4 since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments 5 and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.*
 - a. Share your thoughts on 2 Corinthians 10:5b.
 -
 - b. Some thoughts occur when we are tempted. Read James 4:7 and Matthew 4:1-11 and share your thoughts.
 -
 - c. Does God know your thoughts? Does that give you comfort or concern? See Psalm 139:4.
4. Can words really cause hurt and pain? *"According to a WebMD study, merely saying, "This may hurt a bit," before receiving a shot may be enough to trigger a pain response in the brain long before any actual pain is felt."*⁽⁶⁾ James writes about the tongue in his epistle to the Jewish believers, saying "with it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness" (James 3:9). He concludes in verse 10 that these things should not be this way. Sin can take the form of words spoken out of ignorance or spite.
 - a. Consider *[Psalm 39:1a] I said, "I will guard my ways so that I may not sin with my tongue."* Share your thoughts on "guard my ways" and how it relates to the tongue.
5. There is more opportunity to sin while speaking than while listening. Share your thoughts on 'many words' and 'controls his lips' found in Proverbs 10:19.

The Tongue

- a. While listening, we can be guilty of forming our next thought instead of hearing what is said. Share your thoughts on Proverbs 18:13.

6. Some will remember words spoken years earlier. Not only are they not forgotten, but they also aren't forgiven. *[Matthew 6:14-15] For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. 15 But if you don't forgive others, your Father will not forgive your offenses. Forgiveness by God's standards means not bringing up past sins and putting them on trial once again.* How is that possible for the believer? Choose one of these verses or one that is on your heart, and share your thoughts. (Matthew 6:14, Mark 11:25, James 5:16)

- a. Share your thoughts from *[Hebrews 8:12] For I will forgive their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.*

7. Is there hope that the tongue can be brought under control? What does James 3:7-8 reveal about the tongue? Read Philippians 4:13 and share your thoughts.

8. Consider the power of words, and the immense responsibility of their use at our discretion. *[Proverbs 18:21] Death and life are in the power of the tongue.* Words can encourage or destroy. "Words are the most powerful weapon used by mankind." – Rudyard Kipling.⁽⁷⁾ In his epistle (James 3:4-10), James compares the tongue to the rudder of a ship, and to a small fire that burns an entire forest. In James 3:6 he mentions "the tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members." *[James 3:8] but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.* If no one can tame the tongue, how can a believer bring it under control?

9. Each topic we've covered in "The Nature of God in Proverbs" is applied practically by the use of words. Consider each topic and the scripture reference below. Choose one or more and share your thoughts.

Wisdom:

[Psalm 37:30] The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom; his tongue speaks what is just.

Knowledge:

[Proverbs 15:2] The tongue of the wise makes knowledge attractive, but the mouth of fools blurts out foolishness.

Understanding:

[Proverbs 2:6] For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Instructions:

[Isaiah 50:4] The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are instructed to know how to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens me each morning; he awakens my ear to listen like those being instructed.

[Proverbs 3:11-12] 11 Do not despise the LORD's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; 12 for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

Righteousness:

[Psalm 35:28] And my tongue will proclaim your righteousness, your praise all day long.

Discipline:

[Proverbs 6:23] For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way to life.

[Proverbs 4:1] Listen, sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding,

Integrity:

[Proverbs 2:6-7] 6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity

Humility:

[Daniel 4:37] Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt, and glorify the King of the heavens, because all his works are true and his ways are just. He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

Pride:

[Proverbs 8:13] To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech.

10. Have you ever binge-watched a series where the good and the evil characters are masked until the last episode? The plot brings you to the edge of your seat, wanting justice for evil and a reward for the good. Here is a news flash for our world: God wins in the end, and every knee with bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is LORD. *[Romans 14:11] For it is written, As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God. [Philippians 2:10-11] 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow -- in heaven and on earth and under the earth -- 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Until His return, how should we glorify God by our words? Share your thoughts using Proverbs 10:31, 12:18-19, 15:4, and Psalm 34:13.

PRAY

Words are powerful. They can help, heal, and encourage, but also hurt, damage, and discourage. Allow me to realize the power of words and to use them for the glory of God.

Father God, You have given us an incredible gift of communication. Words can be used to encourage and build up, or to hurt and damage. We pray for wisdom to guard our tongue and that our words would glorify you. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Forgive and forget. (Micah 7:19, Hebrews 8:12)

Think before answering. (Proverbs 15:28)

The power of the tongue. (Proverbs 18:21)

Every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11)

Scripture References:

[Proverbs 10:19] When there are many words, sin is unavoidable, but the one who controls his lips is prudent.

[Proverbs 12:18] There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

[1 John 3:18] Little children, let us not love in word or speech, but in action and in truth.

[Isaiah 66:18] "Knowing their works and their thoughts, I have come to gather all nations and languages; they will come and see my glory.

[Proverbs 21:23] The one who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself out of trouble.

[James 4:7] Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

[Matthew 4:1-11] 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 Then the tempter approached him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 He answered, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will give his angels orders concerning you, and they will support you with their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 7 Jesus told him, "It is also written: Do not test the Lord your God." 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 And he said to him, "I will give you all these things if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus told him, "Go away, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and began to serve him.

The Tongue

[Psalm 139:4] Before a word is on my tongue, you know all about it, LORD.

[James 3:9] With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness.

[Proverbs 18:13] The one who gives an answer before he listens -- this is foolishness and disgrace for him.

[Matthew 6:14] "For if you forgive others their offenses, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well.

[Mark 11:25] "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing."

[James 5:16] Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is very powerful in its effect.

[James 3:7-8] 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

[Philippians 4:13 CSB] 13 I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.

[James 3:4-10] 4 And consider ships: Though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5 So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how a small fire sets ablaze a large forest. 6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among our members. It stains the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 Every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and fish is tamed and has been tamed by humankind, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in God's likeness. 10 Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers and sisters, these things should not be this way.

[Proverbs 10:31] The mouth of the righteous produces wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.

[Proverbs 12:18-19] 18 There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise brings healing. 19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue, only a moment.

[Proverbs 15:4] The tongue that heals is a tree of life, but a devious tongue breaks the spirit.

[Psalm 34:13] Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from deceitful speech.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Lesson 13: Peace

"God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing." ~ C.S. Lewis⁽¹⁾

"When Christ was about to leave the world, He made His will. His soul He committed to His father; His body He bequeathed to Joseph to be decently interred; His clothes fell to the soldiers; His mother He left to the care of John; but what should He leave to His poor disciples that had left all for Him? Silver and gold He had none; but He left them that which was infinitely better, His peace." ~ Matthew Henry⁽²⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 3:1-2 NKJV] 1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; 2 For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.

The focus of a recent *Psychology Today* article was on building inner peace to create a better life and world. The article offered this suggestion: *"Empower your centered self to be the calming wise voice that quiets the inner chatter."* The strategies to be employed included meditation, therapy, exercise, consciousness, and more. The advice centered on searching for peace through self-effort. In this article, peace was defined as a quality, an energy, and a gift.⁽³⁾

Scripture reveals that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). For the non-believer, the advice in the *Psychology Today* article is the best the world can offer. Man was created in the image of God with the ultimate goal of knowing Him. If God allowed peace from a source apart from Him, then man could find peace and be content apart from God, with his fate sealed to be eternally separated from his Creator.

The source of true peace is God. *[2 Thessalonians 3:16] May the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you.* Charles Spurgeon said that God did not send his angel to give you peace, nor did he send His minister, nor that you'd receive peace at the communion table, or in prayer, or in reading the word, or in some other sacred exercise. He goes on to say, *"The Lord of peace himself gives you peace, as if he alone in his own person could give peace, and as if his presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires."*⁽⁴⁾ The peace that God gives is incomprehensible by those of the world. *[John 14:27] Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.* And His peace will guard and protect. *[Philippians 4:7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

John 14:27 clearly differentiates between the peace the world gives and the peace that comes from God. The peace from God does not change. The search for worldly peace is a journey with many stops, as the source of that peace is elusive and sought in a myriad of ways. Non-believers may even attempt to call upon Jesus to find peace, without recognizing Him as Lord. What they do not realize is that He did not come into the world to bring peace. *[Matthew 10:34] Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.* Those seeking peace need to come before the throne of grace and giver of peace. *[Matthew 11:28] Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

Challenging life experiences can cause people to search deep within to find comfort and peace. The Christian can draw near to God, the eternal source of peace. *[Psalm 145:18] The LORD is near all who call out to him, all who call out to him with integrity.*

While it is true that God is the one and only giver of peace, it is also true that God will use people to preach the gospel to help reconcile the lost. *[2 Corinthians 5:18-19] 18 Everything is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. 19 That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.* God is the one that transforms a life, but He will often use His people in this process.

[Matthew 5:9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. "This does not describe those who live in peace, but those who actually bring about peace, overcoming evil with good. One way we accomplish this is through spreading the gospel, because God has entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation. In evangelism we make peace between man and the God whom they have rejected and offended."⁽⁵⁾~ David Guzik

Review Questions:

1. Mention the word 'peace' and we may think of inner peace, or of a lack of conflict in the world. The world may define peace as freedom from disturbance, and something that we achieve through our own efforts. However, the One that gives and removes peace is God alone. Read these verses and share your thoughts:

- a. Psalm 29:11

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- b. Jeremiah 16:5

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- c. Haggai 2:9

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- d. 1 Chronicles 22:9

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Dale Carnegie was an American writer and lecturer who developed many popular courses in self-improvement. Over 450,000 people have graduated from the Dale Carnegie Institute. He provided this advice: *"If a half century of living has taught me anything at all, it has taught me that nothing can bring you peace but yourself."*⁽⁶⁾ What do these verses say to counter this statement?

e. Romans 5:1

f. Romans 8:5-6,9

g. Consider the impact of instruction that teaches the source of peace is yourself. Share your thoughts.

2. *[Matthew 10:34] Don't assume that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. "The message of Jesus - as reflected in the Sermon on the Mount - is indeed a message of peace. Yet since it calls the individual to a radical commitment to Jesus Himself, it is a message of peace that divides between those who choose it and those who reject it. The division between these two choices explains how Jesus did not come to bring peace but a sword."*⁽⁷⁾ ~ David Guzik

a. Have you personally experienced the division that having a relationship with Jesus Christ brings? (See Matthew 10:35-36)

3. Salvation brings peace with God. It does not come from what we have done, but what Jesus Christ did for us. *[Romans 5:1] Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Does salvation always bring the peace of God? It was Vance Havner who said: *"Not everyone who has made peace with God had realized the peace of God."*⁽⁸⁾ Share your thoughts on these verses:

a. Psalm 119:165

b. Proverbs 3:1-2 NKJV

Note: It is a choice to keep our eyes focused upon Jesus Christ, our minds upon His word, and our hearts open to serving Him. When we do, we experience peace beyond human understanding.

4. As Jesus prepared to depart this world, He gave the gift of the Holy Spirit and His peace. *[John 14:26-27] 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you. 27 Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful.* Why is it that in the same verse we read "My peace I give you" and "Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful"? (See John 16:33, John 13:16)

- a. Share how we can have quiet confidence, even through the suffering, pain, and tribulation of this life. See Deuteronomy 31:6 and Hebrews 13:5.

5. Paul's final words to the church in Thessalonica are for peace always and in every way. *[2 Thessalonians 3:16] May the Lord of peace himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with all of you.* We may find ourselves in the position of praying for peace for others, as the Apostle Paul does for the church. Read C.H. Spurgeon's commentary on this verse and share your thoughts.

"I want to call particular attention to the apostle's words in this place. He does not say 'May the Lord of peace send his angel to give you peace.' It were a great mercy if he did, and we might be as glad as Jacob was at Mahanaim, when the angels of God met him. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace send his minister to give you peace.' If he did we might be as happy as Abraham when Melchizedek refreshed him with bread and wine. He does not even say, 'May the Lord of peace at the communion table, or in reading the word, or in prayer, or in some other sacred exercise give you peace.' In all these we might well be as refreshed ... but he says 'the Lord of peace himself give you peace,' as if he alone in his own person could give peace, and as if his presence were the sole means of such a divine peace as he desires."⁽⁴⁾

Peace

- a. We often pray for others experiencing difficulties. Our prayer could be that they may make peace with God (for the unbeliever), or that God's peace would comfort them (for the believer). Is the Holy Spirit putting someone on your heart? Pray for them now and let them know.

6. *"After much prayer, careful study and reliance on the Holy Spirit, I have concluded this about Christ's intercession for us. Jesus died on the cross to purchase peace with God for me – and He is in heaven now to maintain that peace, for me and in me."*⁽⁹⁾ - David Wilkerson
Read Isaiah 32:17 and share your thoughts on the 'result' and 'effect' of righteousness.

7. For many believers, peace is elusive and difficult to maintain. The peace of God within every believer is constantly under attack, and we should expect it to be so. The advice in Philippians 4:6 is often quoted when peace is challenged. *[Philippians 4:6] Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* The New Living Translation of the Bible adds this statement 'and thank him for all he has done'. Consider all God has done for you, beginning with your salvation and through the various trials of life. Taking the time to consider 'all he has done' reminds us of God's faithfulness in the past, which leads us to the next verse. *[Philippians 4:7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* A guard or sentry is responsible for being on watch and immediately sounding an alarm for any threat. In what ways does the peace of God guard a believer's heart and mind? Share your thoughts on these verses:
 - a. John 16:33
 - b. Colossians 3:15
 - c. Micah 7:7

- d. Many Old Testament passages recount God's faithfulness to the nation of Israel. It is a good practice to reflect and remember the faithfulness of God. Philippians 4:6 says to present our requests to God with thanksgiving. Is thanksgiving a continuous part of your prayer life? Do you remember past trials and His faithfulness in them?

8. We read Christ's response to the temptation of Satan in *Matthew 4:4: It is written: Man must not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.* "Jesus could have easily rebuked Satan into another galaxy, but resisted him in a way that we can imitate and identify with."⁽¹⁰⁾ – David Guzik

"Jesus used Scripture to battle Satan's temptation, not some elaborate spiritual power inaccessible to us. Jesus fought this battle as fully man, and He drew on no "special resources" unavailable to us. Out flashed the sword of the Spirit: our Lord will fight with no other weapon. He could have spoken new revelations, but chose to say, 'It is written.'" – C. H. Spurgeon⁽¹¹⁾

Wars are fought to gain peace and there is an adage that, 'The best defense is a good offense'. We cannot avoid spiritual battles in this life, but we can have the peace of God in them. Is there a correlation between being in God's word on a continual basis and the 'peace of God'? Share your thoughts on these verses:

- a. Ephesians 6:16-17

- b. Hebrews 4:12

9. The Colt single-action .45 caliber revolver was known as "the peacemaker" because it was widely used by law enforcement. Although this revolutionary weapon may have enforced peace, it was not a long-term peace, nor an everlasting one. Jesus, in the Sermon on the mount, calls human peacemakers 'sons of God'. *[Matthew 5:9] Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.* Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, mentions that Christ entrusted the message of reconciliation to His followers. *[2 Corinthians 5:19] That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and he has committed the message of reconciliation to us.* How do Christ followers carry this out?

- a. 2 Corinthians 5:20

b. Mark 16:15

PRAY

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we can have peace with God. The peace of God will come from following Him closely and keeping His commands. Then, the peace of God will enable us to share the gospel more effectively.

Lord Jesus, I am thankful that by your sacrifice I can have peace with God. I pray that you would show me anything that is displeasing to you, and that you would draw me close to You. I pray that the peace of God would overshadow the cares I have in the world and enable me to share the gospel of peace. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

The world teaches that peace comes from within oneself.

Salvation brings peace with God. (Romans 5:1)

God gives us His peace. (John 14:27)

Jesus did not come to bring peace on earth, but division. (Matt 10:34)

We will have suffering in this world, but Jesus Christ has conquered the world. (John 16:33)

Closing Thoughts:

A common question in today's society is, "What have you done for me today?" Our job, family, or even our ministry may fall under this subtle but powerful demand. Soon we find ourselves "busy" all the time. We didn't have time for God's word this morning, and of course no time for prayer. We find ourselves not even looking for peace, but just to survive. How did we get to this place, and more importantly, how do we get back to a place where we have the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds?

There is no simple answer, but we can look to God's word for principles to guide us. As we look at Proverbs 3:16-18, we should consider who the author is referring to as "her". *[Proverbs 3:16-18] 16 Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor. 17 Her ways are pleasant, and all her paths, peaceful. 18 She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold on to her are happy.* She has tremendous value as the preceding verses tell us: *[Proverbs 3:14-15] 14 for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. 15 She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire can equal her.* So, what is the source of such happiness? We find the answer in Proverbs 3:13: *Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding.*

Earlier in our study, we reviewed Wisdom and Understanding. Many believers will come to an understanding of the truth revealed in God's word, however they may not fully embrace it in their daily walk with the Lord.

If this is where you are, it might be a good time to bring everything before God. In doing so, realize peace comes not from what you do, but from what was done for you. Consider sharing your burdens with one another, and also bringing them to the Lord.

Scripture References:

[Jeremiah 17:9] The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable -- who can understand it?

[Psalm 29:11] The LORD gives his people strength; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

[Jeremiah 16:5] "For this is what the LORD says: Don't enter a house where a mourning feast is taking place. Don't go to lament or sympathize with them, for I have removed my peace from these people as well as my faithful love and compassion." This is the LORD's declaration.

[Haggai 2:9] "The final glory of this house will be greater than the first," says the LORD of Armies. "I will provide peace in this place" -- this is the declaration of the LORD of Armies.

[1 Chronicles 22:9] But a son will be born to you; he will be a man of rest. I will give him rest from all his surrounding enemies, for his name will be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel during his reign.

[Romans 5:1] Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Romans 8:5-6,9] 5 For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit. 6 Now the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. ... 9 You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him.

[Matthew 10:35-36] For I came to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

[Psalm 119:165] Abundant peace belongs to those who love your instruction; nothing makes them stumble.

[Proverbs 3:1-2 NKJV] 1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; 2 For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you.

[John 16:33] I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.

[John 13:16] Truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his master, and a messenger is not greater than the one who sent him.

[Deuteronomy 31:6] Be strong and courageous; don't be terrified or afraid of them. For the LORD your God is the one who will go with you; he will not leave you or abandon you.

Peace

[Hebrews 13:5] Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, I will never leave you or abandon you.

[Isaiah 32:17] The result of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quiet confidence forever.

[John 16:33] I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.

[Colossians 3:15] And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

[Micah 7:7] But I will look to the LORD; I will wait for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me.

[Ephesians 6:16-17] 16 In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit -- which is the word of God.

[Hebrews 4:12] For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[2 Corinthians 5:20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: "Be reconciled to God."

[Mark 16:15] Then he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017) and *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. Wheaton, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985.

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Lesson 14: Patience

"The next time you're disappointed, don't panic. Don't give up. Just be patient and let God remind you He's still in control."⁽¹⁾ ~ Max Lucado

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 16:32] Patience is better than power, and controlling one's emotions, than capturing a city.

A February 2020 article in **Christianity.com** said, *"'Patience is a virtue' is a popular phrase. While the author is hard to pin down, the meaning is certainly of Biblical origin."*⁽²⁾ It is a saying that has been around for generations. What does it mean to be patient?

An example of patience is found in the life of the prophet Micah. Micah *"began his ministry in the reign of Jotham, but nobody listened. Then he prophesied during the reign of Ahaz, but nobody listened. Finally, he prophesied during the reign of Hezekiah and the leaders and the people repented. Micah didn't give up, even though the results were slow in coming. Micah preached for anywhere between 16 and 25 years before there was any response."*⁽³⁾ ~ David Guzik

Patience is calmly waiting for a result or response. Frustration can set in when the expectation is not met. The sound of silence while waiting can be deafening. The prophet Micah exhibited patience and continued steadfastly to proclaim the message he received from the Lord. *[Psalm 27:14] Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart be courageous. Wait for the LORD.*

For the Christian, patience begins in the mind, where we process our circumstances in the light of the will of God. God won't push us beyond our limit *[1 Corinthians 10:13]* but will give us His peace so that we might have patience. So, the key to patience is having the peace of God in our heart and mind. We have a role to play in this process, which is remembering God's faithfulness. See Philippians 4:6-7 and consider 'thanksgiving'. The New Living Translation states it this way: *Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.* Thanking God for His past faithfulness gives us confidence in our present condition, and the patience to endure it for His glory.

Consider that when others notice our patience, it is a way to preach the gospel. Patience is a witness to the world that the peace of God can bring peace of mind. For a moment, think of those who God brought into your life who were examples of patience. In many cases, they had the peace of God which resulted in patience, and that blessing was poured out on those around them. Patience that comes from the peace of God provides the opportunity for God to reveal to us His purpose. *[Luke 22:42] "... not my will, but yours, be done."*

Consider the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17 (New Living Translation): *16 Always be joyful. 17 Never stop praying.* Whenever we see the words 'always' or 'never' in Scripture, we should take notice. They are absolutes that require thoughtful consideration. For every follower of Jesus Christ, patience is a struggle that makes our dependence on Him continuous, not only day-by-day, but minute-by-minute.

Is patience a learned behavior or a fruit of the Holy Spirit? For the Christian, the answer is both. We're not born with patience, but learn the value of it to help achieve personal or community benefits. When Christians are born-again, they gain a new godly perspective of patience through the Holy Spirit. We submit ourselves to God's will and patiently wait for Him to work. *[Psalm 37:7 CSB] 7 Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the person who carries out evil plans.* There is a blessing for those that patiently wait upon the Lord. *[Lamentations 3:25 CSB] 25 The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him.*

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "patience" was defined then and now.

Definition of Patience:

Webster's Dictionary (current):⁽⁴⁾

- The capacity, habit, or fact of being patient
- Definition of patient:
 - Bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint
 - Manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain
 - Not hasty or impetuous
 - Steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity
 - Able or willing to bear.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:⁽⁵⁾

- The suffering of afflictions, pain, toil, calamity, provocation or other evil, with a calm, unruffled temper; endurance without murmuring or fretfulness. Patience may spring from constitutional fortitude, from a kind of heroic pride, or from Christian submission to the divine will.
- A calm temper, which bears evils without murmuring or discontent.
- The act or quality of waiting long for justice or expected good without discontent.
 - *[Matthew 18:26] "At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.'*
- Definition of patient:
 - Be patient towards all men: *[1 Thessalonians 5:14] And we exhort you, brothers and sisters: warn those who are idle, comfort the discouraged, help the weak, be patient with everyone.*

Review Questions:

1. The definition of patience has changed since 1828. What changed? Why do you think it changed?

2. God called Moses to come up to Mount Sinai where He would establish the Mosaic Covenant. In *Exodus 34:6-7*, we are given a glimpse into the nature of God. *6 The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed: The LORD -- the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth, 7 maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.* Describe the patience of God from this passage.

3. The motive for discipline is love and is necessary for the well-being of God's people, as we see in *Nehemiah 9:30*. *You were patient with them for many years, and your Spirit warned them through your prophets, but they would not listen. Therefore, you handed them over to the surrounding peoples.* Share your thoughts on the balance between patience and discipline.

4. The capital of the Assyrian Empire was Nineveh, the city that heard the preaching of Jonah a hundred years before and repented. Nahum's call was to address this city that had slipped back into sin and was again ripe for judgment. According to *Nahum* 1:3, what do we learn about how God deals with unrepentant sin?

a. God did not immediately judge Nineveh. What does *Romans 2:4* say about patience?

b. What does *Proverbs* 16:32 reveal about patience? Why is it better?

Patience

5. *“Patience is the companion of wisdom.”*⁽⁶⁾ – Saint Augustine. Earlier in our study we discussed the source of wisdom. *[Proverbs 9:10a] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* Godly wisdom does not always come in our timing. *[Isaiah 30:18] Therefore the LORD is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the LORD is a just God. All who wait patiently for him are happy.* Describe how patience is the companion of wisdom.

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- a. Share your thoughts on how godly wisdom impacts patience. See *Proverbs 14:29*.

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6. A *Psychology Today* article titled “The Lost Virtue of Patience” says, *“Patience is often thought of as a virtue, including self-control, humility, tolerance, generosity, and mercy, and is itself an important aspect of other virtues such as hope, faith, and love.”*⁽⁷⁾ *[1 Corinthians 13:13] Now these three remain: faith, hope, and love - but the greatest of these is love.* Using the verses below, share how patience is an important aspect of faith, hope, and love.

- a. Love (2 Peter 3:9)

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- b. Hope (Romans 8:25)

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- c. Faith (2 Thessalonians 1:4 NKJV)

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7. “Despite the digital age’s marvels, it has propagated... a low tolerance for frustration - not just when you accidentally delete a computer file, but in terms of how you approach relationships and yourself. Without patience, you turn into your own worst taskmaster.”⁽⁸⁾ ~ *Psychology Today*

Has your tolerance for patience been impacted by the digital age? Share how you cope with the constant expectation of responsiveness. See Galatians 5:22-23.

8. Frustration happens! Frustration is inevitable and is not a pleasant feeling. However, it does have a purpose. Why does God allow it? Frustration is defined as “a feeling of being upset or annoyed, especially of inability to change or achieve something”.⁽⁹⁾ Is this feeling being driven by God or our flesh? How can we respond to frustration in a way pleasing to the Lord? (See Psalm 25:21) Why should we? (See 1 Timothy 1:16)

9. “Speak when you are angry, and you will make the best speech you will ever regret.”⁽¹⁰⁾ ~ Ambrose Bierce A stop-gap measure to avoid regret can be found in Proverbs 21:23: *The one who guards his mouth and tongue keeps himself out of trouble*. What does Ecclesiastes 7:8-9 mention about a patient spirit, and what advice does this verse provide?

10. A **mindful.org** article shares the benefits of being a patient person. The article makes the claim that “patience is linked to good health. In their 2007 study, Schnitker and Emmons found that patient people were less likely to report health problems like headaches, acne flare-ups, ulcers, diarrhea, and pneumonia... If patience can reduce our daily stress, it’s reasonable to speculate that it could also protect us against stress’s damaging health effects.”⁽¹¹⁾ Share your thoughts using Proverbs 3:7-8 and Colossians 1:11-12.

PRAY

Patience doesn't come naturally. A follower of Jesus Christ who demonstrates patience can dramatically impact the world to the glory of God. Pray that the moments of frustration would lead to a time of waiting on the Lord.

Father God, all glory and praise to You. I pray that my moments of frustration would lead to seeking You and Your will, and as a result that I would demonstrate patience to those You bring into my path.

Key Takeaways:

Patience is powerful. (Proverbs 16:32)

Wait for the LORD. (Psalm 27:14)

A patient person can be a godly witness. (Proverbs 14:29)

Final Thought:

[Galatians 5:22-23] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. Patience is an internal attribute exhibited outwardly in our behavior toward others. Patience is a choice that can often come on the heels of overcoming frustration. When in the company of those who are watching for your response, it becomes an opportunity share the gospel.

In Galatians 5:22, patience is followed by kindness. Kindness towards others in many cases is a result of exhibiting patience. It is God's kindness that leads to repentance *(Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?)* As we follow the extraordinary example of Jesus Christ to exhibit patience, we share in reaching the lost *[1Timothy 1:16] But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.*

Scripture References:

[1 Corinthians 10:13] No temptation has come upon you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation he will also provide a way out so that you may be able to bear it.

[Philippians 4:6 NLT] Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.

[Nahum 1:3] The LORD is slow to anger but great in power; the LORD will never leave the guilty unpunished. His path is in the whirlwind and storm, and clouds are the dust beneath his feet.

[Romans 2:4] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[Proverbs 16:32] Patience is better than power, and controlling one's emotions, than capturing a city.

[Proverbs 14:29] A patient person shows great understanding, but a quick-tempered one promotes foolishness.

[2 Peter 3:9] The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

[Romans 8:25] Now if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with patience.

[2 Thessalonians 1:4 NKJV] so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure,

[Galatians 5:22-23] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.

[Psalm 25:21] May integrity and what is right watch over me, for I wait for you.

[1 Timothy 1:16] But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.

[Ecclesiastes 7:8-9] 8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning; a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit. 9 Don't let your spirit rush to be angry, for anger abides in the heart of fools.

[Proverbs 3:7-8] 7 Don't be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil. 8 This will be healing for your body and strengthening for your bones.

[Colossians 1:11-13 CSB] 11 being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, joyfully 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light. 13 He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

Footnotes

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Lesson 15: Kindness

“Want to snatch a day from the manacles of boredom? Do overgenerous deeds, acts beyond reimbursement. Kindness without compensation. Do a deed for which you cannot be repaid.” ~ Max Lucado⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 19:17] Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and he will give a reward to the lender.

“Kindness is an attribute of God himself and is to be practiced by the believer by means of reflecting God’s kindness when relating to others.”⁽²⁾ But what is kindness, and what is its purpose? Does it automatically become an attribute of a believer when accepting Jesus Christ as Lord?

Kindness is mentioned in *[Romans 2:4]: Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?* The intent of God’s kindness is to lead us to repentance. God demonstrates His kindness to mankind in order to restore the relationship lost when sin entered into the world. One could conclude that kindness, which is listed as a fruit of the Spirit that a believer is called to exhibit, is crucial to the Christian walk. *[Galatians 5:22-23] 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things.* As believers reflect the kindness of God, God uses them to lead others to faith. The Holy Spirit enables a believer to demonstrate the kindness of God that leads to repentance.

In the list of the fruits of the Spirit, it can be easy to overlook kindness, because it can overlap with and be similar to other fruits, like goodness and gentleness. For example, kindness is a feature of love. *[1 Corinthians 13:4] Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant.* It is demonstrated by showing care and concern for others while expecting nothing in return. Kindness in a believer draws others to us, and in turn to the God we serve.

The Scriptures teach that kindness is expected of the Christian and is of more importance than sacrifice. *[Hosea 6:6] For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.* ^(note) In fact, Christians are to love kindness! *[Micah 6:8 NASB20] 8 He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?* Imitating God’s kindness does not come naturally. It is only possible through the Holy Spirit working within us.

(NOTE: The Hebrew word for ‘faithful love’ used in Micah 6:6 is kkeh'-sed, and is translated in English as goodness, kindness, and faithfulness.)

Just as love is a decision, so is kindness. Demonstrating kindness to others is an acknowledgement of the unlimited kindness that God has given to the believer. Kindness affects not only the present but also the future. As we exhibit kindness towards others, seeds are sown that point others to salvation.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "kindness" was defined then and now.

Definition of Kindness:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

- The quality or state of being kind.
- A kind deed.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary:⁽⁴⁾

- Good will; benevolence; that temper or disposition which delights in contributing to the happiness of others, which is exercised cheerfully in gratifying their wishes, supplying their wants or alleviating their distresses; benignity of nature. Kindness ever accompanies love.
- There is no man whose kindness we may not sometime want, or by whose malice we may not sometime suffer.
- Act of good will; beneficence; any act of benevolence which promotes the happiness or welfare of others. Charity, hospitality, attention to the wants of others, etc., are deemed acts of kindness or kindnesses. [Acts 28:2.](#)
 - *[Acts 28:2] The local people showed us extraordinary kindness. They lit a fire and took us all in, since it was raining and cold.*

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of 'kindness' has changed in our country over time. What has changed and why do you believe it has changed?

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2. One definition of kindness in Webster's 1828 dictionary says that "Kindness ever accompanies love". It could be said that kindness demonstrates love. What is the purpose of God's kindness according to [Romans 2:4](#)?

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3. The apostle Paul made the claim that he was the worst of all sinners ([1 Timothy 1:15](#)). In his past he was a blasphemer, a persecutor of Christians, and an arrogant man. Everyone has a past that, like Paul, includes things we certainly would like to forget. Paul penned these words of encouragement in [[2 Corinthians 5:17](#)]: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!* We all have a past that includes some or all of what is listed in [[Titus 3:3](#)]: *For we too were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, enslaved by various passions and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, detesting one another.* How did God reach us when we were in this place? Share your thoughts on [Titus 3:4-5](#).

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4. *“God’s kindness is unlimited, enabling him to act as a friend even to those who are his enemies. Christ’s willingness to offer himself to help the spiritually destitute shows the extent of God’s kindness. And, as God’s chosen, we are to imitate his kindness in relationships with others.”*⁽⁵⁾ The kindness of God is intended to lead to repentance. Repentance restored the relationship with God for the Christian. If God reached us through His kindness, shouldn’t kindness be a trait of the Christian? What about our kindness towards others? Share your observations from the above quote, and [Romans 5:10](#) and [2 Corinthians 5:20](#).

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5. We are introduced to Naomi in the book of Ruth. In Ruth 1:1-5, we read of a famine that caused Naomi’s family to leave Bethlehem for the territory of Moab. Her husband and two sons died there. As she returned to Bethlehem, she asked to be called Mara (bitter). Naomi opined that, *“the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me”* ([Ruth 1:20](#)), and *“the Almighty has afflicted me.”* ([Ruth 1:21](#))

As we read [Ruth 2:1-20](#), we notice that Naomi’s perspective has changed. Share your thoughts on what caused this change.

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Kindness

- a. Performing acts of kindness as a believer with the motive to please God has a benefit in both the present and in eternity. Think of a time when you experienced kindness. Reflect and be thankful. This is not a question but consider sharing your thoughts with the group.

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6. Kindness demonstrated by a believer on earth has eternal implications. “*The Scriptures also teach that divine kindness is to be reflected in the human experience. Indeed, expressing kindness to other human beings is more important than performing ritual sacrifice to God. [Hosea 6:6]: For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. Thus, we are to love kindness [Micah 6:8] and to be children of the Most High, exhibiting his kindness and mercy.*”⁽⁶⁾ ~ Walter A. Elwell

- a. What is listed in conjunction with kindness to one another in [Ephesians 4:32](#)?

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- b. [Luke 6:35-36](#) reads like a definition of kindness. Share what these verses say.

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7. Share your thoughts on the meaning of [\[Proverbs 19:17a\] Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD](#). Keep in mind Romans 2:4 and 2 Corinthians 5:20.

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- a. [\[Proverbs 14:21\] The one who despises his neighbor sins, but whoever shows kindness to the poor will be happy](#). What do you believe the author meant when he wrote, “whoever shows kindness to the poor will be happy?”

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8. Consider the difference between human kindness and godly kindness. *“Biblical kindness is always rooted in love. Secular kindness is often based on tolerance. It’s “being nice” to people regardless of how you feel about them.”*⁽⁷⁾ Godly kindness does not come naturally. It is the Holy Spirit working in our heart that allows us to share the fruit of the Spirit. Apart from God we have no ability to demonstrate godly kindness. What do the following verses remind us about attempting kindness apart from God? [Psalm 14:3](#) and [Romans 3:12](#).

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9. If actions speak louder than words, then godly kindness demonstrated through actions is incredibly effective. “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” This saying has its origins back to St. Francis of Assisi, though it is debatable if those were his exact words. However, actions and words should work together in preaching the gospel. What does Philippians 1:27 and 1 Thessalonians 1:5 say about the gospel?

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10. Finally, does kindness provide a benefit to the giver? ([See Proverbs 19:17](#)) A research article from the *Journal of Positive Psychology* concludes that acts of kindness promote both well-being and recovery from anxiety and depressive disorders.⁽⁹⁾ Share your thoughts.

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Closing thoughts:

Body language is important to build trust and support what is being communicated. Physical expressions like mannerisms, eye contact, gestures, and tone of voice communicate without speaking. Continuously gauging the reaction of the recipient generates instant feedback to the speaker.

Now consider the godly attribute of demonstrating love through kindness. Kindness is the combination of words, body language, and actions, conveying a message of love, care, and concern.

While it is possible to demonstrate kindness with words alone, it is certainly more effectively done in person. It is said that most of what we communicate is accomplished nonverbally. A *Psychology Today* article estimated that in communication, 55% is body language, 38% is tone of voice, and only 7% is the actual words spoken.⁽⁹⁾

Kindness can be overlooked in a culture of social media, email, and texting, and where friends may be online only. In-person human interaction is limited, creating less opportunity to demonstrate kindness. What is the remedy? Start today by praying for an opportunity to show kindness, then do it in person.

PRAY

Kindness toward others is an effective way to reach a world in need of a Savior. Kindness comes from a heart that has received it and is compelled to share it.

Father God, thank You for Your loving kindness that gives us life. We pray that we will be a vessel revealing Your loving kindness to those You bring into our path. We pray that the Holy Spirit will fill us with the thoughts, words, and actions of kindness that would bring You glory. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Godly kindness is intended to lead to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

Love is patient, love is kind. (1 Corinthians 3:4)

The kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind saved us. (Titus 3:4-5)

God will reward those who are kind. (Proverbs 19:17)

Scripture References:

[1 Corinthians 13:4] Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant,

[Hosea 6:6] For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

[Micah 6:8 NASB20] 8 He has told you, mortal one, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?

[1 Timothy 1:15] This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" -- and I am the worst of them.

[Romans 2:4] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[Galatians 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[Titus 3:4-5] 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, 5 he saved us --not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy -- through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

[Romans 5:10] For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.

[2 Corinthians 5:20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: "Be reconciled to God."

[Ruth 1:1-5] 1 During the time of the judges, there was a famine in the land. A man left Bethlehem in Judah with his wife and two sons to stay in the territory of Moab for a while. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, and his wife's name was Naomi. The names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They entered the fields of Moab and settled there. 3 Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 Her sons took Moabite women as their wives: one was named Orpah and the second was named Ruth. After they lived in Moab about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Chilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two children and without her husband.

[Ruth 1:20] "Don't call me Naomi. Call me Mara," she answered, "for the Almighty has made me very bitter.

[Ruth 1:21] "I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has opposed me, and the Almighty has afflicted me? "

[Ruth 2:20] Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May the LORD bless him because he has not abandoned his kindness to the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our family redeemers."

[Luke 6:35-36] 35 But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

[Ephesians 4:32] And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

Kindness

[Psalm 14:3] All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one.

[Romans 3:12] All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one.

[Philippians 1:27] Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel,

[1 Thessalonians 1:5] because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit,

[Proverbs 19:17] Kindness to the poor is a loan to the LORD, and he will give a reward to the lender.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017) and *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. Wheaton, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985.

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Lesson 16: Goodness

"The goodness of God is infinitely more wonderful than we will ever be able to comprehend." ~ Aiden Wilson Tozer⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 20:6 NKJV] Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?

Goodness is something both received and given by believers. It is received from God and is intended to be shared with others. Goodness from God demonstrates His love; goodness from believers has the same result.

Is God always good? *[Psalm 145:9] The LORD is good to everyone; his compassion rests on all he has made.* "The very first temptation in the history of mankind was the temptation to be discontent...that is exactly what discontentment is – a questioning of the goodness of God."⁽²⁾ Discontentment causes believers to question God's goodness, while limiting the outpouring of goodness to others.

As free moral agents, we can form our own opinion of how good God is, but it doesn't change God's goodness. *[James 1:17 CSB] 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.* We may more easily feel His goodness when life aligns with our desires. What about difficult times? Charles Spurgeon said, "Remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity."⁽³⁾ It is trials and tribulations that put the goodness of God on trial within the heart. God's goodness never waivers, only our thoughts of it do.

God's goodness can be understood by those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. For the believer, the journey through life is not outside of God's sight. God is completing the goodness within believers through trials and tribulations for the purpose of giving Him glory and reaching the lost. *Psalm 31:19-20 How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you. In the presence of everyone you have acted for those who take refuge in you. 20 You hide them in the protection of your presence; you conceal them in a shelter from human schemes, from quarrelsome tongues.*

The goodness of God is intended to lead to repentance (*Romans 2:4*). Is our goodness toward others a reflection of the goodness of God? God's goodness through us can impact the lost. "I would sooner bring one sinner to Jesus Christ than unravel all the mysteries of the divine Word, for salvation is the one thing we are to live for."⁽⁴⁾ – Charles Spurgeon. Spurgeon prioritizes the salvation of a single person over personal revelation.

Is there goodness apart from that which comes from a relationship with God? Most people believe they are good and that their goodness is enough to get to heaven. The goodness of man is not sufficient. *Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* The goodness that comes from God can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ. *[1 Corinthians 2:12 CSB] 12 Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God.*

Godly goodness comes from faith and trust in God despite the troubles we experience. It comes from knowing that our citizenship is in heaven, and that we are sojourners in this life. God's goodness in our daily life is how we can have a peaceful and purposeful life and reach the lost.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "goodness" was defined then and now.

Definition of Goodness:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁵⁾

Goodness:

- **The quality or state of being good.**
- used interjectionally or in phrases especially to express mild surprise or shock.
 - oh, my goodness!
 - goodness knows.
- The nutritious, flavorful, or beneficial part of something.

Good:

- Of a favorable character or tendency.
- Free from injury or disease.
- Commercially sound.
- That can be relied on.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽⁶⁾

Goodness:

- **The state of being good;** the physical qualities which constitute value, excellence or perfection; as the goodness of timber; the goodness of a soil.
- The moral qualities which constitute Christian excellence; moral virtue; religion.
The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness faith. [Galatians 5:22](#)
- Kindness; benevolence; benignity of heart; but more generally, acts of kindness; charity; humanity exercised. I shall remember his *goodness* to me with gratitude.
- Kindness; benevolence of nature; mercy.
The Lord God--abundant in *goodness* and truth. [Exodus 34:6](#)
- Kindness; favor shown; acts of benevolence, compassion or mercy.
Jethro rejoiced for all the *goodness* which Jehovah had done to Israel. [Exodus 18:9](#)

Good:

- Complete or sufficiently perfect in its kind; having the physical qualities best adapted to its design and use; opposed to bad, imperfect, corrupted, impaired. We say, good timber, good cloth, a good soil, a good color. *And God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.* [Genesis 1:4](#).
- Having moral qualities best adapted to its design and use, or the qualities which God's law requires; virtuous; pious; religious; applied to persons, and opposed to bad, vitious, wicked, evil. *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.* [Romans 5:7](#).
- Conformable to the moral law; virtuous; applied to actions. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works. [Titus 2:3](#).
- Convenient; useful; expedient; conducive to happiness. It is not good that the man should be alone. [Genesis 2:9](#).

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of “goodness” or “good” has changed in our country over time. What has changed and why do you believe it has changed?

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2. It is not too difficult to find people who will call themselves good. They may claim that they have a heart for those in need or mention a favorite charity that they support. They might devote their time to helping the less fortunate. It usually is more difficult to convince a ‘good’ person their goodness is not good enough. Why? (See Isaiah 64:6 and Psalm 14:3)

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3. The goodness of man apart from God is temporary. *[Isaiah 40:6] ... All humanity is grass, and all its goodness is like the flower of the field.* The word “goodness” (New King James Version) or “loyalty” (Christian Standard Bible) in Proverbs 20:6 refers to the kindness of men towards men. Read both translations of this verse and share your thoughts.

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Note: The goodness of humanity will fade away, but God’s word will remain. *[Isaiah 40:7-8] 7 "The grass withers, the flowers fade when the breath of the LORD blows on them; indeed, the people are grass. 8 "The grass withers, the flowers fade, but the word of our God remains forever."*

4. It is easy for the Christian to be discouraged in a society with declining morals. It happens when good is not popular and evil is praised. Rejection and persecution may become commonplace, and one may ask "Where is the God of justice?" It was the same in days past. *[Malachi 2:17] You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you ask, "How have we wearied him? " When you say, "Everyone who does what is evil is good in the LORD's sight, and he is delighted with them, or else where is the God of justice?"* While doing good may not be popular, it makes a statement, especially to those close to us. It can leave a legacy. What inheritance can we leave for those we love? Share your observations for these verses.

- a. Proverbs 22:1

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- b. Proverbs 13:21-22

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- c. The people in Malachi's day were discouraged because it seemed like the wicked prospered and had it better than the godly. See 3 John 1:11 and share your observations.

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5. Jesus demonstrated the goodness of God to a blind man in Mark 10:51-52. *[Mark 10:51-52] 51 Then Jesus answered him, "What do you want me to do for you? " "Rabboni," the blind man said to him, "I want to see." 52 Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you." Immediately he could see and began to follow Jesus on the road.* Jesus restored this man's sight, but more importantly, acknowledged his faith. "Go, your faith has saved you." It was the goodness of God that healed his blindness, but his faith that resulted in salvation.

- a. Consider the motive of your heart when assisting others. Are those opportunities to assist also opportunities to share the gospel? See Proverbs 3:27.

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Do you know unbelievers who are in need of physical healing? You may have been praying for them for a long time. Consider bringing them up in your group and praying for them to come to faith.

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6. Salvation is by grace through faith, ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) rendering any good thing man can do as insufficient to earn God's grace. [\[Isaiah 64:6a NIV\]](#) All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Although there is no good thing we can do on our own, we are called to live a life worthy of our calling. Paul prays for the church in Thessalonica that "God will make you worthy of His calling." [\[2 Thessalonians 1:11\]](#) In view of this, we always pray for you that our God will make you worthy of his calling, and by his power fulfill your every desire to do good and your work produced by faith.

- a. What does God do for believers to make them worthy? ([see Psalm 25:8-9; Philippians 2:13](#))

7. In our study **The Nature of God in Proverbs**, we've reviewed godly attributes and how they impact our journey through life. God's divine power is available to all believers, and Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith ([Hebrews 12:2](#)). 2 Peter 1:5-7 mentions we should make every effort to supplement faith with goodness. In this verse, goodness is the first in a sequence of qualities to be sought by a Christ follower, with each quality built upon the last. What is the end result found in verse 7?

- a. What does 2 Peter 1:8 mention about these qualities?

- b. What does 2 Peter 1:9 say about these qualities?

8. Thankfulness for God's goodness in the past is an important part of a healthy prayer life. Remembering the goodness of God helps us prepare for what is to come. *[Psalm 31:19-20] 19 How great is your goodness that you have stored up for those who fear you and accomplished in the sight of everyone for those who take refuge in you. 20 You hide them in the protection of your presence; you conceal them in a shelter from human schemes, from quarrelsome tongues.* The Christian should have a sense of God's goodness flowing through them. Have you given this consideration? Share your thoughts. (Consider Ephesians 5:1, 8-9)

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9. The most visited memorial in Washington D.C. is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It attracts more than 5 million visitors each year. The massive wall lists the names of more than 58,000 servicemen and women who lost their lives during the Vietnam War. The purpose of this memorial, as with most, is for generations to come to remember something or someone of importance.

As Israel crossed the Jordan river into the promised land, a member of each tribe was sent to take a stone from the riverbed so that the stones could be used to create a memorial (*Joshua 4:1-9*). This memorial would serve to remind Israel of God's goodness and his faithfulness for future generations.

In Acts 10, we are introduced to Cornelius, a centurion. *[Act 10:2] 2 He was a devout man and feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds for the Jewish people and always prayed to God.* Cornelius has a vision of an angel of God visiting him. Read Acts 10:3-4. How does this scripture define a memorial?

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10. An often-quoted verse for encouragement is *[Romans 8:28] We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.* God's goodness is stored up for the follower of Jesus Christ. We may not always see the good in our circumstances. *Psalm 107:1* and *Nahum 1:7* provide another perspective. Share your thoughts on these verses. Explain why this is important.

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11. Real-time mapping apps guide us every day. How did we ever get to where we were going without the aid of these amazing tools? Not only have directions improved, but knowing current traffic patterns provides continuous course correction. The result of using these tools is knowing the best route to take.

How many times have you used your favorite mapping app this week, compared to how many times you have been in God's word to determine your path? *[Proverbs 2:7-9] 7 He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity 8 so that he may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of his faithful followers. 9 Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and integrity -- every good path.* Just like real-time mapping apps, we need consistent updates to remain on a good path. Share your thoughts on Proverbs 2:7-9. Consider Proverbs 2:20 in your response.

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PRAY

Goodness toward others is a reflection of the goodness of God, poured out into our hearts. It is the desire of our heart to reach the lost, and when they see our goodness, that they see the love of God.

Father God, You are good! And You have poured out Your goodness to us. It is our heart's desire that we share Your goodness with those You bring into our path. Give us the opportunity to do so, we pray. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

Goodness is uprightness of heart. (Galatians 5:22)

Goodness will impact those around us. (Proverbs 13:21-22)

Godly goodness is intended to lead to repentance. (Romans 2:4)

Supplement your faith with goodness. (2 Peter 1:5-7)

Godly goodness is stored up for those that fear God. (Psalm 31:19-20)

Closing thoughts:

"The goodness of man towards man is beneficial in this life, while the goodness of God leads to an eternal reward. For the Christian, it is the goodness of God to us that is on display in the goodness of God through us."

During the creation of the heavens and the earth, everything that God made was good. That is, until [\[Genesis 2:18\]: Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him."](#) Did God create man with a flaw? It is possible that God could have created man so that being alone was good. If He did, would man reflect the image of the triune God? Why did God create man with the need that only could have been met by taking part of man and creating woman? [\[Genesis 2:21-22\] 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. 22 Then the LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.](#)

What was man's response when God brought him woman? [\[Genesis 2:23\] And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called "woman," for she was taken from man.](#) In the previous chapter in Genesis, we see the triune nature of God revealed: [\[Genesis 1:26\] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth."](#) Creating woman from man reflects the intimate relationship of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

Digging Deeper:

What is the difference between goodness and kindness? They seem similar but are mentioned independently in the fruit of the Spirit in *Galatians 5:22* *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, **kindness**, **goodness**, faithfulness.*

The Greek word for *goodness* in *Galatians 5:22* is **ag-ath-o-soo'-nay**. It is defined as uprightness of heart and life, goodness, and kindness.

The Greek word for *kindness* in *Galatians 5:22* is: **kh-ray-stot'-ace**. It is defined as moral goodness, integrity, and benignity (kindness towards others). The same word is used in *Romans 2:4*, in “the riches of his kindness”. *Romans 2:4* *Or do you despise the riches of his **kindness**, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's **kindness** is intended to lead you to repentance?*

Kindness is mentioned twice in *Romans 2:4*. The Greek word for kindness found in *Romans 2:4b* is: **kh-rase-tos'**. It is defined as virtuous, good, mild, and pleasant. The New King James Version uses the English word ‘goodness.’

Before starting on the lesson, reflect on these verses with an understanding of the original meaning of these words.

[Galatians 5:22 CSB] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.

[Galatians 5:22 NKJV] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[Romans 2:4 CSB] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[Romans 2:4 NKJV] 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

Scripture References:

[Romans 2:4 CSB] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[Galatians 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[Exodus 34:6] The LORD passed in front of him and proclaimed: The LORD -- the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth,

[Exodus 18:9] Jethro rejoiced over all the good things the LORD had done for Israel when he rescued them from the power of the Egyptians.

[Genesis 1:4] God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness.

[Romans 5:7] For rarely will someone die for a just person -- though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die.

[Titus 2:3] In the same way, older women are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not slaves to excessive drinking. They are to teach what is good,

[Genesis 2:9] The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[Isaiah 64:6] All of us have become like something unclean, and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment; all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

[Psalm 14:3] All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one.

[Isaiah 40:6] A voice was saying, "Cry out! " Another said, "What should I cry out? " "All humanity is grass, and all its goodness is like the flower of the field.

[Proverbs 20:6 NKJV] Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, But who can find a faithful man?

[Proverbs 22:1] A good name is to be chosen over great wealth; favor is better than silver and gold.

[Proverbs 13:21-22] 21 Disaster pursues sinners, but good rewards the righteous. 22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren, but the sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

[3 John 1:11] Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

[Proverbs 3:27 CSB] 27 When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs.

[Ephesians 2:8-9] 8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift -- 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.

[Psalm 25:8-9] 8 The LORD is good and upright; therefore he shows sinners the way. 9 He leads the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.

[Philippians 2:13] 13 For it is God who is working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose.

[Hebrews 12:2] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[2 Peter 1:5-7] 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, 7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

[2 Peter 1:8] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 Peter 1:9] The person who lacks these things is blind and shortsighted and has forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.

[Eph 5:1] Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children,

[Eph 5:8-9] For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light -- 9 for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth --

[Joshua 4:1-9] 1 After the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua: 2 "Choose twelve men from the people, one man for each tribe, 3 "and command them: Take twelve stones from this place in the middle of the Jordan where the priests are standing, carry them with you,

and set them down at the place where you spend the night." 4 So Joshua summoned the twelve men he had selected from the Israelites, one man for each tribe, 5 and said to them, "Go across to the ark of the LORD your God in the middle of the Jordan. Each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder, one for each of the Israelite tribes, 6 "so that this will be a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean to you?' 7 "you should tell them, 'The water of the Jordan was cut off in front of the ark of the LORD's covenant. When it crossed the Jordan, the Jordan's water was cut off.' Therefore these stones will always be a memorial for the Israelites." 8 The Israelites did just as Joshua had commanded them. The twelve men took stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each of the Israelite tribes, just as the LORD had told Joshua. They carried them to the camp and set them down there. 9 Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing. The stones are still there today.

[Acts 10:3-4] 3 About three in the afternoon he distinctly saw in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius." 4 Staring at him in awe, he said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel told him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have ascended as a memorial offering before God.

[Psalm 107:1] Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his faithful love endures forever.

[Nahum 1:7] The LORD is good, a stronghold in a day of distress; he cares for those who take refuge in him.

[Proverbs 2:20 CSB] 20 So follow the way of the good, and keep to the paths of the righteous.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017) and *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. Wheaton, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985.

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Lesson 17: Faithfulness

"The glory of God's faithfulness is that no sin of ours has ever made Him unfaithful." ~ Charles Spurgeon⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 3:3] Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.

Loyalty and faithfulness are godly virtues that are available to believers and desired in the Christian life. It is comforting to know that God's faithfulness does not waiver even when ours does. *[2 Timothy 2:13] If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.* Many Christians will put an inordinate amount of trust and faith in a person of authority rather than God. When that person stumbles due to unfaithfulness, some may turn away from their relationship with Him. God is the only one who has perfect faithfulness. *[Isaiah 25:1] LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you. I will praise your name, for you have accomplished wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness.*

Proverbs 16:6 describes God's loyalty and faithfulness by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. *[Proverbs 16:6] Iniquity is atoned for by loyalty and faithfulness, and one turns from evil by the fear of the LORD.* Loyalty and faithfulness in this verse speak of God's virtuous attributes. The Christian demonstrating loyalty and faithfulness exemplifies those virtues to a world in need.

Proverbs 3:3 provides wise advice to remain faithful. *[Proverbs 3:3a] Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you.* Solomon emphasizes the importance of loyalty and faithfulness, but a temporary lack of faith is a sin that a faithful God will forgive. *[1 John 1:9] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

It is a good practice to use various Bible translations to gain a better understanding of Scripture. The New King James translation uses 'mercy and truth' in the place of 'loyalty and faithfulness'. Webster's 1828 dictionary⁽²⁾ definition of mercy is "a tenderness of heart which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves", while the definition of truth is "conformity to fact or reality as in the truth of the scriptural prophecies". The word loyalty is defined as "fidelity to a prince or sovereign", and faithfulness is translated as "firm adherence to allegiance and duty".

Proverbs 3:3a says to never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Proverbs 3:3b brings these two virtues together and places them in the core of our being: *[Proverbs 3:3b] Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.* The same phrase, 'loyalty and faithfulness', is used three more times in Proverbs.

"Mercy and truth are the glorious perfections of God. Are not his children new - created in his image? Let then our Father's image be manifested in us."⁽³⁾ The virtues of loyalty and faithfulness are in our new nature but must be cultivated.

Godly leaders who exhibit loyalty and faithfulness (*see Proverbs 3:3 and Proverbs 14:22*) can impact those under their authority. *[Proverbs 20:28] Loyalty and faithfulness guard a king; through loyalty he maintains his throne.* A godly leader will look to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, for help to carry the burden of leadership.

Have you ever participated in a venture and, at some point, realized it would not be glorifying to God? It may even be considered evil. The right thing to do may not always be easy, but faithfulness to God honors Him and benefits you. *[Proverbs 14:22] Don't those who plan evil go astray? But those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness.* It may be that you were placed in the situation as God's representative, for just such a time as this. Eyes are on you. Not only the eyes of those around you, but the Lord's. *[2 Chronicles 16:9a] For the eyes of the LORD roam throughout the earth to show himself strong for those who are wholeheartedly devoted to him.* You may influence others to make a godly choice as well, now or in the future. Standing up for God's will has benefits here and in eternity.

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "Faithful" was defined then and now.

Definition of Faithful:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁴⁾

- Steadfast in affection or allegiance: Loyal
- Firm in adherence to promises or in observation of duty: Conscientious
- Given with strong assurance: Binding
- True to the facts, to a standard, or to an original

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽²⁾

- Fidelity; loyalty; firm adherence to allegiance and duty; as the *faithfulness* of a subject.
- Truth; veracity; as the *faithfulness* of God.
- Strict adherence to injunctions, and to the duties of a station; as the *faithfulness* of servants or ministers.
- Strict performance of promises, vows or covenants; constancy in affection; as the *faithfulness* of a husband or wife.

Review Questions:

1. The definition of faithfulness has changed since 1828. What changed? Why do you think it changed?

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2. Hezekiah was a faithful king in Israel. In fact, not one of the kings of Judah was like him, either before or after him ([2 Kings 18:5](#)). His father Ahaz was one of the worst kings Judah had ([2 Kings 16:10-20](#)). Hezekiah's son was Manasseh, who did not take after his father, but restored the worship of Baal and Asherah. He encouraged the worship of foreign gods and participated in the sacrificial offering of young children to Molech.

"It is remarkable that such a man as Hezekiah could be the son of Ahaz. Yet we must remember that all his life he was under the influence of Isaiah." G. Campbell Morgan.⁽⁵⁾ Hezekiah did what was right in the LORD's sight. [[2 Kings 18:3](#)] *He did what was right in the LORD's sight just as his ancestor David had done.* Read [2 Kings 18:5-7](#) and share your observations of what Hezekiah did to be considered the best king of Judah.

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- a. Considering his earthly father's influence, it is interesting that Hezekiah had the opportunity to develop faith in the LORD God of Israel. The prophet Isaiah had a great impact on him. Consider those you have an influence on. Share your thoughts on how you influence others to deepen their faith in God. See Psalm 89:1.

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3. Solomon told his son to let his heart keep his commands. He is not referring to *his* commands, but God's commands. [[Proverbs 3:1-2](#)] *1 My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; 2 for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being.* Obedience to the word of God is more important than offering something of value to God. [[1 Samuel 15:22b](#)] *to obey is better than sacrifice...* Solomon goes on to provide advice that can have a profound effect on your life. [[Proverbs 3:3-4](#)] *3 Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. 4 Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people.*

- a. What does it mean to tie loyalty and faithfulness around your neck, and write them on the tablet of your heart?

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- b. What is the result, according to [Proverbs 3:4](#)? Explain. ([See 1 Kings 3:6-12](#))

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4. The Christian journey through life is fraught with trials and temptation. Family relationships may be broken. Persecution, both trivial and serious, will take place. Walking the narrow path may not be popular at times, yet through it all Christians can have peace. What would you say to new believers, to encourage them in their faith and to help them to remain on the narrow path? See [Proverbs 2:7-8](#); [Proverbs 10:17](#); [Psalm 119:105](#).

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5. Are there people you know whom you doubt will ever come to faith? Maybe they hurt you or your family beyond your human ability to forgive. Maybe you've forgiven them but will not forget what they did. The last place you'd expect to see them is in church, sharing how they accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

The prophet Jonah was God's vessel to reach the nation of Nineveh, though Jonah hated the Ninevites. Because of his message, they repented, and God relented. Here is Jonah's response: [\[Jonah 4:1-2\]](#) *1 Jonah was greatly displeased and became furious. 2 He prayed to the LORD: "Please, LORD, isn't this what I thought while I was still in my own country? That's why I fled toward Tarshish in the first place. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and one who relents from sending disaster.* God, who is abounding in faithful love, is not willing that any should perish, not the nation of Nineveh or those whom we've not forgiven. Read these verses and share your thoughts: [Psalm 100:5](#); [108:4](#); [117:1-2](#).

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- a. The Ninevites' repentance was demonstrated by their actions. *[Jonah 3:10] God saw their actions -- that they had turned from their evil ways -- so God relented from the disaster he had threatened them with. And he did not do it.*

Joel 2:13 describes God's character in the same manner as *Jonah 3:10*. What does the prophet Joel mention about repentance?

6. Jesus gave a model for prayer to His disciples that included the subject of evil. *[Matthew 6:13] And do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* Evil can be the thought that knocks on the door of our mind, or as in the life of Job, it can thrust itself into our lives in an instant of time. Both can take the Christian off path. The godly virtues of loyalty and faithfulness counter evil. Share your thoughts on *Proverbs 14:22*.
7. Life is full of distractions that can keep us busy and preoccupied. Is it possible to miss what is truly a blessing? Many Christians, when asked how they are doing, will respond "I'm blessed." A good follow-up question is, "How are you blessed?" *[Proverbs 28:20a] A faithful person will have many blessings.* Consider the blessings in your life for a moment. Share what God is putting on your heart.

- a. Share what Proverbs 21:21 says about finding purpose in life.

8. A common topic of discussion for non-believers is that of evil. Why does it exist? Why doesn't God protect people from evil, even Christians? The idea of God's faithfulness as protection might be met with disbelief by a non-believer. *[Psalm 91:4] He will cover you with his feathers; you will take refuge under his wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield.* There is evil in the world, but this world will pass away. Jesus prays for all believers. *[John 17:15] I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.* Share your observations on these verses:

- a. Lamentations 3:22-23.

b. Proverbs 2:7-8

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9. Faithfulness might be worldly or spiritual. Worldly faith is trust in the creation, not the Creator. Spiritual faithfulness is reconciliation to God by grace through faith. When Christians speak of faith, they are acknowledging that faith comes from God. [\[Hebrews 12:2\] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith.](#)

a. How does Philemon describe effective faith? ([See Philemon 1:5-6](#))

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b. What appeal does Jude make in his epistle? ([See Jude 1:3](#))

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10. God's faithfulness goes beyond what He does for those that have come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. God's faithfulness is in His creation. Is there any place or any one beyond the reach of God? Read these verses and share your observations:

a. Psalm 89:8 and Psalm 89:5

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b. Consider God's faithfulness through creation. See [Psalm 36:5](#), [Romans 1:20](#), [Jeremiah 32:17](#), [Jeremiah 33:2-3](#), and [Psalm 19:1-2](#).

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Closing thoughts:

Think back to a time when someone you know broke his or her promise. Circumstances beyond their control could have played a role, but the promise was broken. The relationship is not the same any longer. Only God can make a promise that will never be broken. When we read of His promises, we can rest assured in His faithfulness. *[Psalm 119:90] Your faithfulness is for all generations; you established the earth, and it stands firm.*

God's faithfulness never wavers and His love is unconditional. *[Psalm 100:5] For the LORD is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.* God's desire is eternal unity with those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. *[John 17:20-21] I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word. 21 "May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me."*

It should not be the case, but man's faithfulness is sometimes based on feelings or circumstances, and not the promises of God. The advice Solomon gave to his son was to not allow faithfulness to waver. *[Proverbs 3:3] Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.* What advice does God give us through His word to remain faithful through good and difficult times? *[James 4:8a] Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*

PRAY

God's faithfulness never wavers. His faithfulness is on display in heaven and on the earth, and in the lives of His followers. Even when we lack faith, He remains faithful. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Father God, You are faithful! Your faithfulness has reached the hearts of those that have come to faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We pray that we would not look to our circumstances, but to Your faithfulness to guide our hearts and minds. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

God remains faithful even when we are not. (2 Timothy 2:13)

NEVER let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. (Proverbs 3:3a)

God is looking for faithfulness throughout the earth. (Proverbs 14:22, 2 Chronicles 16:9a)

God's faithfulness is protection for believers. (Proverbs 16:6)

God is faithful to forgive our sins. (1 John 1:9)

Scripture References:

[2 Kings 18:5] Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah was like him, either before him or after him.

[2 Kings 16:10-20] 10 King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria. When he saw the altar that was in Damascus, King Ahaz sent a model of the altar and complete plans for its construction to the priest Uriah. 11 Uriah built the altar according to all the instructions King Ahaz sent from Damascus. Therefore, by the time King Ahaz came back from Damascus, the priest Uriah had completed it. 12 When the king came back from Damascus, he saw the altar. Then he approached the altar and ascended it. 13 He offered his burnt offering and his grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splattered the blood of his fellowship offerings on the altar. 14 He took the bronze altar that was before the LORD in front of the temple between his altar and the LORD's temple, and put it on the north side of his altar. 15 Then King Ahaz commanded the priest Uriah, "Offer on the great altar the morning burnt offering, the evening grain offering, and the king's burnt offering and his grain offering. Also offer the burnt offering of all the people of the land, their grain offering, and their drink offerings. Splatter on the altar all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of sacrifice. The bronze altar will be for me to seek guidance." 16 The priest Uriah did everything King Ahaz commanded. 17 Then King Ahaz cut off the frames of the water carts and removed the bronze basin from each of them. He took the basin from the bronze oxen that were under it and put it on a stone pavement. 18 To satisfy the king of Assyria, he removed from the LORD's temple the Sabbath canopy they had built in the palace, and he closed the outer entrance for the king. 19 The rest of the events of Ahaz's reign, along with his accomplishments, are written in the Historical Record of Judah's Kings. 20 Ahaz rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and his son Hezekiah became king in his place.

[2 Kings 18:5-7] 5 Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah was like him, either before him or after him. 6 He remained faithful to the LORD and did not turn from following him but kept the commands the LORD had commanded Moses. 7 The LORD was with him, and wherever he went he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.

[Psalm 89:1] I will sing about the LORD's faithful love forever; I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations with my mouth.

[Proverbs 3:4] Then you will find favor and high regard with God and people.

[1 Kings 3:6-12] 6 And Solomon replied, "You have shown great and faithful love to your servant, my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, righteousness, and integrity. You have continued this great and faithful love for him by giving him a son to sit on his throne, as it is today. 7 "LORD my God, you have now made your servant king in my father David's place. Yet I am just a youth with no experience in leadership. 8 "Your servant is among your people you have chosen, a people too many to be numbered or counted. 9 "So give your servant a receptive heart to judge your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours? " 10 Now it pleased the Lord that Solomon had requested this. 11 So God said to him, "Because you have requested this and did not ask for long life or riches for yourself, or the death of your enemies, but you asked discernment for yourself to administer justice, 12 "I will therefore do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has never been anyone like you before and never will be again." God uses people to carry out his will. David's faithfulness influenced his son Solomon, and Solomon recognized his need to lead the people of Israel. Solomon gained favor in the sight of God for his request, and the people since God blessed him with wisdom.

[Proverbs 2:7-8] 7 He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity 8 so that he may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of his faithful followers.

[Proverbs 10:17] The one who follows instruction is on the path to life, but the one who rejects correction goes astray.

[Psalm 119:105] Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path.

[Psalm 100:5] For the LORD is good, and his faithful love endures forever; his faithfulness, through all generations.

[Psalm 108:4] For your faithful love is higher than the heavens, and your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

[Psalm 117:1-2] 1 Praise the LORD, all nations! Glorify him, all peoples! 2 For his faithful love to us is great; the LORD's faithfulness endures forever. Hallelujah!

[Joel 2:13] Tear your hearts, not just your clothes, and return to the LORD your God. For he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in faithful love, and he relents from sending disaster.

[Proverbs 14:22] Don't those who plan evil go astray? But those who plan good find loyalty and faithfulness.

[Proverbs 21:21] The one who pursues righteousness and faithful love will find life, righteousness, and honor.

[Lamentations 3:22-23] 22 Because of the LORD's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!

[Proverbs 2:7-8] 7 He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity 8 so that he may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of his faithful followers.

[Philemon 1:5-6] 5 because I hear of your love for all the saints and the faith that you have in the Lord Jesus. 6 I pray that your participation in the faith may become effective through knowing every good thing that is in us for the glory of Christ.

[Jude 1:3] Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to contend for the faith that was delivered to the saints once for all.

[Psalm 89:8] LORD God of Armies, who is strong like you, LORD? Your faithfulness surrounds you.

[Psalm 89:5] LORD, the heavens praise your wonders -- your faithfulness also -- in the assembly of the holy ones.

[Psalm 36:5] LORD, your faithful love reaches to heaven, your faithfulness to the clouds.

[Romans 1:20] For his invisible attributes, that is, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen since the creation of the world, being understood through what he has made. As a result, people are without excuse.

[Jeremiah 32:17] "Oh, Lord GOD! You yourself made the heavens and earth by your great power and with your outstretched arm. Nothing is too difficult for you!"

[Jeremiah 33:2-3] 2 "The LORD who made the earth, the LORD who forms it to establish it, the LORD is his name, says this: 3 "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and incomprehensible things you do not know.

[Psalm 19:1-2] 1 The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017) and *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. Wheaton, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985.

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Lesson 18: Gentleness

"I choose gentleness... Nothing is won by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice may it be only in praise. If I clench my fist, may it be only in prayer. If I make a demand, may it be only of myself." ~ Max Lucado⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 15:1] A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

Meekness and gentleness are qualities ascribed to Jesus Christ even though he is the all-powerful King. *[2 Corinthians 10:1] Now I Paul, myself, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ -- I who am humble among you in person but bold toward you when absent.* "Paul had been accused of being courageous and bold at a distance, but subservient and weak-kneed when personally present, feebly voicing his demands."⁽²⁾ *[2 Corinthians 10:10] For it is said, "His letters are weighty and powerful, but his physical presence is weak and his public speaking amounts to nothing."*

"How can the same person be in presence lowly and bold toward you at other times? Isn't this contradictory? It isn't a contradiction at all. Those who can't see that boldness and lowliness can be found in the same person don't know the life of Jesus very well."⁽³⁾ Paul encouraged those sincere in their faith and confronted those presenting false teaching.

Paul's demonstration of leadership can be summed up in *[1 Corinthians 11:1] Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.* Faithful leadership is much needed in society. Some may aspire for spiritual leadership, and Paul commends those who do. *[1 Timothy 3:1] This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work."* He provides requirements in *1 Timothy 3:2-7*. One requirement is to not be a bully but to be gentle. It requires discernment to know when correction is needed, and even more to know how to administer it. It is said that meekness is power under control. Meekness, or gentleness, allows correction while removing the dangerous element of emotion. Effective correction occurs when the recipient does not raise defensive barriers. *[Proverbs 15:1] 1 A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.*

Loving God and loving others are the greatest commands (*Matthew 22:35-40*). It is said that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Whether it is reaching the lost or edifying the saints, gentleness is an effective communication tool. Why? Gentleness is disarming and creates a vulnerability that forms a caring bond. *[Proverbs 15:4a NLT] Gentle words are a tree of life.* Gentleness can easily be exploited and therefore thought a weakness. So why demonstrate gentleness? The motive is love. *[Ephesians 4:2 NLT] Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

Humility is the foundation that gentleness and meekness rest upon. *[Philippians 2:3] Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.* As we consider all people we encounter as made in the image of God, and that God does not desire for any to perish, gentleness is our natural response.

Imagine for a moment the scene at the last supper. Jesus pours water in a basin and washes the disciple's feet. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Almighty God, washing dusty, dirty feet. Peter asks why? *[John 13:7] Jesus answered him, "What I'm doing you don't realize now, but afterward you will understand."* Jesus was setting an example of how we should think of and treat others. When we do, we will experience relief from our burdens and find true purpose in life.

[Matthew 11:28-29 NLT] 28 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "gentleness" was defined then and now.

Definition of Gentleness:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽⁴⁾

Gentleness

- The quality or state of being gentle

Gentle

- Free from harshness, sternness, or violence
- Soft, delicate
- Moderate
- Belonging to a family of high social station: Gentleman

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽⁵⁾

Gentleness

- Softness of manners; mildness of temper; sweetness of disposition; meekness. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, *gentleness* goodness, faith. [Galatians 5:22](#).
- Kindness; benevolence.
- Tenderness; mild treatment.

Gentle

- Mild; meek; soft; bland; not rough, harsh or severe; as a *gentle* nature, temper or disposition; a *gentle* manner; a *gentle* address; a *gentle* voice. [1 Thessalonians 2:7](#).
- Tame; peaceable; not wild, turbulent or refractory; as a *gentle* horse or beast.
- Soothing; pacific.
- Treating with mildness; not violent.
A *gentle* hand may lead the elephant with a hair.

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of 'Gentleness' has changed in our country over time. What has changed and why do you believe it has changed?
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2. The Greek word for gentleness in Galatians 5:23 is *prah-oo'-tace*. It is defined as mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness. *[Galatians 5:22-23] 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. "The word has the idea of being teachable, not having a superior attitude, not demanding one's rights. It isn't timidity or passiveness; It is the quality of the man who is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time."*⁽⁶⁾ *2 Timothy 2:24-25* provides instructions for gentleness. What advice does Paul share?
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3. According to Webster's 1828 dictionary, gentleness includes meekness. A world view of meekness is *"Someone that does not have force or someone who is willing to give into others."* It also can mean, *"deficient in spirit and courage,"* and *"not violent or strong."*⁽⁵⁾ *[Proverbs 25:15b] a gentle tongue can break a bone. "The soft member breaking the hard bone may seem to be a paradox. But it is a fine illustration of the power of gentleness above hardness and irritation."*⁽⁷⁾ Share your thoughts on *Proverbs 25:15b*.
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4. Our culture condones and even boasts of behaviors that are an abomination to Christian values. Some Christians are vilified for not embracing lifestyles that are opposed to our faith and beliefs. As Christians contemplate these opposing views, it becomes difficult to separate the sin from the sinner, especially when they are accompanied by aggressive behavior toward believers. These opposing behaviors should not be allowed to infiltrate the church. Instead, Christians should have an influence on our culture. *[Philippians 4:5 NKJV] Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord [is] at hand.*

The Christian is called to demonstrate gentleness to all men. “*The sphere is broad. We show this gentleness to all men, not just to whom we please.*”⁽⁸⁾ Read [1 Corinthians 9:19-23](#) and share your observations.

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Note: “*The word gentleness describes the heart of a person who will let the Lord fight his battles. He knows that vengeance is Mine, says the Lord (Romans 12:19). It describes a person who is really free to let go of His anxieties and all the things that cause him stress, because he knows that the Lord will take up his cause.*”⁽⁸⁾

- a. Be ready at any time to share the hope you have in Jesus Christ. Share your observations from [1 Peter 3:15-16](#).

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5. God by his providence chooses our biological family. For some, that family is a mission field. [\[Matthew 10:36\] and a man's enemies will be the members of his household](#). Many Christians find the strength to face the challenges of life through their church family. The church family is an intentional community drawn together by a common faith and by the leading of the Holy Spirit. Maybe you’ve been hurt by your church family. It is usually a gentle word that begins the process of reconciliation.

- a. It is always a good practice to pray before speaking to someone during the process of reconciliation. Why is the advice in [Proverbs 15:1](#) important?

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- b. Gentleness may be the bridge to reach family members that are non-believers. [\[Philippians 4:5 NKJV\] Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord \[is\] at hand](#). This is not easy to accomplish. Consider sharing with the group how you have reached family members with gentleness.

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- c. Consider the words of Jesus on the sermon on the mount. *[Matthew 5:24] leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.* If God is putting someone on your heart as you are reading this, then stop and pray that God would lead you to restore that relationship. Ask your group to pray and take a step of faith to reach out in gentleness and love to that person.

6. Gentleness is not a natural tendency for most. It requires consideration and prayer in order to develop the ability to demonstrate it. It was mentioned earlier to “Let your gentleness be known to all.” Many times, our circumstances will dictate the degree of gentleness we exhibit toward others. The challenge with a popular verse such as *Matthew 11:28-29* is that we can know it so well that we overlook its significance. Consider your current circumstances that are burdensome and causing anxiety. *[Matthew 11:28-29 NKJV] 28 "Come to Me, all [you] who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."* Make this your prayer today. Share what is on your heart.

7. *[Proverbs 15:4 NLT] Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. “Our words have the power to do far more good than we often think. Conversely, our words have the power to do far more harm than we often think.”*⁽⁹⁾ Gentle words are nutrients that flow through the tree of life, resulting in goodness and growth. In what ways can we show gentleness to others? See *2 Timothy 2:24* and *Titus 3:2 (NKJV)*.

NOTE: The term “tree of life” appears in only three books of the Bible: *Genesis (2:9; 3:22; 3:24)*, *Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12)*, and *Revelation (2:7; 22:2; 22:14; 22:19)*.

8. A Christian’s actions and words should always be controlled by the Holy Spirit and not our emotions. Easier said than done! It requires a constant awareness that our personal thoughts are not always in concert with the Holy Spirit. *[Galatians 5:17] For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.* Is gentleness always on display in the Christian’s life? In righteous anger, Jesus overturned the money changers’ tables (*Mark 11:15*). He did this because they had turned the temple into a den of thieves. This practice was an offense against God. *[Mark 11:17] He was teaching them: "Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves! "*

Words and actions should not be driven by emotion. Share your observations based on [Galatians 5:17](#) and [Ephesians 4:26](#).

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9. Rosaria Butterfield writes in her memoir about her journey from being a committed lesbian to a committed Christian. She mentions that as a non-Christian, her impression of evangelical Christians was that they were poor thinkers, judgmental, scornful, and afraid of diversity. This impression was changed by a pastor and his wife who responded by letter to a critique made by Rosaria of an evangelical Christian group. She mentioned, *"It was the kindest letter of opposition that I had ever received."*⁽¹⁰⁾ Its tone demonstrated that the writers weren't against her.

In the church family there may be a tendency to ignore sin or to react harshly toward the one who sinned. Neither of these will yield a good result. A harsh reaction might confirm the same opinions shared by Rosaria Butterfield. Not addressing sin can bring down the church family. Share your observations of the right approach mentioned in [Galatians 6:1](#).

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10. Gentleness is a choice, and it is of great worth. It is a choice on our part, and of great worth in God's sight. Gentleness has its origin in godly wisdom and is demonstrated by Jesus Christ. [\[2 Corinthians 10:1a\]](#) *Now I Paul, myself, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.* What does James say about wisdom and understanding in [James 3:13](#)?

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- a. Of what value is gentleness in God's sight? See [1 Peter 3:4](#).

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Closing Thoughts

"We know almost nothing about gentleness from a scientific perspective. Gentleness has been a relatively popular topic in Christian circles and among theologians. But, not among scientists. And not among many other belief systems. A science of gentleness would be off to a good start with a strong definition of what gentleness is and a validated measurement tool to assess it."⁽¹¹⁾

Many in the scientific community and beyond recognize that gentleness is something that is not widely understood. They cannot even find a basis to begin to comprehend it. Christians have a higher authority Who gives meaning to gentleness. It is the calling of the Christian to demonstrate these qualities to the world, so they may know that God is the source of gentleness. *[Colossians 3:12] Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience . . .*

It is important for the Christian to recognize that the self-centeredness that is so ingrained in our culture should not be considered valuable. How can we do this? *[1Peter 3:16] Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.*

PRAY

Godly wisdom and understanding are on display though gentleness. God's gentleness is toward all people. God desires for believers to reach the lost through the Gospel with gentleness. It is by gentleness that the love and grace of God are received.

Father God, You are worthy to be praised. Test me Lord, and examine my heart and mind, and show me how I can better represent You to the lost. Create in me a heart of gentleness. Show me when I go astray in this way. I pray for an opportunity to show Your gentleness to those You bring into my path. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

A gentle tongue is of great power. (Proverbs 25:15)

Show gentleness to all people. (Philippians 4:5)

A lack of gentleness gives the wrong impression. (Proverbs 15:1)

Jesus Christ demonstrated meekness and gentleness. (2 Corinthians 10:1)

Gentleness comes from Godly wisdom. (James 3:13)

Gentleness is of great worth in God's sight. (1 Peter 3:4)

Scripture References:

[1 Timothy 3:2-7] 2 An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. 4 He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. 7 Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap.

[Matthew 22:35-40] 35 And one of them, an expert in the law, asked a question to test him: 36 "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest? " 37 He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. 38 "This is the greatest and most important command. 39 "The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 "All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

[Galatians 5:22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

[1 Thessalonians 2:7] Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nurse nurtures her own children.

[2 Timothy 2:24-25] 24 The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient, 25 instructing his opponents with gentleness. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading them to the knowledge of the truth.

[1 Corinthians 9:19-23] 19 Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law -- though I myself am not under the law -- to win those under the law. 21 To those who are without the law, like one without the law -- though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ -- to win those without the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. 23 Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.

[Romans 12:19] Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for God's wrath, because it is written, Vengeance belongs to me; I will repay, says the Lord.

[1 Peter 3:15-16] 15 but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. 16 Yet do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.

[Proverbs 15:1] A gentle answer turns away anger, but a harsh word stirs up wrath.

[2 Timothy 2:24] The Lord's servant must not quarrel, but must be gentle to everyone, able to teach, and patient,

[Titus 3:2 NKJV] to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

[Genesis 2:9] The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[Genesis 3:22] The LORD God said, "Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever."

[Genesis 3:24] He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

[Proverbs 3:18] She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, and those who hold on to her are happy.

[Proverbs 11:30] The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and a wise person captivates people.

[Proverbs 13:12] Hope delayed makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

[Revelation 2:7] "Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

[Revelation 22:2] down the middle of the city's main street. The tree of life was on each side of the river, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree are for healing the nations,

[Revelation 22:14] "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates.

[Revelation 22:19] And if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share of the tree of life and the holy city, which are written about in this book.

[Mark 11:15] They came to Jerusalem, and he went into the temple and began to throw out those buying and selling. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves,

[Ephesians 4:26] Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger,

[Galatians 6:1] Brothers and sisters, if someone is overtaken in any wrongdoing, you who are spiritual, restore such a person with a gentle spirit, watching out for yourselves so that you also won't be tempted.

[James 3:13] Who among you is wise and understanding? By his good conduct he should show that his works are done in the gentleness that comes from wisdom.

[1 Peter 3:4] but rather what is inside the heart -- the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017); *The Holy Bible: New King James Version*. Wheaton, IL: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1985 and *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

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Lesson 19: Self-Control

"Here is the paradox of Christian living. We must give up control of self to gain self control." ~ Andy Mineo⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 25:28 ESV] 28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Proverbs, one of the wisdom books of the Bible, has much to say about self-control. The word for 'self-control' is translated as 'temperance' in the King James Version of the Bible, and used in [Galatians 5:23](#). The original Greek word (*egkrateia*) conveys the meaning "the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites". God has given the Christian the ability to exercise self-control. [\[2 Timothy 1:7 ESV\] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.](#)

Free will leads to the need for self-control, because self-control determines our actions and reactions. The Holy Spirit influences the believer's self-control, but it should not come as a surprise that a lack of self-control exists in all people. A failure of self-control results in a violation of God's righteousness. [\[Romans 3:23\] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.](#)

There are efforts under way to understand self-control through controlled studies. A group of psychologists at the University of Waterloo in Canada conducted a series of studies of self-controlled behavior. Their findings suggest that individuals differ in their beliefs about self-control. "A person who thinks that self-control is a limited resource will be more likely to give in to temptations. Plus, when we perceive a task as effortful, we show poorer self-control. This may mean that you can have more control simply by shifting your perspective."⁽²⁾ [\[2 Timothy 4:5a\] But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship.](#) Their findings indicate that self-control is increased by shifting your mental state, in order to 'see' certain tasks as less effortful. The shift in mental state for Christians begins when they accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. [\[2 Corinthians 5:17\] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!](#)

A **Psychology Today** article asks the question: "Does self-control fluctuate?" "The idea of self-control as a stable trait isn't always true. A person's level of self-control tends to wax and wane over the course of a day, suggesting that self-control is less like a mental capacity such as intelligence and more a fluctuating resource along the lines of physical energy."⁽²⁾ The Apostle Paul shares advice to stop the variation of self-control throughout the day. [\[1 Thessalonians 5:17\] pray constantly.](#) Daniel is an example of faithfully seeking God throughout the day. [\[Daniel 6:10\] The windows in its upstairs room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.](#)

The Holy Spirit lives in the heart of the Christian, and the fruit of the Spirit includes self-control. For Christians, self-control is no longer subject only to the unguarded mind. [\[Romans 8:9 NLT\]](#) *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you.* Self-control is developed in the Christian through the sanctification process. Webster's 1828 dictionary defines sanctification as *'the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to a supreme love to God.'* Our lives become subject to the Holy Spirit's control when we walk according to God's word. [\[Galatians 5:16\]](#) *I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "Self-Control" was defined then and now.

Definition of Self-control:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

Self-control

- Restraint exercised over one's own impulses, emotions, or desires.

Temperance

- Moderation in action, thought, or feeling.
- Habitual moderation in the indulgence of the appetites or passions.
- Moderation in or abstinence from the use of alcoholic beverages.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary: (Temperance)⁽⁴⁾

Temperance

- Moderation; particularly, habitual moderation in regard to the indulgence of the natural appetites and passions; restrained or moderate indulgence; as *temperance* in eating and drinking; *temperance* in the indulgence of joy or [mirth](#). *temperance* in eating and drinking is opposed to gluttony and drunkenness, and in other indulgences, to excess.
 - [Mirth](#): Social merriment; hilarity; high excitement of pleasurable feelings in company; noisy gayety; jollity. mirth differs from joy and cheerfulness, as always implying noise.
 - With genial joy to warm the soul.
 - I will cause to cease the voice of mirth from Judah and Jerusalem. [Jeremiah 7:34](#).
- Patience; calmness; sedateness; moderation of passion.
 - He calmed his wrath with goodly *temperance* [Unusual.]

Review Questions:

1. What is self-control? Wikipedia defines it as “*an aspect of the cognitive process and more specifically, an executive function that permits an individual to inhibit their impulses and natural, habitual, or dominant behavioral responses to stimuli, in order to select a more appropriate behavior that is consistent with completing their goals*”.⁽⁵⁾

As we’ve studied **The Nature of God in Proverbs**, we’re reminded that the Christian, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can comprehend his purpose in life. Creation cannot serve the Creator without a relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit will guide us in developing self-control. The Christian standard of self-control will differ from that of a non-believer.

God reaches each believer in His perfect timing. Now He lays before us the ability to grow in our faith. Read 2 Peter 1:3-7 and share your thoughts.

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2. Everyone has experienced life before the influence of the Holy Spirit. *[Colossians 2:13] And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses.* Think of your thoughts, actions, and words prior to being “born again.” All things became new, including your self-control. Describe how this transformation changed you using *Romans 12:2* and *2 Corinthians 5:17*.

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3. Many Christians would like to permanently block the memory of their behavior prior to coming to faith in Jesus Christ. Before our salvation, self-control was not influenced by the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul’s past was controlled by his sin nature, but even then, God’s mercy covered him. *[1 Timothy 1:13] even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an arrogant man. But I received mercy because I acted out of ignorance in unbelief.* Our past also has been covered by the grace of God, and now we press forward with the leading of the Holy Spirit, Who influences our thoughts, actions, and words. For the believer, self-control is now guided by the Holy Spirit. Share your observations and implications from *Proverbs 25:28* using the English Standard Version.

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- a. The book of Nehemiah demonstrates the importance of walls to protect those within a city's boundaries, and the necessity of gates to maintain a connection to those outside the city. Proverbs 25:28 makes the comparison between a man and a city. Psalm 122 is a prayer for Jerusalem. What does Psalm 122:6-7 add to the analogy in Proverbs 25:28?

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4. As cited previously, **Psychology Today** states that self-control tends to wax and wane over the course of a day.⁽²⁾ God has given the Christian a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). The Greek word Paul used for sound mind (sōphronismos) has the idea of a calm, self-controlled mind, in contrast to the panic and confusion that come from a fearful situation. Is it true for the Christian that self-control tends to increase or diminish over the course of a day? Why or why not?

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5. An article entitled "*How to Improve Your Self-Control*" states that psychologists define self-control as:
- The ability to control behaviors to avoid temptations and achieve goals.
 - The ability to delay gratification and resist unwanted behaviors or urges.
 - A limited resource that can be depleted.⁽⁶⁾

Researchers have found that people who have better self-control tend to be healthier and happier. A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association found that 71% of people believe that self-control can be learned and strengthened.⁽⁶⁾ It would be difficult to argue against the definitions mentioned above. How does 2 Timothy 1:7 (English Standard Version) expand on these definitions?

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6. The article in the previous question provided the definition of self-control as "*the ability to control behaviors to avoid temptations and achieve goals.*" The strategies recommended by the author to overcome temptations are self-imposed. They include setting goals, focusing on one goal at a time, having a plan for situations that might break your resolve, practicing using self-control to improve willpower, and avoiding temptation. These strategies do not include looking to God for help.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus wanted His disciples to stay awake with Him, but found them sleeping on three occasions ([Matthew 26:36-45](#)). Jesus' solution to conquer the temptation to sleep was to pray. [[Matthew 26:41](#)] *Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation.* The verse continues: *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*, and this is a popular saying. However, "stay awake and pray" is not as popular.

Another often-cited partial verse is [James 4:7](#): "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you". The words before and after this verse condition this promise with actions that are our responsibility. Developing self-control is leveraging God-control in one's life. With that in mind share your observations on [James 4:7-8](#).

7. Paul sets the stage for Christian discipline and self-control. [[1 Corinthians 9:24-27](#)] *24 Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. 25 Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. 26 So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. 27 Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.* What does the metaphor in verse 24 suggest?

- a. In Paul's day athletes were required to enter into ten months of strict training for a race, and were disqualified from participating if they failed to do so. What does Paul say about those competing in the race in verses 25-26?

- b. Paul brings the metaphor to a close with a personal application in his life in verse 27. Paul's final instructions to Timothy before his departure from this world are found in [2 Timothy 4:5](#). Share your thoughts on the similarities in these verses: [1 Corinthians 9:27](#) and [2 Timothy 4:5](#).

8. There is something quite appealing about being in the presence of an elderly, godly person. *[Proverbs 16:31] Gray hair is a glorious crown; it is found in the ways of righteousness.* Their passage through the Christian life has not only been beneficial to them, but it also benefits those whom they mentor. Timothy, at an early age, came under the teaching of the apostle Paul. In Paul's final words to Timothy, he exhorts him to exercise self-control in everything. Share your thoughts on these verses:

- a. Self-control of the tongue. *Proverbs 12:18; 26:28*

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- b. Self-control of the mind. *Proverbs 15:14; 15:28*

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- c. Self-control of our actions. *Proverbs 14:17; 15:18*

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9. Self-control is not a rite of passage that comes naturally with age, nor does it come with longevity as a believer. Self-control is a sign of spiritual maturity that comes from actively pursuing a life pleasing to God. Paul addresses spiritual maturity in *1 Corinthians 3:1-4*. Those he addressed were 'still worldly.' Here are three things to consider when growing in spiritual maturity. First, recognize the Holy Spirit lives in you. Second, be open and sensitive to the influence of the Holy Spirit through prayer and the reading of God's word. Third, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. Consider spiritual maturity and share your observations using *Galatians 6:8* and *Romans 8:5*.

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10. Exercising self-control sounds like a daunting task. The Greek word for self-control (egkrateia) is defined as “the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites. Self-control that is influenced by the Holy Spirit will keep the believer on the right path.” Share your observations on Proverbs 4:26-27.

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11. As Christians, we have an enemy and he is looking for our weaknesses. *[1 Peter 5:8] Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.* The need to strengthen self-control increases as a believer strives to make a difference for the kingdom of heaven. Consider the cost, but also the reward. Christian maturity brings challenges that require more self-control. Remember the book of Job.

Reflect on the opportunities placed before you, that may take you out of your comfort zone, that God is placing upon your heart. *[Philippians 4:13] I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me.* You may already be praying about this. Consider sharing it with the group and asking for prayer.

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Closing Thoughts

Psychology Today mentions “*there is a debate surrounding the degree to which self-control is an innate individual difference, versus a learned skill.*”⁽²⁾ This debate could be greatly enhanced by inquiring of the Creator of all creation. Why is it that seeking the ultimate source of knowledge is not considered? Consider the example below to shed light on the subject.

Most men do not read instructions. Many men believe that logic and intuition will prevail and that instructions are there for the other guy. The cautions and warnings at the beginning of instructions are usually included because of mistakes made by someone else. When all else fails, the instructions are finally reviewed and behold, success! While man may not want to admit that he needs help, he does.

2 Peter 1:5-7 could help those who struggle with a loss of self-control over the day. *[2 Peter 1:5-7] 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, 7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.* In verse 6, knowledge is mentioned with self-control. In our previous studies of **The Nature of God in Proverbs**, we have read that *[Proverbs 1:7a] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.*

Effective self-control is dependent upon a close relationship with our God. *[John 15:5] I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.*

PRAY

Self-control that is Spirit-controlled is of great value to God. Lord, may it not be my will, but Your will be done.

Father God, I acknowledge my dependency upon You for self-control. I ask that You would create a clean heart within me and place a guard around my mind so that all that I say and do would glorify You. I want to reach the lost with the gospel. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to You. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

God gave us a spirit of self-control. (2 Timothy 1:7 ESV)

Exercise self-control in everything. (2 Timothy 4:5a)

Believers are controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:9)

A man without self-control is like a city without walls. (Proverbs 25:28)

Self-control covers the tongue, the mind, and our actions. (Proverbs 12:18; 15:14; 14:17)

Scripture References:

[Galatians 5:23 KJV] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

[Jeremiah 7:34] "I will remove from the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of joy and gladness and the voices of the groom and the bride, for the land will become a desolate waste.

[2 Peter 1:3-7] His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 By these he has given us very great and precious promises, so that through them you may share in the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world because of evil desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, 6 knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, 7 godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

[Romans 12:2] Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

[2 Corinthians 5:17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!

[Proverbs 25:28 ESV] 28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

[Psalm 122:6-7] 6 Pray for the well-being of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure; 7 "may there be peace within your walls, security within your fortresses."

[2 Timothy 1:7 ESV] for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

[Matthew 26:36-45] 36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he told the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 He said to them, "I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me." 39 Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." 40 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter, "So, couldn't you stay awake with me one hour? 41 "Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 Again, a second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." 43 And he came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open. 44 After leaving them, he went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? See, the time is near. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

[James 4:7-8] 7 Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

[2 Timothy 4:5] But as for you, exercise self-control in everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

[Proverbs 12:18] There is one who speaks rashly, like a piercing sword; but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

[Proverbs 26:28] A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth causes ruin.

[Proverbs 15:14] A discerning mind seeks knowledge, but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness.

[Proverbs 15:28] The mind of the righteous person thinks before answering, but the mouth of the wicked blurts out evil things.

[Proverbs 14:17] A quick-tempered person acts foolishly, and one who schemes is hated.

[Proverbs 15:18] A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but one slow to anger calms strife.

[1 Corinthians 3:1-4] 1 For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, 3 because you are still worldly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not worldly and behaving like mere humans? 4 For whenever someone says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not acting like mere humans?

[Galatians 6:8] because the one who sows to his flesh will reap destruction from the flesh, but the one who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life from the Spirit.

[Romans 8:5] For those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit have their minds set on the things of the Spirit.

[Proverbs 4:26-27] 26 Carefully consider the path for your feet, and all your ways will be established. 27 Don't turn to the right or to the left; keep your feet away from evil.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2015. *The English Standard Version Bible: With Apocrypha*. Oxford University Press, 2009, and *The King James Study Bible: King James Version*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2008.

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Lesson 20: Joy

"Christian joy is letting Christ live His life out through you so that what He is, you become." ~ David Jeremiah⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[Proverbs 10:28] The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

The current edition of Webster's dictionary defines joy as delight, gaiety, bliss, or to rejoice. By definition, joy is pleasant. Christians have a different understanding of joy. *[James 1:2] Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials.* The word 'trial' signifies affliction, persecution, or a hardship of any kind. The Christian view of 'joy' may share some aspects of the secular view, but there are also significant differences.

C.S. Lewis saw a clear distinction between joy, pleasure, and happiness. *"I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy. . . I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure."*⁽²⁾ We must have a deeper understanding of joy in order to not consider it synonymous with pleasure or happiness.

Before enduring the cross, Jesus prayed to the Father for His disciples. *[John 17:9] I pray for them. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they are yours.* Ultimately, He prayed for all believers. *[John 17:20] I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in me through their word.* His prayer was: *[John 17:11] I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one.* The restoration of man to God was about to take place. The joy of the Lord is in the prayer of Jesus to the Father. *[John 17:13] Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them.*

What brings joy to Jesus Christ? We have the unique opportunity to see the prayer of Jesus to the Father in *John 17:1-26*. We see His desire for a deep personal relationship with all believers: *[John 17:21] May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us, so that the world may believe you sent me.* Not only do we see this oneness, but we see the role of believers "so that the world may believe you sent me." As we keep our eyes on Jesus, His joy will radiate through us to reach the lost. *[Hebrews 12:2] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The joy of the Lord does not result in an easy path through life. Joy is the exhilaration of being in His will and experiencing the fulfillment of His calling. *[John 15:11] I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.* Jesus was properly equipping His disciples for what they would face when sharing the gospel. Without the joy of Jesus Christ, it would not be possible to withstand the trials and tribulation they were about to experience as they proclaimed the good news. What was true for them is true for believers today. *[Proverbs 10:28] The hope of the righteous is joy.* We need the joy of the Lord deep within our heart.

Joy

The feeling of happiness and pleasure can come from many sources, like a new house or car, but the feeling is temporary. Joy comes from the Lord and it finds fulfillment in remaining in His will. It is Jesus' will that we proclaim the Gospel. *[Mark 16:15] Then he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."* Is there anything more valuable in this world than someone coming to faith? Happiness and pleasure will fade, but the joy of salvation is heard throughout all creation. *[Luke 15:7] I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't need repentance.*

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let's see how "Joy" was defined then and now.

Definition of Joy:

Webster's Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

- The emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires: Delight
- The expression or exhibition of such emotion: Gaiety
- A state of happiness or felicity: Bliss
- A source or cause of delight
- To experience great pleasure or delight: Rejoice

Webster's 1828 Dictionary⁽⁴⁾

- The passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good; that excitement of pleasurable feelings which is caused by success, good fortune, the gratification of desire or some good possessed, or by a rational prospect of possessing what we love or desire; gladness; exultation; exhilaration of spirits.
 - **JOY** is a delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good.
 - Bring heavenly balm to heal my country's wounds.
 - **JOY** to my soul and transport to my lay.
- Gayety; mirth; festivity.
 - The roofs with *joy* resound.
- Happiness; felicity.
 - Her heavenly form beheld, all wished her *joy*.
- A glorious and triumphant state.
 - --Who for the *joy* that was set before him, endured the cross. [Hebrews 12:2](#).
 - *[Hebrews 12:2] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- The cause of *joy* or happiness.
 - For ye are our glory and *joy* [1 Thessalonians 2:19](#).
 - *[1Thessalonians 2:19] For who is our hope or joy or crown of boasting in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?*
- A term of fondness; the cause of you.
 - **JOY**, verb intransitive To rejoice; to be glad; to exult.
 - I will *joy* in the God of my salvation. [Habakkuk 3:18](#).
 - *[Habakkuk 3:18] yet I will celebrate in the LORD; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!*

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of 'Joy' has changed in our country over time. What has changed and why do you believe it has changed?

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2. There cannot be a unified definition of joy that is acceptable to both the non-believing world and the Christian. [John 15:11](#) and [Hebrews 12:2](#) clearly identify joy in the person of Jesus Christ. The joy mentioned in John 15:11 is predicated upon what Jesus had previously taught his disciples. What is needed for the joy of the Lord to be in the Christian? See [John 15:4, 9-10](#).

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3. John 15:11 says that Jesus desires His joy would be in his disciples, but also that it would be complete. [\[John 15:11\] I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete](#). Having joy is dependent upon a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Joy and oneness with God are closely related. Is it possible to have one without the other? See [John 17:11-13](#) and [Philippians 2:1-2](#).

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4. King David possessed qualities that were pleasing to God ([1 Samuel 13:14](#)). However, he experienced a time when joy departed from him. [Psalm 32:3-5](#) records David's confession, which led to the restoration of his relationship with God. Joy departed from David during his time of unconfessed sin. [\[Psalm 51:12\] Restore the joy of your salvation to me, and sustain me by giving me a willing spirit](#). Unconfessed sin can cause the joy of salvation to diminish since it hinders the bond of prayer and fellowship with God.

For some believers, the *joy of salvation* does not carry over to *joy in everyday life*. Circumstances can crowd out joy, from temporary inconveniences to concerns about loved ones and their eternal destiny. The battle for joy is waged not only over unconfessed sin, but also through the trials God has allowed in our lives. Share your thoughts on the following verses and plan to share one with the group.

- a. 1 Samuel 2:9

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Joy

b. Psalm 73:26

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c. Psalm 61:2

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d. Psalm 46:1

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e. Isaiah 33:2

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f. Isaiah 40:31

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5. A **Psychology Today** article shares a clinical example of an interaction between a therapist and a client who is very depressed. The therapist “set out to become a joy detective. I looked for any signs of joy: an upturned mouth indicating a muted smile, a split-second of light in her eyes, energy in her body, or any narrative where joy might be found.”⁽⁵⁾ The therapist cracked a joke and there was a little smile. The joke made the client “feel warm”, but the client was fearful the warm feeling would soon go away. Was this warm feeling of joy sustainable? Why or why not?

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- a. As C.S. Lewis mentioned earlier, joy must be distinguished from both happiness and pleasure. Share your observations on [Psalm 16:11](#). How would this have changed the therapist’s approach?

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- b. What comfort would [Psalm 147:3](#) and [Philippians 4:7](#) provide for the client in this story?

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6. The first telephone conversation occurred on March 10, 1876. Human interaction in society was forever changed. The first conversation was: “Mr. Watson – come here – I want to see you.” Alexander Graham Bell wrote in his journal: “To my delight he came and declared that he had heard and understood what I said”.⁽⁶⁾ The telephone was the next best thing to speaking in person. The apostle John, an eyewitness of Jesus Christ, recognized how much more could be accomplished by speaking in person. Read [2 John 1:12](#) and share your observations.

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7. The Lord told Ananias in a vision to minister to Paul. The Lord revealed His plan for Paul. [\[Acts 9:15\]](#) *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to take my name to Gentiles, kings, and Israelites."* It was the Lord Who called Paul to preach in Rome. [\[Acts 23:11\]](#) *The following night, the Lord stood by him and said, "Have courage! For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so it is necessary for you to testify in Rome."* Paul wrote the book of Romans prior to visiting Rome. He was arrested in Jerusalem in 58 A.D., then imprisoned in Caesarea, and finally arrived in Rome in 61 A.D.⁽⁷⁾ Read [Romans 1:11-13](#) and share your observations about Paul’s desired face-to-face encounter with the Roman believers. Keep in mind that Paul did not establish the church in Rome, nor had he visited there yet.

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- a. Paul is an example of a faithful servant. The faithful servants in the parable of the talents [\(Matthew 25:14-30\)](#) were greeted with “Well done good and faithful servant! ...Share your master’s joy.” There is joy within a believer who is faithful to share the gospel. Remember a time when you shared the gospel and tell the group about it.

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8. The apostle John *“was an elderly man in the vicinity of ninety years of age when he wrote his final letters. As far as we know, he is the only one of the original disciples to die of old age and/or natural causes.”*⁽⁸⁾ John tells us about his encounter with Jesus Christ. He writes these things so that our joy may be complete ([1 John 1:4](#)). *“In Johannine thought, “joy” is a gift from God that transcends the difficulties of life in the world, because it recognizes God’s continuing love in the face of the world’s hatred (John 15:11; 16:20-22). Jesus therefore prays that his disciples “may have the full measure of my joy within them,” despite the fact that he is sending them into a hateful world.”*⁽⁹⁾ ([John 17:13](#)). What things did John write so that our joy may be complete? See [1 John 1:1-3](#).

9. Jesus gives his joy to the believer. [[Psalm 16:11b](#)] *in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures*. A natural response to this joy is to desire to give joy back to God. It is human nature to demonstrate care and concern for others by sacrifice. We may give up our time or something that is of value to bring joy to another. But how do we bring joy to the Creator of the universe? Is it by sacrifice? [[1 Samuel 15:22b](#)] *Look: to obey is better than sacrifice*. It is not that God is not pleased with our offering, but there is something more important. [[Proverbs 21:3](#)] *Doing what is righteous and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice*. According to [Hebrews 13:15-16](#), what sacrifice is pleasing to God? How often?

10. The joy of the Lord is strength to face the world. [[Nehemiah 8:10b](#)] *Do not grieve, because the joy of the LORD is your strength*. It is the foundation for hope as we trust in God. Hope that is not in God does not last. [[Job 8:13](#)] *the hope of the godless will perish*. Hope in anything but God simply cannot be sustained. [[Proverbs 11:7b](#)] *hope placed in wealth vanishes*. *“Man can live about forty days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air...but only for one second without hope.”*⁽¹⁰⁾ The believer has joy and peace from God that causes hope to overflow by the power of the Holy Spirit. The joy of the Lord is deeply rooted in the believer and cannot be moved by circumstances. For the believer how are hope and joy related?

- a. Proverbs 10:28

- b. Romans 15:13

c. What advice would you offer to a true seeker of joy?

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11. For the Christian parent there is no greater joy than to know that your children are walking with the Lord. *[Proverbs 23:24-25 NLT] 24 The father of godly children has **cause for joy**. What a pleasure to have children who are wise. 25 **So give your father and mother joy!*** It is all too common that parents accept the blame for wayward children. This may be the most difficult spiritual battle a Christian can face, but we do not face it alone. Just as in any trial, adversity brings us to the throne of grace where we cry out to God. We're reminded that God's love is poured out to our children, because they are first *His* children. The final chapter is not yet written! It is important to remind ourselves that our joy is in the Lord, and that He loves our children deeply.

When Jesus was about to leave this world he told His disciples that they would weep and mourn and become sorrowful, but their sorrow would turn to joy. *[John 16:22] So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, **and no one will take away your joy from you**.* Read *John 16:20-24*. Share your thoughts on *Psalms 5:11*.

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Closing Thoughts

The joy of salvation brings together the bride (the Church) and the groom (Jesus Christ) in unity that is eternal (*Revelation 19:7*). It is said that new Christians have more joy than those who are mature in the faith. Does the joy of salvation wane over time while we are here in this life? If so, what is the remedy? We might find the answer in the letter to the church of Ephesus:

[Revelation 2:3-4] 3 I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. It could be that the signs of the times such as wars, famines, plagues, and persecution of Christians overshadow the joy of the Lord. *[Revelation 2:5] Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.*

In contrast to the church, the world searches for joy, pleasure, and happiness through a worldly source of joy that can ebb and flow. When the definition of joy does not include a relationship with Jesus Christ, the search for purpose and peace is futile. The joy of the Lord is not found in any pursuit apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit, and with the result of bringing glory to God. A Christian that brings joy to others shares in the joy of the Lord. *[Philemon 1:7] For I have great joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother.* Consider reflecting the joy of the Lord with those you encounter today.

PRAY

The joy of the Lord is always within reach for the Christian. Jesus wants the believer's joy to be complete so that it is possible to withstand the inevitable challenges from an unbelieving world. With our eyes focused on Him, the world grows dim in the light of His presence.

Father God, glory and honor and praise be to Your name. I ask that my mind be renewed with the joy of the Lord, and that I might be reminded that You alone are my strength. May I look to Jesus Christ the author and finisher of my faith to guide my path. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

The hope of the righteous is joy. (Proverbs 10:28)

Consider it great joy when experiencing trials. (James 1:2)

Have the complete joy of Jesus. (John 15:11)

For the joy set before Him, Jesus Christ endured the cross. (Hebrews 12:2)

Joy and oneness with God are closely related. (John 17:11-13)

Scripture References:

[John 15:11] I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

[Hebrews 12:2] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[John 15:11] I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

[Hebrews 12:2] keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[John 15:4] Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.

[John 15:9-10] 9 As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

[John 17:11-13] I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled. Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them.

[Philippians 2:1-2] 1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, 2 make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

[1 Samuel 13:14] but now your reign will not endure. The LORD has found a man after his own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over his people, because you have not done what the LORD commanded.

[Psalm 32:3-5] 3 When I kept silent, my bones became brittle from my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was drained as in the summer's heat. Selah 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not conceal my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah

[1 Samuel 2:9] He guards the steps of his faithful ones, but the wicked perish in darkness, for a person does not prevail by his own strength.

[Psalm 73:26] My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever.

[Psalm 61:2] I call to you from the ends of the earth when my heart is without strength. Lead me to a rock that is high above me,

[Psalm 46:1] God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble.

[Isaiah 33:2] LORD, be gracious to us! We wait for you. Be our strength every morning and our salvation in time of trouble.

[Isaiah 40:31] but those who trust in the LORD will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary, they will walk and not faint.

[Psalm 16:11] You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.

[Psalm 147:3 CSB] 3 He heals the brokenhearted and bandages their wounds.

[Philippians 4:7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

*[2 John 1:12] Though I have many things to write to you, I don't want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to come to you and talk face to face **so that our joy may be complete.***

[Romans 1:11-13] 11 For I want very much to see you, so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, 12 that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. 13 Now I don't want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that I often planned to come to you (but was prevented until now) in order that I might have a fruitful ministry among you, just as I have had among the rest of the Gentiles.

[1 John 1:4] We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

[John 15:11] I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

[John 16:20-22] 20 Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. 21 When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. 22 So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you.

[John 17:13] Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy completed in them.

[1 John 1:1-3] 1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life -- 2 that life was revealed, and we have seen it and we testify and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us -- 3 what we have seen and heard we also declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Joy

[Hebrews 13:15-16] 15 Therefore, through him let us continually offer up to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. 16 Don't neglect to do what is good and to share, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.

[Proverbs 10:28] The hope of the righteous is joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.

[Romans 15:13] Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[John 16:20-24] 20 Truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will become sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn to joy. 21 When a woman is in labor, she has pain because her time has come. But when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the suffering because of the joy that a person has been born into the world. 22 So you also have sorrow now. But I will see you again. Your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy from you. 23 In that day you will not ask me anything. Truly I tell you, anything you ask the Father in my name, he will give you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

[Psalm 5:11] But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them shout for joy forever. May you shelter them, and may those who love your name boast about you.

[Revelation 19:7] Let us be glad, rejoice, and give him glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has prepared herself.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), and *Holy Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2015.

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Lesson 21: Love

"I Choose Love...No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I will love God and what God loves." ~ Max Lucado⁽¹⁾

Key Verse:

[John 15:12-13] 12 This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends.

From ancient times, philosophers attempted to explain love from a human perspective. Plato rejected the idea that love is solely about desire and sexual gratification. He argued that love is a step-by-step process that begins with admiration of physical beauty and evolves into admiration of spiritual beauty. For Plato, the highest form of love was the love of truth, which is known as Platonic Love. Aristotle, in contrast, believed self-love was the most important aspect of love.

While there are a variety of definitions of love in the world, there is only one that has eternal meaning. The Bible's definition of love is God. *[1 John 4:16] And we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. **God is love**, and the one who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.* One may ask, "How can I love what I cannot see, hear, or touch?" We read in 1 John to keep His commands. *[1John 5:3] For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden.* Keeping God's commands should be the desire of every believer. The motive for keeping God's commands is love and not to attain righteousness through the law.

Jesus' response to a Pharisee, an expert in the law, provides some insight. He asked this question: *[Matthew 22:36] "Teacher, which command in the law is the greatest?"* The motive of the Pharisee was to trap Jesus into emphasizing one commandment in the law above others. Jesus quoted *[Deuteronomy 6:5] "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.* But Jesus did not stop there. He went on to address how to treat others. *[Matthew 22:38-40] 38 This is the greatest and most important command. 39 The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. 40 All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.*

There are many words for love in the Greek, but two are found in the New Testament. "Philia" represents deep friendship. "Agape" in ancient Greek literature was translated as affection. *"It is this word that the New Testament adopts and infuses with unique meaning. This word was chosen by the New Testament writers to convey to future generations the unique dimensions and overwhelming depth of God's love and to explore the impact of that love on human beings."*⁽²⁾

Paul uses the word 'agape' to describe love, and John uses the same word to describe God. *[1 John 4:16] **God is love**.* John uses the word 'agape' extensively in his gospel and epistles. *[John 15:9-10] 9 As the Father has **loved** me, I have also **loved** you. Remain in my **love**. 10 If you keep my commands you will remain in my **love**, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his **love**.*

Paul's discourse in *1 Corinthians 13* describes how love is a decision that can be seen in action. It is known as the love chapter.

Love

We have kept Love as the last topic in our study of “The Nature of God in Proverbs.” In previous lessons we have looked at specific attributes of God in order to draw closer to Him. What will be our legacy? Will they remember our love? *[1 Corinthians 13:4-8] 4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, 5 is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. 6 Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.*

Noah Webster wrote the first dictionary for the United States of America in 1828. There have been many additions and revisions over the years. Let’s see how “Love” was defined then and now.

Definition of Love:

Webster’s Dictionary (current)⁽³⁾

- Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties.
- Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers.
- Affection based on admiration.
- An assurance of affection.
- Warm attachment, enthusiasm, or devotion.
- The object of attachment, devotion, or admiration.
- A beloved person.
- Unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: such as:
 - The fatherly concern of God for humankind.
 - Brotherly concern for others.
- A person’s adoration of God.
- A god (such as Cupid or Eros) or personification of love
- An amorous episode
- The sexual embrace
- A score of zero – as in tennis.

Webster’s 1828 Dictionary⁽⁴⁾

- An affection of the mind excited by beauty and worth of any kind.
 - The love of God is the first duty of man.
- Courtship; chiefly in the phrase, to make love that is, to court; to woo; to solicit union in marriage.
- Patriotism; the attachment one has to his native land; as the love of country.
- Benevolence; good will. God is love *1 John 4:7*
- The object beloved. The lover and the love of human kind.
- A word of endearment. Trust me, love
- Picturesque representation of love. Such was his form as painters.
- Lewdness. He is not lolling on a lewd love-bed.

Review Questions:

1. The 1828 definition of 'Love' has changed in our country over time. What has changed and why do you believe it has changed?

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2. Believers show their love for God by keeping His commands. *[1 John 5:3] For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands.* God's commands are not severe, stern, violent or cruel. The proving ground for a believer to begin to comprehend love is by loving others. The Greek word for love in *1 John 4:20* is 'agape'. *[1 John 4:20] If anyone says, "I love God," and yet hates his brother or sister, he is a liar. For the person who does not love his brother or sister whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.* Share your thoughts on this verse and the implications it has in context with *John 13:34-35*.

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- a. A believer is not promised to be loved by those in the world. What should be your expectation as a follower of Jesus Christ? See Mark 13:13 and Luke 6:22.

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3. God is not bound by time and has chosen those who would choose Him. *[Ephesians 1:4-5] 4 For he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in love before him. 5 He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* While God's love is constant and there is nothing that can separate us from His love, the love of man can ebb and flow. God's love is unconditional. How do *1 John 4:19* and *Romans 5:8* support this claim?

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Love

4. Many of us have heard the words “this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you,” usually said before the board of correction meets the seat of understanding. The motive for discipline should always be love. *[Proverbs 3:12] for the LORD disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.* Worldly discipline may be administered out of emotion, however Godly discipline’s motive is always love.

Discipline is a lifelong pursuit that impacts all aspects of life. Most recognize the need for discipline. However, some are not fond of it. *[Proverbs 5:11-12] 11 At the end of your life, you will lament when your physical body has been consumed, 12 and you will say, "How I hated discipline, and how my heart despised correction."* Discipline from God should be expected, with the realization it is because of His love.

- a. 1 Corinthians 9:27 speaks of self-discipline. What was Paul’s motive?

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- b. Explain why Psalm 94:12 is important for the believer.

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5. There is a war taking place and every person in the world is on the battlefield. Technology has extended the battlefield into every household, appealing to the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes. ‘Eros’ dominates our culture and challenges true love (agape). These two were not meant to challenge one another. Casualties are mounting due to a lack of Godly wisdom and knowledge of the Holy One. The warning bell has sounded: *[1 John 2:15-16] 15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions -- is not from the Father, but is from the world.* Thinking about 1 John 2:15-16, share your observations on the following verses:

- a. A tactic the enemy uses effectively is to convince women that outward beauty is everything. Share your thoughts on Proverbs 31:30.

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- b. God is the provider of power and wealth. His provision is not for personal gain, but to glorify Him. Loving the world or things in the world can draw attention away from the provider of all things. What advice is found in Proverbs 30:7-8, particularly Proverbs 8b?

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Love

6. Consider Plato's step-by-step process of discovering love (described at the beginning of the study), applied to the believer. In place of the first step, admiration of physical beauty, is justification. Justification happened the moment of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. *[Romans 10:9] If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* The sanctification process begins as the Holy Spirit reveals the nature of God, and we see and experience God's great love. What does God want us to do with the love He has given us? It is to spread the good news of the gospel, just as Jesus did during his earthly ministry. *[Luke 4:43] But he said to them, "It is necessary for me to proclaim the good news about the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because I was sent for this purpose."*

At the time that John wrote the book of Revelation, the church in Ephesus had been around for several years. Something happened over the years that caused John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to write these words. *[Revelation 2:3-4] 3 I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first.* It can become routine to serve God and not remember His unchanging love, and the love we had when first saved. What advice is found in Revelation 2:5?

- a. Looking back on the past with a thankful heart reveals God's faithfulness, and is important for the Christian to recognize God's provision and His love. Share your thoughts on Philippians 4:6-7.

7. The love of God remains constant in the most difficult circumstances we find ourselves facing. *[Romans 8:35] Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* The spiritual battle rages, but we are not fighting for victory but from victory. Share how the Holy Spirit helps us through difficult times. See *Romans 8:26, Acts 1:8, and 1 Corinthians 6:19.*

Love

8. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul does not define love by lofty concepts, but by action words. The first word he uses to describe love is 'patient' - also known as 'long suffering.' For some, patience is a limited resource. It can only go so far.

Godly love is demonstrated by patience. Godly patience is the gospel preached without words. It is not only the restraint in our response, but the long-term endurance of it, which impacts a person. The advice found in Proverbs is easier said than done. *[Proverbs 24:29] Don't say, "I'll do to him what he did to me; I'll repay the man for what he has done."* Describe in your own words how a believer's love toward others can be demonstrated through patience. Consider *Romans 2:4* in your response.

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9. Charles Spurgeon gave a sermon titled "Unpurchasable Love," based on Song of Solomon 8:7. "The love of our Lord Jesus Christ is altogether unpurchasable," said Spurgeon.⁽⁵⁾ *[Song of Solomon 8:7] A huge torrent cannot extinguish love; rivers cannot sweep it away. If a man were to give all his wealth for love, it would be utterly scorned.* Maybe Paul McCartney had it right when he wrote the song "Can't Buy Me Love." "When pressed by American journalists in 1966 to reveal the song's "true" meaning, McCartney stated, "I think you can put any interpretation you want on anything, but when someone suggests that 'Can't Buy Me Love' is about a prostitute, I draw the line." He went on to say: "The idea behind it was that all these material possessions are all very well, but they won't buy me what I really want."⁽⁶⁾

- a. Mark 10:17-22 shares a story about earthly riches. What dilemma was the man in this story faced with? How did Jesus view this man (v. 21)?

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- b. Who or what is the subject of love in Proverbs 8:17-19? And why is this better than earthly wealth?

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- c. Share your observations from the previous question using Proverbs 9:10.

Note: Commenting on the Song of Solomon: *"If a manuscript of this little book were found alone, detached from the biblical context and tradition, it undoubtedly would be viewed as secular. The book has no obvious religious content."*⁽⁷⁾

The Song of Solomon is never quoted in the Old or New Testament; however, Charles Spurgeon preached fifty-nine sermons on this book!

10. A **Psychology Today** article entitled "What Love Is" defines love as having three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. The article defines intimacy as feelings of closeness and connection, warmth, caring and sharing. Passion refers to intense feelings of attraction, while commitment is more cerebral and is a deliberate decision to invest in a relationship over the long term.⁽⁸⁾

The Biblical definition of love is found in the nature of God. Assume that you are in a conversation with a non-believer and the subject of love comes up. An effective way to start the conversation might be to acknowledge there is a definition of love in the Bible that is different from that in society.

How would you describe love to this person? Consider using *[1 Corinthians 13:4-8]: 4 Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, 5 is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. 6 Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never ends.*

Closing Thoughts

God's love is the anchor of the soul for a Christian, and there is nothing that can separate a believer from the love of God. *[Romans 8:38-39] 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* The enemy cannot place a wedge between a believer and God. He is relegated to attempting to distract Christians by other means. Although Christians cannot be separated from the love of God, they can be rendered ineffective.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder" is an accepted quote in society, but is it true? Another popular saying in churches is, "One week without reading the Bible makes one weak." We can allow circumstances on our life to pull us away from our relationship with God. Although gravity is an unseen, mysterious force, we know how gravitational force operates. Gravity pulls a body towards it, but there are forces that can defy gravity. A rocket leaving the earth, a child jumping in the air, and even the magnets on your refrigerator defy gravity. In the same way, the Holy Spirit pulls us toward a relationship with God, but as the spiritual battle rages, we are tempted to pull away from Him. We do have a choice, though. *[Psalm 145:18] The LORD is near all who call out to him, all who call out to him with integrity.*

The outcome of the war is already decided. That happened on the cross of Calvary. Nothing can separate the Christian from the love of God. The question becomes, "How effective is the Christian to reach the lost with the gospel?"

"A Christian is: a mind through which Christ thinks, a heart through which Christ loves, a voice through which Christ speaks, and a hand through which Christ helps." ~ Saint Augustine⁽⁹⁾

PRAY

God loved us and chose us before the foundation of the world. He chose us to be holy and blameless in love before Him. God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who was given to us. We demonstrate our love for God by keeping His commands.

Father God, all praise, honor, and glory to You. You have demonstrated Your great love for us through Your Son Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and who rose from the dead so that we might be made righteous in Your sight. Look into my heart and show me anything that is displeasing to You and use me to effectively reach the lost with the gospel. Amen.

Key Takeaways:

God is love. (1 John 4:16)

Love for God is keeping His commands. (1 John 5:3)

The Greatest Commandments: Love God, love others. (Matthew 22:38-40)

Love is patient, kind, does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, is not rude, not self-seeking, is not irritable, does not remember wrongs, rejoices in truth, bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

The Lord disciplines the one he loves. (Proverbs 3:12)

God's love never fails. (Romans 8:38-39)

Scripture References:

[1 John 4:7] Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

[John 13:34-35] 34 I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

[Mark 13:13] You will be hated by everyone because of my name, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[Luke 6:22] Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you, insult you, and slander your name as evil because of the Son of Man.

[1 John 4:19] 19 We love because he first loved us.

[Romans 5:8] 8 But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[1 Corinthians 9:27] Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

[Psalm 94:12] LORD, how happy is anyone you discipline and teach from your law.

[Proverbs 31:30] Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the LORD will be praised.

[Proverbs 30:7-8] 7 Two things I ask of you; don't deny them to me before I die: 8 Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me. Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need.

[Revelation 2:5] Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

[Philippians 4:6-7] 6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[Romans 8:26] In the same way the Spirit also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with unspoken groanings.

[Acts 1:8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

[1 Corinthians 6:19] Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own,

[Romans 2:4] Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

[Mark 10:17-22] 17 As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up, knelt down before him, and asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone. 19 "You know the commandments: Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not bear false witness; do not defraud; honor your father and mother." 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these from my youth." 21 Looking at him, Jesus loved him and said to him, "You lack one thing: Go, sell all you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 But he was dismayed by this demand, and he went away grieving, because he had many possessions.

[Proverbs 8:17-19] 17 I love those who love me, and those who search for me find me. 18 With me are riches and honor, lasting wealth and righteousness. 19 My fruit is better than solid gold, and my harvest than pure silver.

[Proverbs 9:10] The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Footnotes

All scripture citations taken from the Christian Standard Bible translation (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

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Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
2:6	14	6:8	15	7:19	12
6:8	10	7:7	13		
Nahum		Habakkuk		Zephaniah	
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:3	14	2:4	11	2:3	10
1:7	16	3:18	20		
Haggai		Zechariah		Malachi	
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
2:9	13	9:9	10	2:17	16

Matthew					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
4:1-11	9	6:15	12	15:18-19	12
4:1-11	12	6:19-21	6	16:24-27	4
4:4	13	7:13	11	18:26	14
5:9	13	7:13-14	8	22:35-40NLT	18
5:17-19	6	10:34	13	22:36-40	10
5:17-18	7	10:35-36	13	22:36	21
5:24	18	10:36	18	22:38-40	21
6:9-13	12	11:28	13	25:14-30	20
6:13	17	11:28-29	18	26:36-45	19
6:14-15	12	13:10-11	5	26:41	19
6:14	12	15:11	12	28:19-20	10
Mark					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:35	11	11:15	18	16:15	20
8:36	6	11:17	18	16:15-16NLT	5
10:51-52	16	11:25	12	16:15	13
10:17-22	21	13:13	21		
Luke					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:75	7	6:22	21	22:40	11
4:43	21	10:18	11	24:45	5
6:35-36	15	15:7	20		
John					

Proverbs Path

Verses Referenced

Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
3:16-17	3	15:9-10	20	17:3	5
13:7	18	15:9-10	21	17:9	20
13:13-16	10	15:11	20	17:11	20
13:16	13	15:12-13	21	17:11-13	20
13:34-35	21	16:8	3	17:13	20
14:17	8	16:20-22	20	17:15	17
14:26-27	13	16:20-24	20	17:20	20
14:27	13	16:22	20	17:20-21	17
15:4	20	16:32-33	5	17:21	20
15:5	11	16:33	13	18:37-38	3
15:5	19	17:3	4		
Acts					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:8	21	10:2	16	18:26	8
2:42	10	10:3-4	16	23:11	20
7:10	2	17:26-27	4	28:2	15
9:15	20				
Romans					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:11-13	20	4:1-3	7	8:26	21
1:16-17	7	4:9-10	7	8:9	19
1:17	11	4:13	7	8:28	16
1:18-25	3	4:19-24	7	8:35	21
1:28	5	5:1	13	8:37	3
2:4	14	5:7	16	8:38-39	21
2:4	15	5:8	21	10:9	16
2:4	16	5:10	15	10:9	21
2:4	21	7:12	6	11:11	11
3:10	7	7:18	8	12:2	6
3:12	15	7:18-19	10	12:2	19
3:20	7	8:3-4	6	12:16	8
3:22-23	7	8:5	19	14:11	12
3:23	16	8:5-6,9	13	15:4	6
3:23	19	8:25	14	15:13	20

Proverbs Path

Verses Referenced

1 Corinthians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:17-18	2	6:19-20	1	10:13	14
2:1-2	2	6:20	7	11:1	8
2:10	9	8:1	11	11:1	18
3:1-4	19	9:19-23	18	13:4	11
3:18-20	2	9:24-27	19	13:4	15
3:19	5	9:27	6	13:4-8	21
6:19	21	9:27	21	13:13	14
2 Corinthians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:4	3	5:17	19	5:21	7
1:12	2	5:18-19	13	7:4	11
5:12	11	5:19	13	10:1	18
5:17	15	5:20	13	10:3-5	12
5:17	17	5:20	15	10:10	18
Galatians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
3:1-5	7	3:24	7	5:22-23	1
3:2-3	7	5:16	1	5:22-23	14
3:5-7	7	5:16	19	5:22-23	15
3:6	7	5:17	8	5:22-23	18
3:10-14	6	5:17	10	6:1	18
3:11	11	5:17	18	6:4	11
3:16	7	5:22	16	6:8	19
3:16-18	7	5:22	18		
Ephesians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:3-14	1	2:8-9	16	4:32	15
1:4-5	21	2:10	6	5:1	16
1:18 NLT	5	2:10	7	5:8-9	16
2:8	6	2:10	11	6:12	17
2:8	7	4:2 NLT	18	6:16-17	13

Proverbs Path

Verses Referenced

Philippians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:27	15	3:13	9	4:6-7	14
2:1-2	20	4:5 NKJV	18	4:6-7	21
2:3	18	4:6	8	4:7	13
2:3-4	10	4:6	13	4:7	20
2:5-8	10	4:6-7	4	4:13	12
2:10-11	12	4:6-7	5	4:13	19
2:13	16				
Colossians					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:3-4	5	2:2-3	5	3:12	18
1:9	5	2:8	2	3:15	13
1:11-13	14	2:13	19		
1 Thessalonians			2 Thessalonians		
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:5	15	5:14	14	1:4 NKJV	14
2:7	18	5:16-17	14	1:11	16
2:19	20	5:17	19	3:16	13
1 Timothy					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:13	19	3:1	18	6:10	4
1:15	15	3:2-7	18	6:17-19	6
1:16	14	4:12	8		
2 Timothy					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:7 ESV	19	2:24	18	3:16	4
1:14 NLT	6	2:24-25	18	4:5	19
2:12	17				
Titus			Philemon		
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
2:3	16	3:3	15	1:5-6	17
3:2 NKJV	15	3:4-5	15	1:7	20

Proverbs Path

Verses Referenced

Hebrews					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
4:12	13	11:31-32	9	12:8	9
7:1-3	7	12:1	3	13:5	8
10:24-25	10	12:2	16	13:5	13
10:38	11	12:2	17	13:15-16	20
11:6	7	12:2	20	4:12	9
11:17-19	7	12:5-7	8	12:9-11	8
James					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:2	20	2:10	7	4:1-3	2
1:5	1	2:17	7	4:6	8
1:5	2	2:19	7	4:7	11
1:9-10	10	2:23	7	4:7	12
1:13	9	3:4-10	12	4:7-8	19
1:17	16	3:7-8	12	4:8a	17
1:19	7	3:9	12	5:16	12
1:19-20	12	3:13	18	5:16	7
1:20	7	3:14-15	2		
1 Peter					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:5-6	5	3:12	7	3:16	18
1:6	10	3:15	5	5:8	19
3:4	18	3:15-16	18		
2 Peter					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:3-7	19	1:5-7	19	1:9	16
1:5-7	16	1:8	16	3:9	14
1 John					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:1-3	20	2:15-16	21	4:19	21
1:4	20	2:16	11	4:20	21
1:9	8	4:7	21	5:3	21
1:9	9	4:16	21	5:20	5
1:9	17				
2 John		3 John		Jude	
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
1:12	20	1:11	18	1:3	17

Proverbs Path

Verses Referenced

Revelation					
Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson	Verse	Lesson
2:3-4	20	2:7	18	22:2	18
2:3-4	21	3:19	8	22:14	18
2:5	20	19:7	20	22:19	18
2:5	21				