



My Heart Unchained

Book Three: Connecting to the Heart of the Father

Helping Disciples of Jesus Connect
Their Hearts to the Savior

Published by Valley Bible Church, Pleasanton CA, 3rd Edition
Copyright © 2019 by Valley Bible Church, Pleasanton CA

ISBN 9781079783735

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by Valley Bible Church. Requests for permission should be emailed to VBCwomen@thecrossing.org.

Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture quotations are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001, 2011, 2016 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NIV® are taken from the New International Version Bible®, copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Scripture quotations marked NASB® are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation.

PREFACE

MY HEART UNCHAINED HELPING DISCIPLES OF JESUS CONNECT THEIR HEARTS TO THE SAVIOR.

Current culture applauds following our hearts. And by “heart” it means our feelings. We have been taught and encouraged to pay special attention to our feelings and to trust them. A recent popular social media quotation claims, “You’ll know the truth by the way it feels.” Yet, feelings are fickle, and if we follow them, we will certainly be confused and misled.

It is true that we live from our hearts. Created in the image of God, we have the ability to think, feel, and choose. In Scripture the term “heart” is the center of one’s inner life and represents these three functions. Our intellect, emotions, and will are designed to work together to help us as Christ-followers live a biblically balanced and satisfied life.

A Christian disciple is one who desires to live wholeheartedly for Christ and is eager and involved in making other disciples. Therefore it is essential he is aware of his heart-responses in relationships and circumstances. And as the disciple becomes more discerning, he will be better equipped to align his heart to Truth, obey Christ, and maintain heart-health.

My Heart Unchained is a seven-part discipleship tool designed to help you, a follower of Jesus, understand and discern your heart so that you might live wholeheartedly in Christ by glorifying and enjoying Him.

In *My Heart Unchained* you will learn what it means to entrust your heart to God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and His plan to rescue mankind. Also, you will learn tools to evaluate your heart and to establish healthy heart-attitudes and disciplines.

May the Lord bless you and refine you as you work through the lessons and enjoy more fully the Satisfier of your heart.

*Unchained: To be set free from
sin and what the world tells us.*

Galatians 5:1

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Romans 6:18

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Producing the *My Heart Unchained* discipleship tool has been the collective effort of many wonderful individuals. In particular, we are grateful and appreciative of the following individuals and elders of Valley Bible Church, both Pleasanton and Livermore campuses, for their commitment to pray, brainstorm, write, edit, design, test, revise, provide testimonies, and encourage.

Women's Writing Team

Sharon Collard, Imelda Dodgen, Charlene Earle, Connie Johnson, Anna Plummer, Fritzeen Scott, and Shirley Sweetman.

Men's Editing Team

Seeing the value of *My Heart Unveiled*, a group of men undertook the project of editing and arranging the study so that it would resonate with men. George Hampton, Dan Hennes, Jay Scott, and Jason Wong replaced testimonies and biblical examples to make illustrations applicable to men.

In addition, we would like to thank the Elders of Valley Bible Church for their oversight, input, review, and support: Timothy Barley, Gary Darnell, Devon Dodgen, Jim Jahncke, Jay Scott, Gary Stafford, and Randy White.

Contents

Book One: Redemption and the Trinity

Unit 1: Understanding God's Plan of Redemption.	1
Lesson 1: God's Majesty Revealed in Creation	2
Lesson 2: God's Personal Relationship with Man.	10
Lesson 3: Man's Fall Into Sin.	18
Lesson 4: Sin's Consequences	26
Lesson 5: Jesus is the Remedy	34
Unit 2: Knowing God	51
Lesson 1: God is My Perfect Father	52
Lesson 2: My Prodigal God	64
Lesson 3: Understanding God's Sovereignty	72
Lesson 4: Understanding God's Holiness (And His Justice, Wrath, and Mercy).	82
Lesson 5: Understanding God's Power	96
Unit 3: Knowing Jesus and the Holy Spirit	105
Lesson 1: Jesus, Humble Servant.	106
Lesson 2: Jesus, My High Priest	118
Lesson 3: Holy Spirit, My Helper	130
Lesson 4: Walking in the Spirit.	138
Lesson 5: My True Identity	146

Book Two: Discovering My Heart

Unit 4: Understanding My Heart 159

- Lesson 1: God Alone Will Satisfy 160
- Lesson 2: God’s Nature Reflected in My Heart 172
- Lesson 3: God Gave Me A New Heart 182
- Lesson 4: Renewing My Mind to Grow My Heart. 196
- Lesson 5: God Desires My Whole Heart 210

Unit 5: My Longing Heart 225

- Lesson 1: My Longing Heart 226
- Lesson 2: My Controlling Heart 236
- Lesson 3: My Surrendered Heart 242
- Lesson 4: My Grieving Heart 254
- Lesson 5: My Worshiping Heart 262

Book Three: Connecting to the Heart of the Father

Unit 6: Attitudes of the Heart. 273

- Lesson 1: My Forgiving and Confessing Heart. 274
- Lesson 2: My Reconciling Heart 286
- Lesson 3: My Trusting Heart 292
- Lesson 4: My Grateful Heart 300
- Lesson 5: My Guarded Heart. 310

Unit 7: Habits of the Heart 323

- Lesson 1: Growing in the Word. 324
- Lesson 2: Growing in Prayer 338
- Lesson 3: Growing Through Community 352
- Lesson 4: Growing Through Suffering 366
- Lesson 5: Growing in the Hope of Heaven 388

Attitudes
of the
Heart

Unit 6: Attitudes of the Heart

In Part 5 you learned that your heart is divided when you put anything or anyone above God. You also learned that you must surrender these things or persons to God, along with your fears and your perceived need/desire to control.

In Part 6 you will examine “Attitudes of the Heart.”

274 Lesson 1: My Forgiving and Confessing Heart

286 Lesson 2: My Reconciling Heart

292 Lesson 3: My Trusting Heart

300 Lesson 4: My Grateful Heart

310 Lesson 5: My Guarded Heart

LESSON 1: MY FORGIVING AND CONFESSING HEART

In Unit 5 you discovered the ways your heart can be divided when you try to control a situation or person in order to protect yourself. In this lesson, My Forgiving and Confessing Heart, you will discover that unforgiveness also divides your heart. It stands in the way of doing what God calls you to do—to forgive as He forgives.

When your heart has been injured by someone (whether intentional or not), it is also divided or fractured. Pain lingers in your heart. In My Grieving Heart, you learned you must mourn your pain in order to release it. As you choose to forgive, you can open your injured heart to receive God's comfort and healing.

YOU ARE FORGIVEN AND THUS YOU ARE TO FORGIVE OTHERS

The definition for forgiveness is “to pardon; to renounce anger, resentment or punishment against; to absolve from payment.”¹

You have been forgiven by God your great debt against Him. It is only in response to how much you have been forgiven that you are able to forgive others. Remembering that you are undeserving of God’s forgiveness gives you the right perspective when you need to forgive someone. As God initiated His forgiveness toward you while you were yet His enemy (Romans 5:10), so you must forgive your offender regardless of posture. A forgiving heart is the rational and obedient response to God’s command to forgive others.

Think about how great a salvation you have received. Read the following verses.

Titus 3:3-5

³For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit....

Ephesians 1:7-8

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight....

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Hebrews 8:12

“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”

You may have been deeply hurt by someone’s sin(s) against you; however, as you choose to forgive, God will bring healing to your heart. This may be immediate, or it may be a process over a long period. You may need to grieve the loss of someone dear or something you never had (e.g., love of a parent or spouse) as part of the process of healing, but you can trust the great Healer to heal your heart. *Forgiveness is releasing the offender and the offense to God, and if you have been deeply hurt, forgiveness is an avenue to release your deep hurt to God (review Part 5 Lesson 4—My Grieving Heart).*

Is there a time in your life when choosing to forgive some brought healing and freedom to your heart?

How does Jesus' example of forgiving others and enduring unjust suffering impact and encourage you? Read the following verses and record your response.

Luke 23:34a

And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

1 Peter 2:23-24

²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

What do you think it means to entrust your heart to the Father? See John 2:23-25 for insight of Jesus entrusting His heart to the Father.

What impact might forgiveness have on an unbeliever?

TO FORGIVE IS A COMMAND

There is no Scripture that gives you permission to withhold forgiveness from a person, whether a follower of Christ or not. Offering forgiveness to others is a gracious response to God's forgiveness of you. Extending forgiveness is not based on a feeling. It cannot be withheld until you feel like forgiving. Extending forgiveness is a choice of the will and an act of obedience. Our horizontal relationship with others reveals the nature of our vertical relationship with God. Because the Holy Spirit resides within you, you have His power to make a right decision to forgive. Again, forgiveness is a loving and obedient response to the forgiveness you have received from God.

WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS ABOUT FORGIVENESS AND UNFORGIVENESS

What is the command to forgive? And what is the consequence of not forgiving? Read the following verses and record your response.

Matthew 18:21-35

²¹Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. ²³"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant

Unforgiveness creates a hostile environment for the Spirit.

Ephesians 4:30-32

³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-14

¹²Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

What forgiveness looks like:

- Not bringing up the wrong with the other person.
- Not bringing it up with others.
- Not bringing it up in your own thoughts.
- Not dwelling on the hurt.
- Not wishing ill on the other person.
- Praying for the other person.
- Living out the fruit of the Spirit toward that person.

What justice looks like:

Ecclesiastes 12:14

For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Matthew 12:36

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak,

1 Corinthians 4:5

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts and then shall every man have praise of God.

Acts 17:31

Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Romans 4:6-8

⁶Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

THE BURDEN OF UNFORGIVENESS

Being unwilling to forgive is a burden to you. It separates you from fellowship with God. According to Hebrews 12:15 it not only affects you but it also affects others. "See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled." A bitter root of unforgiveness will continue to grow in your heart and negatively affect you and others unless it is completely cut off by your choice to forgive. Manifestations of a bitter heart include anger or frustration when you see or think about the offender or the desire (need) to withdraw from the offender. As you choose to forgive, you release the burden of an unforgiving heart to God and experience His grace once again.

What forgiveness is not:

- Forgiveness is not minimizing the sin or making excuses for the sin.
- Forgiveness is not the absence of anger at the sin.
- Forgiveness does not make an abusive offender a safe or trustworthy person. You are not commanded to trust an untrustworthy person.
- Forgiveness does not mean there are no consequences for sin.
- Forgiveness is not dependent on the response of the offender or whether justice is served.
- Forgiveness is not self-blame, although you are required to take responsibility for your part.
- Forgiveness is not remaining silent and refusing to confront when necessary.
- Forgiveness is not forgetting.

If you are forgiving a person who you feel is abusive, it is wise to seek godly counsel to determine if any form of relationship should continue.

STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

Take some time now to allow God to speak to your heart. Is there anyone you need to forgive? Work through the following steps to release the burden of an unforgiving heart to God. (If you do not presently have a person that comes to your mind, practice this exercise with someone you have forgiven in the past.) At the next meeting you will pray through your forgiveness and confession lists with a partner. If you are struggling to begin the forgiveness process, ask God to show you why you are struggling.

Practical Steps to Forgiveness:²

Before you begin, think about the forgiveness you received from God.

Step 1: Make a list of all the ways the person has sinned against you or hurt you.

The list may include things that were not intentional wrongs against you. The list may also include habits or actions that in themselves are not sins, but you may be harboring resentment or experiencing pain nevertheless.

Step 2: The focus of the list may relate to a specific situation, or it may relate to an entire relationship over a long period.

Step 3: Allow yourself to experience your feelings during this process.

By allowing yourself to feel (e.g., abandonment, loss, rage, sadness, fear or even physical symptoms) you are beginning to mourn your pain.

Step 4: After you have completed the list, pray out loud telling God you are choosing to forgive the offender for every offense (specifically naming each one).

In this process you are continuing to mourn your pain as you release the offense to God. It may be helpful to pray through this list with a trusted person.

Step 5: Tear up the list.

Take a moment to thank Jesus that you can place your burden at the foot of His cross. Thank Him for the forgiveness He enables you to extend to your offender. Thank Him that He is able to lift the burden of unforgiveness and the pain you have carried.

Step 6: Continue to walk in forgiveness.

Remember that thoughts and feelings resulting from the sin committed against you may continue to come up in your memory. Also, your offender may continue to sin against you. Each time, choose in that moment to forgive again (Matthew 18:22). Remind yourself that you have placed the offense and the offender at the cross. You no longer have to carry this burden.

Retain the confession list to be used in the reconciliation process.

IS THERE ANOTHER STEP?

Consider which scenario describes your situation:

- If you have sinned against someone and they have something against you (Matthew 5:23–24), the next step is to go and ask for forgiveness. See Lesson 2.
- Sometimes, however, your confession is only vertical before God because the other person is not aware that you have sinned against them.
- If you are in a conflict with another person, regardless of whose sin caused the conflict, if possible, go and seek reconciliation (Romans 12:18).
- If a person has sinned against you, you must forgive them vertically before God. If they have not sought forgiveness from you, you are not to extend it prematurely (see Luke 17:3). However, there may be an opportunity for restoration of the relationship if you keep a posture of grace toward the person. You may never hear a “please forgive me” from the other person. In this situation, you must surrender your requirement for justice (to be heard, to be understood, or an acknowledgement from the other person how they hurt you). Remember, grace is undeserved favor from God toward you and undeserved favor you extend to others. Entrust your heart to God’s protection.

“Although followers of Jesus never have a right to refuse forgiveness, let alone to take revenge, we are not permitted to cheapen forgiveness by offering it prematurely when there has been no repentance... The incentive to peace-making is love, but it degenerates into appeasement whenever justice is ignored. To forgive and to ask for forgiveness are both costly exercises. All authentic Christian peace-making exhibits the love and justice—and so the pain—of the cross.”³

John Stott

Reflection

Write a prayer of thanksgiving in response to the truth that you can entrust the safety and care of your heart to the Father, despite the pain you may have experienced from someone's sin against you.

Application

Forgive.

Who do you need to forgive? Have you been abused? Will you commit to do it before our next scheduled study time?

Confess.

Who have you offended or sinned against? Is there abusive behavior in your past? Will you prepare a confession list before our next scheduled study?

LESSON 2: MY RECONCILING HEART

In Lesson 1 you learned that extending forgiveness is a choice of the will based on recognizing how much God has forgiven you. Luke 6:36 tells you to “be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” The American Heritage dictionary defines “mercy” as the kind and compassionate treatment of an offender with a disposition to be forgiving.

When you forgive someone who has offended you and confess your sin against them, God grants you the ability to extend mercy and to seek reconciliation.

Ephesians 4:1-3

¹I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS

Steps to Reconciliation

Step 1: Forgive

Choose to forgive your offender as described in Lesson 1.

Step 2: Confess your sin or your part of the conflict

Choose to confess your own sins as described in Lesson 1. Consider the following as you continue to evaluate how you may have contributed to the conflict:

“Confession isn’t merely an admission of where we may have gone wrong. It’s an acknowledgment of how our actions may have hurt someone else. When we are willing to confess our faults, and then go a step further by admitting how our actions have been hurtful, there is greater opportunity to go beyond clearing the air and actually establishing a new connection with that person.”¹

Dale Pyne

Step 3: Create a reconciliation list

Using your confession list, create a reconciliation list of the things for which you need to ask forgiveness. Eventually you will use this list to reconcile with the other person involved in the conflict. If your confession is lengthy, limit the number of items to no more than eight. More than that could be overwhelming to the listener. Include items that will be most encouraging, helpful, and healing for the other person to hear.

The reconciliation process with an abuser is not an attempt to re-establish relationship if the relationship has been broken. It is specifically the process of recognizing your own sin in the relationship and asking for forgiveness. It is dealing biblically with your own sin, not theirs. It may not be safe to meet with an abuser in person. A phone call may be sufficient. You may also want to have a trusted person with you when you make a call.

There may be times in a difficult relationship, or any relationship for that matter, when it is necessary to confront the situation and the person. Scriptural guidelines for admonishing will be addressed in Unit 7 Lesson 3.

If the forgiveness/ confession involves abuse the person may need to seek biblical counseling to facilitate healing.

Step 4: Go and be reconciled

As God is faithful in revealing your attitudes and actions that contributed to the conflict, and you are faithful in confessing your part and creating a reconciliation list, it is important to take the next step in the reconciliation process. It may be helpful for you to meet face-to-face with the person to verbally confess your part and ask for forgiveness. If meeting in person is not possible, try to talk by phone. As a last resort, communicate in written form.

Don't

- Bring up the way the person sinned against or offended you.
- Make excuses for your actions against the person.
- Seek justice for yourself.
- Require the other person to acknowledge how you were sinned against or offended.
- Demand reconciliation if the other person is not willing.

Do

- Confess or admit what you did to contribute to the conflict.
- Acknowledge the pain or hurt you caused.
- Ask for forgiveness.
- If appropriate to the circumstance, ask how you could have done it differently or how you can do it differently in the future.
- Make restitution, if necessary.

Keep the following Scriptures in mind as you approach the other person:

Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

What happens if the other person does not want to meet or to reconcile?

It is your responsibility to do what God calls you to do in the reconciliation process, all of which are described above. It is not your responsibility to convince the other person to reconcile. It is not your responsibility to change the other person’s heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. If the other person is not willing to reconcile, continue praying for the other person’s heart, continue praying for opportunities to extend mercy and grace, and continue praying for reconciliation.

If the other person not only refuses to reconcile but appears to have become an enemy by his words or actions, let Romans 12:17–19 guide your attitude and actions.

Romans 12:17-21

¹⁷Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” ²⁰To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.”

²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

In ancient times when a person was remorseful and repentant, they would show it by putting a container of coals or ashes on their heads.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Read John 13:34–35 and 1 John 4:19–21. Meditate on these Scriptures. Ask God to show you how to love in your relationships.

Application

Identify a relationship that has been broken. Have you forgiven the other person? Have you listed ways you have sinned against or offended that person? Are you willing to reconcile with this person? When and how (in person, by phone, with another person present)?

LESSON 3: MY TRUSTING HEART

As you have worked through the My Heart Unchained lessons, you have had many opportunities to learn about and practice trusting God. Trust is a choice. Trust is not a one-time decision but an active, moment-by-moment choosing to walk in the Spirit.

You have learned that it is your choice to do the following:

- Invite the Spirit to search your heart
- Find your identity and satisfaction in God
- Surrender your way and embrace His way
- Forgive instead of harboring bitterness

We will now see how these points help develop a trusting heart.

GOD IS TRUSTWORTHY

God's character and His commitment to you as His child is absolutely trustworthy; therefore, you can have confidence in His perfect integrity, strength, ability, and faithfulness.

Integrity of God: God is honest, good, and honorable.

Numbers 23:19

"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?"

Strength of God: God is all-powerful.

Matthew 8:27b

"What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

Ephesians 1:19-20

¹⁹And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places...

Ability of God: God is qualified, capable, competent, intelligent, and skillful.

Isaiah 40:13-14, 18

¹³Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? ¹⁴Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?... ¹⁸To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?

Jude 1:24-25

²⁴Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ²⁵to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Faithfulness of God: God is unchangeable, secure, dependable, and loyal.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 13:5b

He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Which of the above traits would be helpful for you to remember when you face a dilemma?

HINDRANCES TO TRUSTING

These wonderful truths regarding God’s trustworthiness are encouraging and comforting. However, when you face difficult situations, you may be tempted to doubt, worry, deny, or toil.

Take a closer look at what each of these words mean:

Doubt (verb)

To be uncertain about; consider questionable or unlikely; hesitate to believe.

Worry (verb)

Allowing one’s mind to dwell on difficulty or troubles; to torment oneself; to give way to unease or anxiety.

Deny (verb)

To avoid; to refuse to recognize or acknowledge.

Toil (verb)

To labor; to work; to exert strength with pain and fatigue of body or mind, particularly of the body, with efforts of some continuance or duration.

This may result in you choosing to keep busy, analyzing a situation in order to control it, or trying to accomplish something in your own strength rather than relying on God.

Impatience (verb)

Lack of patience. Eager desire for relief or change; restlessness. Intolerance of anything that thwarts, delays, or hinders.

God works in His time and we don’t understand what He is doing while we wait.

What do you find yourself most tempted to do?

The above are indicators of an unsettled heart which, when left unchecked, may lead to anxiety, depression, and despair.

You also learned in Unit 5 Lesson 4 “My Grieving Heart” that anxiety and depression can come from unexpressed grief.

If you struggle with anxiety, endeavor to commit Philippians 4:6–8 to memory.

Philippians 4:6

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Again Paul instructs his readers to not only focus on God but also to pray about three things. First, he tells them to pray about everything on their minds. You can pray about the things that are disturbing, worrisome, and fearful. Second, He instructs them to make supplication. The word “supplication” means to beg for something earnestly or plead humbly with another, either for yourself or another person. You can pour out your heart in supplication to the Lord, for He hears and He cares. Third, Paul says to pray with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is an expression of gratitude. Praying with gratitude is accepting by faith God’s faithful work on your behalf.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul wisely assures his readers of the wonderful result of renewing their minds. When you shift your focus from self or a situation to Him, and when you surrender your self-sufficiency and humble yourself before God, He fills you with His peace. This peace comes whether or not the problem is resolved. This peace guards and protects your heart and truly is beyond your human understanding.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Paul specifically states the characteristics of the things on which you are to place your thoughts. This shifts your focus and encourages your gratitude.

Share a time in your life when you used this Scripture or another to overcome anxiety. Record the Scripture and the situation.

DEPRESSION AND DESPAIR

Depression is the feeling of gloom and severe despondency, an attitude of hopelessness or joylessness. Despair is the complete loss of hope. Despair and depression are symptoms of doubt and worry (not trusting God); however, depression may have a physiological component if the body chemistry becomes imbalanced. This can happen in periods of high stress, or illness.

You may need to consult a doctor to determine if there is a chemical imbalance. Sometimes medication may be helpful; however, renewing your mind with God’s truth and calling out to Him are invaluable in all situations. Reminding yourself of God’s goodness and faithfulness is especially important when you are suffering from depression.

Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and John Piper to name a few are individuals who regularly suffer(ed) from depression.

HOW ASAPH DEALS WITH DESPAIR

Psalm 77:3-4

³When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. ⁴You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

Asaph’s words indicate that he is in despair. Though the Psalm does not reveal the specific situation, it clearly expresses his many doubts concerning God’s trustworthiness.

Record all of Asaph’s doubts in your own words.

Psalm 77:7-9

⁷“Will the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? ⁸Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? ⁹Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?” Selah

What did Asaph choose to do next?

Psalm 77:10

Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

In verses 11–15 asaph remembered, pondered, and meditated upon God’s mighty deeds. He renewed his mind.

Underline the specific things Asaph remembered.

Psalm 77:11–15

I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds. Your way, O God, is holy. What god is great like our God? You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph.

RESOLVE TO TAKE STEPS OF OBEDIENCE

The ongoing act of renewing your mind keeps you focused and dependent on God and enables you to do whatever it is He is calling you to do, which may involve taking a difficult action step. At this point you may still be fearful; however, you are resolved to obey.

Below are some verses that may encourage you to take the next step.

Psalm 56:3–4

³When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

See also, Psalm 27:1

Proverbs 3:5–6

⁵Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Isaiah 26:3–4

³You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

⁴Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

What you keep your mind on is what you are trusting in.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Remember your sacred history. Recall the ways in which God has shown His integrity, strength, ability, and faithfulness in your life.

Application

Have you been anxious or depressed in the past? Is it a “regular” occurrence? Do you believe God cares? How will you deal with anxiety or depression when it next happens?

Are you dealing with anxiety or depression right now?

LESSON 4: MY GRATEFUL HEART

In Lesson 3 you were reminded that God is trustworthy and His devotion to you is unwavering. He can be trusted always in all situations because His presence is a constant in your life. This knowledge is the springboard for a grateful heart. Gratitude is not just a happy feeling. It is a heartfelt acknowledgement and appreciation to God in response to who He is, His grace (unmerited favor) toward you, and His faithful provision.

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR WHO HE IS

Scripture is full of expressions of praise and thanksgiving to Him who is worthy of all praise. As you read the following Scriptures, personalize each one in a prayer of thanksgiving.

Psalm 18:3a

I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised...

Psalm 107:1

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!

Psalm 145:3

Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

Psalm 145:13a

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

Psalm 145:17

The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.

Psalm 96:4-9

- ⁴For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.
- ⁵For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
- ⁶Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!
- ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!
- ⁹Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

1 Chronicles 29:11-13

¹¹Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹²Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.

Revelation 5:9b-10

^{9b}“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Revelation 5:13b

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

EXTRAVAGANT GRATITUDE FROM A SINFUL WOMAN

A grateful heart is characterized by awe at the great contrast between a woman’s own unworthiness and the incredible lavishness of God’s grace toward her.

Luke 7:36–50 tells the story of a sinful woman from the city who hears Jesus is in a Pharisee’s home. She went uninvited to the house, bringing with her an alabaster flask of ointment, and “standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment” (38). Her extravagant expression of love was in response to how much she had been forgiven. She was not timid or ashamed to show her gratitude in such a demonstrative way, even though she was in the presence of the judgmental Pharisee. Jesus had something to say to the Pharisee in this story. “You gave me no water for my feet.... You gave me no kiss.... You did not anoint my head with oil.... I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little” (44–47).

A lavish expression of gratitude is a beautiful response to recognizing both the depth of your need and the depth to which the Father has forgiven you through Christ Jesus.

GOD’S EXTRAVAGANT GIFTS TO YOU

If God’s only gift to you was the forgiveness of your sins, it would truly be enough to keep you grateful for the rest of your life here on earth and throughout eternity. A grateful heart sees God for who He is and recognizes His unmerited grace poured out in his salvation. Out of that heart he views all aspects of his life as God’s good gifts, for “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are always present, always responding on your behalf, and always working in you and for your good, keeping you, empowering you, and bringing you eventually to your heavenly home. All blessings come from your good and loving triune God.

THE POSTURE OF A GRATEFUL HEART

A grateful heart humbly recognizes that all things, big or small, wonderful, mundane, and even difficult, are from Him.

Ephesians 5:20

Giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ....

1 Thessalonians 5:18

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Hebrews 13:15

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

Considering the previous verses, what things might you give thanks for that you have not yet acknowledged as gifts from the Father?

What do you think it means to offer a “sacrifice” of praise? In your own life, when is offering praise a sacrifice?

Take a couple of minutes to make a list of what you are grateful for.” Be prepared to share one or two items from your list.

What is the connection between humility and gratefulness?

Which of God’s gifts do you tend to take for granted? How can you develop gratitude for these specific things?

“It’s one thing to be grateful. It’s another to give thanks. Gratitude is what you feel. Thanksgiving is what you do.”

Tim Keller

A GRATEFUL HEART PROTECTS AND GUARDS YOU FROM COMPLACENCY AND GRUMBLING

God desires for you to cultivate a grateful heart because He knows that sin is borne out of ingratitude. Ingratitude reveals itself in a complacent or grumbling attitude.

The Danger of a Complacent Heart

According to Dictionary.com, “Complacency” is defined as being “pleased, especially with oneself or one’s merits, advantages, situation, etc., often without awareness of some potential danger or defect; self-satisfied.”

When the Christ-follower is complacent, he is living self-sufficiently. Whether things are going well or not, he relies on his own strength and ability to get through each day seldom thinking about God. Often this is not intentional; he simply does what he is capable to do. So it is easy for him to take for granted God’s faithful presence and provision and neglect to give Him thanks.

Do you find yourself at times going through your day seldom thinking about God or giving Him thanks? Why do you think this is so?

The Danger of a Grumbling Heart

A grumbling heart cheats God of His glory, and it cheats you from recognizing God’s faithfulness and provision in your daily life.

What are some characteristics of a grumbling heart?

The Israelites often grumbled (Exodus 14:11-12; 15:24;16:2–3; and 17:1-7). By Exodus 17 the Israelites had experienced crossing the Red Sea on dry land, they had watched their enemies drown in the Red Sea, they had drunk bitter water turned sweet by a miracle, they had been guided and protected in the wilderness by a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire during the night, and they had been nourished by manna. Yet they quarreled with Moses (17:2) and grumbled against him, declaring, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” (17:3). They continued, “Is the Lord among us or not?” (17:7). God graciously provided water for them again even though they grumbled and tested God. Moses called the name of this place Massah (test) and Meribah (quarrel).

In Psalm 95:8–9 the psalmist states, “Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.”

According to these verses what resulted from the Israelites’ grumbling hearts?

What does a hardened heart look like?

What had they failed to see?

*Discontentment is not because of circumstances.
It is always a heart problem.*

THE GRATEFUL HEART IS A CONTENTED HEART

“Gratitude is a decision of the will, and if a decision of the will, the choice resides squarely with us. Deciding to be thankful is no easy task. It takes work.”

Chuck Swindoll

Practicing gratefulness grows a contented heart. A biblical definition of contentment (autarkeias) is “to be satisfied, sufficient; to be free from care because of satisfaction with what is already one’s own.” For most people being content does not come naturally, but as you daily practice giving thanks for what you have and do not have, you will increasingly see all these things as God’s gifts to you.

Philippians 4:11-13

¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

1 Timothy 6:6-8

⁶But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

1 Timothy 6:17

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

What causes you to be discontent? How can you remedy that?

CULTIVATING A GRATEFUL HEART: MORNING, NOON, AND NIGHT

You must be intentional to cultivate a grateful heart by choosing to take time to consider and remember the undeserved gifts that come from God, the Extravagant Giver. Consider incorporating one or more of the following practices into your life to develop a more grateful heart:

- Filter everything in your day through God, recognizing that He is intimately involved in every detail of your life.

For we brought nothing
into the world, and we
cannot take anything
out of the world.

1 Timothy 6:7

- Choose to look for and recognize His specific gifts including “trials of various kinds” (James 1:2), because you are confident that “[e]very good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (James 1:17).
- Delight in His gifts. Receive the enjoyment of these things, recognizing they are from God.
- Remember, every morning is a new opportunity to see God’s steadfast love and mercy. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end” (Lamentations 3:22).
- At the end of the day, recall what He has done. What was the special gift of the day?
- Be intentional in recognizing God in creation, and specifically thank Him for the ways it thrills you.
- Tell others how you see God working in your life.
- Serve and love others.
- Guard against replaying in your mind the “if only” or the “what if” so that you will not miss God’s present blessings.
- Keep grounded in the knowledge that this fallen world is passing away, and your hope is kept for you in heaven (1 Peter 1:4). This eternal perspective balances the ups and downs of this life.
- Start a “Thanksgiving List” and take some time each day to add a line or two to your list.

Reflection

Ask the Lord to reveal to you if you have a complacent and/or grumbling heart. If so, confess these sins to the Lord and receive His forgiveness. Ask God to show you specific things for which to be grateful. Meditate on the following verses.

Psalm 95:6-7a

⁶Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

⁷For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Application

What are you grateful for? (wife, family, church, job, shelter?)

In what area of life are you not content?

How will you be grateful morning, noon, night? (throughout the day?)

LESSON 5: MY GUARDED HEART

So far in Unit 6 you have learned the importance of cultivating healthy heart attitudes in the areas of forgiveness, confession, reconciliation, trust, and gratefulness. In this lesson you will consider the final attitude, guarding your heart.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GUARD YOUR HEART?

The word “guard” means “to watch over in order to protect or control, to keep an eye on, keep safe, be alert to.” Some synonyms include “secure, protect, shield.” You are to watch over your heart to keep it safe from harmful influences so that you may serve God and others purely and honorably.

People often think guarding the heart means guarding it from pain or hurt. The goal is not to avoid pain and hurt. If this is your goal, you will miss God’s provision and direction through the difficult circumstance or relationship.

C. S. Lewis encourages:

“Of all arguments against love none makes so strong an appeal to my nature as ‘Careful! This might lead you to suffering.’

“To my nature, my temperament, yes. Not to my conscience. When I respond to that appeal I seem to myself to be a thousand miles away from Christ. If I am sure of anything I am sure that His teaching was never meant to confirm my congenital preference for safe investments and limited liabilities...”

“There is no safe investment. To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.”

Are you listening to your heart? Have you ever guarded your heart from pain or hurt? In what ways have you tried to protect your heart? Are you able to connect this to any underlying fear(s)?

GUARDING YOUR HEART FROM UNGODLY INFLUENCES

To love and serve God and others honorably you must guard and protect your heart against ungodly influences—those that are contrary to God’s nature and purposes. Your heart will be trained either by the Word of God or by the world. Both external and internal influences will directly impact what flows from your heart, so you must keep a watchful eye on its musings and inclinations. Evaluate your go-to’s when you are bored, depressed, or tired because often these are times of temptation.

“Sin has its residence in that which is inconstant, changing, and habitually deceitful, i.e., in our hearts. This means that we must be on constant vigil for its actings; we must be in a perpetual state of watchfulness (not fearfulness or hyper-activity). If we were fighting against an enemy who presented himself in the open, that would be one thing; we could rest in peace knowing that he was far away at times or incapable of striking at others. But we wrestle not against such a foe. Sin living in the heart is deceitful, deals treacherously, and often comes by stealth. Therefore, we must be vigilant; we must watch and pray as the Lord himself repeatedly taught us.”²

John Owen

Take a few minutes to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you what is most influencing your heart right now. Brainstorm a list and ask yourself if each of these people/things is influencing your heart toward God or away from God?

GOD'S WORD IS YOUR STANDARD

To guard his heart a man must thoughtfully consider what is influencing it. He filters what he is thinking, feeling, and choosing through the grid of God's Word.

Do not entertain a way of thinking that is contrary to the Word of God!

God's Word is the final authority, so be careful not to allow culture (secular or Christian) a stronger voice. Christian podcasts, blogposts, speakers, books, movies, devotionals, or friends may be helpful tools but only to the degree that they are submitted to the authority of God's Word.

What is the connection between knowing God's Word and guarding your heart?

Read the following passage and record your response.

Psalm 119:9-11

⁹How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. ¹⁰With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! ¹¹I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Read Proverbs 2:1-10. Circle the verbs that indicate your part and underline the verbs that indicate God's response.

Proverbs 2:1-10

¹My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, ⁵then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; ⁷he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. ⁹Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

What are God's promises to those who seek and treasure His Word?

GUARD YOUR HEART WITH DILIGENCE AND DISCERNMENT

You are to guard your heart diligently.

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Look up the definition of “diligent” and write it below:

As a follower of Christ you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit, Who is eager to give understanding and discernment to those who ask Him. “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians: 2:12–14).

Humbly ask the Lord to grow your understanding of His word and diligence to obey it.

BEWARE OF FALSE TEACHING—STUDY THE TRUTH—FAKE VS. REAL

How is false teaching described in the following scriptures? What happens when you choose to follow false teaching? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Galatians 1:6–9

⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

How is the culture at large influencing the church in a negative way? What are some examples of false teaching in the church?

2 Timothy 4:3-5a

³For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober-minded....

1 Peter 1:13

Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be “sober-minded”?

“Bible literacy matters because it protects us from falling into error. Both the false teacher and the secular humanist rely on biblical ignorance for their messages to take root, and the modern church has proven fertile ground for those messages. Because we do not know our Bibles, we crumble at the most basic challenges to our worldview. Disillusionment and apathy eat away at our ranks.”³

Jen Wilkin

INFLUENCES THAT DIMINISH HOLINESS

You are to protect yourself from influences that diminish holiness.

What do the following Scriptures advise? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived "Bad company ruins good morals."

Psalm 1:1-2

¹Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

2 Timothy 2:14-17a

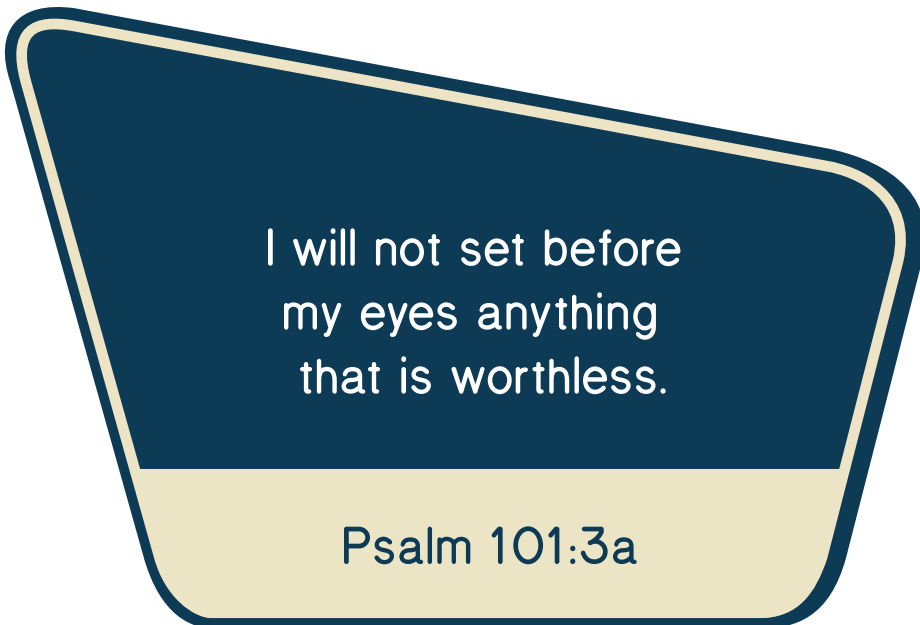
¹⁴Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness, ¹⁷and their talk will spread like gangrene.

Psalm 101:2b-3a

²I will walk with integrity of heart within my house; ³I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.

Psalm 119:37

Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; and give me life in your ways.



HEART CARE

Practical Tips for Heart Care:

1. Incorporate God’s Word in your daily life. (Unit 7 Lesson 1 will address this in more detail.)
2. Talk to God about what is on your heart. Take some time daily (or more often!) to do a “heart check” asking God to reveal to you any ways you are not walking in light of His Word.
 - Am I dissatisfied? What am I looking at or listening to that is breeding dissatisfaction?
 - Can I eliminate these things?
 - Am I comparing myself and my life to others?
 - Is what I am choosing life-giving?
 - In light of eternity, does this matter?
3. Invite God into your daily routines.
4. Remain in Christian community. Seek out a trusted friend to share your struggle, pray together, and keep each other accountable. In a social media world, you must be intentional to build authentic relationships and real community. The right relationships point you to God, sharpen you, encourage you, and hold you accountable. Strong mutual Christian support among family and friends is essential for keeping your heart guarded in the middle of life’s challenges.
5. Take time to care for yourself as you are more likely to let down your heart-filter when you are tired, hungry, worn out, etc.

What are other practical ways you can care for your heart?

Philippians 1:9–11

⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Meditate on the heart attitudes you explored in Part 6. Is there one in which you would particularly like to grow? Talk to the Lord about it in prayer.

Application

List an area or areas where you guard needs to be more diligent and stronger. (coarse jokes or language, pornography or sexually explicit material, inappropriate company of others (not your wife)?)

UNIT 6 WORKS CITED

Lesson 1: My Forgiving and Confessing Heart

- 1 • As defined by the American Heritage Dictionary
- 2 • Adapted from Called to Obedience Ministries.
- 3 • Stott, John R.W. *The Cross of Christ*, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2006, pg. 289.

Lesson 2: My Reconciling Heart

- 1 • Pyne, Dale. "The Path of a Peacemaker: Have I Hurt You?" *Peacemaker*, <http://blog.peacemaker.net/?p=4259>. Accessed 22 March 2017.

Lesson 3: My Trusting Heart

- 1 • Roche, Arthur, *Reader's Digest* (June 1988), pg. 64.

Lesson 4: My Grateful Heart

No works cited.

Lesson 5: My Guarded Heart

- 1 • Lewis, C.S. *The Inspirational Writings of C.S. Lewis: The Four Loves*. Nelson, Nashville, Tennessee, 2004, pgs. 278–279.
- 2 • Owen, John. *The Works of John Owen, Vol. 6: Temptation and Sin*. Goold, Banner of Truth, 1967, pg. 175.
- 3 • Wilkin, Jen. *Women of the Word: How to Study the Bible with Both Our Hearts and Our Minds*. Crossway, Wheaton, Illinois, 2014, pg. 45.

Habits of the Heart

Unit 7: Habits of the Heart

In Unit 7 you will look afresh at five spiritual disciplines: Growing in the Word, in Prayer, through Community, through Suffering, and in the Hope of Heaven.

324 Lesson 1: Growing in the Word

338 Lesson 2: Growing in Prayer

352 Lesson 3: Growing through Community

366 Lesson 4: Growing through Suffering

388 Lesson 5: Growing in the Hope of Heaven

LESSON 1: GROWING IN THE WORD

In Lesson 1 you will see how growing in God's Word and beholding His glory changes you into His likeness.

Spiritual habits/disciplines do not change you; they create space for you to connect and engage with God. Spiritual habits/disciplines encourage your heart to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and train your heart (what you think, feel, and choose) to seek Jesus and look for Him in all things with expectation.

Galatians 5:25

Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Growing in God's word entails seeking God's wisdom through bible study, prayer, and fellowship, as well as acting in obedience.

ABIDING BRINGS JOY

ABIDE

To stay in, continue in, and remain in

According to John 15 those who abide in Christ:

1. Reveal the true nature of the living God (John 15:8; 1:18; 8:12).
2. Bear fruit (John 15:8) and point to the reality of a relationship with God.
3. Live as people loved by God and as people loving one another (John 15:9–10; 12–15)
4. Experience joy and delight because of loving Jesus and obeying His commandments (John 15:10–11).
5. Influence others for Christ (John 15:16).
6. Ask for the right things and receive them (because they are the right things) (John 15:7, 16).

Jesus delights in fellowship with His people as friends relating to each other. Jesus is the Word (logos: John1:1,14), the personification of God Himself, who has made His home in you and who wants you to be fully at home in Him.

John 8:31b–32

^{31b}If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

BEHOLD THE GLORY OF THE LORD

In Unit 7 you will explore spiritual disciplines God has given you to draw near to Him and behold Him. In 2 Corinthians 3:18a Paul writes, “And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

Beholding the glory of the Lord means that you are to think about Jesus by giving your strong, reflective thinking to thoughts about the Savior. You can divide this thinking into two categories: (1) what the Bible says about Jesus as a Person (who He is, what He is like), and (2) what the Bible says about what Jesus has done (accomplished), what He is doing, and what He will do in the future.

As you behold the glory of the Lord you will know Him, enjoy Him, and exalt Him; and as you do, you will become like Him and experience the abundant life He has planned for you. Abiding brings joy!

One essential way to behold the glory of the Lord is to read, study, meditate on, and memorize the Word. The Word reveals God—His character and His work—to man. Beholding the glory of the Lord through the Word will change you. As it energizes your heart, the truth will set you free. “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31–32). As you see God and treasure Him above all else, your deepest longings will align with His will and

be satisfied. Everything that comes out of your heart will be different! In this lesson you will realize the connection between abiding in the Word of God and treasuring Him.

OPEN THE EYES OF MY HEART

In Ephesians 1:18 Paul prays that his listeners will have “the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” To know God is to experience the reality of God. When you open the Word, ask the Lord to open the eyes of your heart that you might see Him.

It is important to remember that the Spirit and the flesh are at war against each other (Galatians 5:17; Galatians 5:24–25). The culture, Satan, and your flesh get in the way and block your ability to understand the Word and your desire for it. So you must ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand Scripture and to increase your desire and ability to know and believe God. The Holy Spirit promises to interpret spiritual truths to you (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

In addition to Ephesians 1:18, you may want to pray one of the following verses before you read or listen to the Word.

Look up the following Scriptures and write out each verse.

Psalms 119:18

Psalms 86:11

Come to the Word with **expectation**. Though you cannot have expectations of others, you can have expectations of the Word.

How do you approach the Word with expectation? Pay attention to any and all reactions you have with the Scriptures.

- What surprises you?
- What confronts you? Confrontation reveals what is in your heart, the good things you are missing. It is not to condemn but to reveal your heart so that you may enjoy Him more fully.
- How is God drawing you into deeper relationship with Him? What are new insights to familiar passages?
- What convicts you? What will you do about it?

Engage with God and ask Him to give you His perspective as you read the Word. If necessary, engage with God to give you a change of heart.

DAILY INTAKE OF THE WORD NOURISHES YOUR FAITH

Paul writes in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." For your faith to grow, you must be in the Word.

How does the Word nourish your faith?

Psalm 119 has 176 verses, the longest Unit in the Bible. In almost every verse, the Word of God is mentioned (eight different terms). Psalm 119 beautifully declares not only the character of the Scriptures but also the character of God. All of the attributes of the Word are attributes of God.

Psalm 119:2

Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.

With a humble heart, you are to develop a practical habit which seeks to know God and His will in order to keep it.

Read the below ten beautiful truths regarding God's Word.

God's Word is wonderful.

Psalm 119:18

Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.

God's Word gives strength.

Psalm 119:28

My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word!

God's Word is good.

Psalm 119:39

Turn away the reproach that I dread, for your rules are good.

God's Word gives comfort.

Psalm 119:50

This is my comfort in my affliction, that your promise gives me life.

God's Word gives life.

Psalm 119:93

I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life.

Horizontal lines for writing

God’s Word is sweet.

Psalm 119:103

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

God’s Word is light.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

God’s Word is precious.

Psalm 119:127

Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.

God’s Word is right.

Psalm 119:137

Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules.

God’s Word is true.

Psalm 119:160

The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endure forever.

Over the next several days read through Psalm 119 in short Lessons. Reflect upon and record some of the characteristics of the Word that particularly encourage and challenge you.

TREASURE THE WORD

God’s Word is designed to gradually free you from sin’s hold on you. The Psalmist said it this way: “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). Note the cause and effect: God’s Word is “stored up.” Why? To stop sin.

This Hebrew word “stored up” is also translated “treasured.” The NASB translates Psalm 119:11 accordingly: “Your word I have treasured in my heart.” You consider God’s Word as a treasure by internalizing it as such. Treasuring the Word leads to transformation.

Proverbs 2 uses vivid language to depict how the believer is to treasure God’s Word. “Wisdom” is speaking and is viewed as a person.

How do you pursue wisdom? Read the following passage.

Proverbs 2:1-4

¹My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures....

This list of activities addresses both the internal issues and motives of the heart, as well as the external efforts (both mental and physical). Wisdom’s urgent plea points to this: whatever is necessary, give it your all in your pursuit of Wisdom!

Proverbs 2:5 continues, “then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” The remaining verses (Proverbs 2:5–15) describe the benefits that come to you when you develop the pattern of pursuing wisdom.

BE A MAN OF THE WORD

How do you engage with God’s Word so that you can experience personal transformation and growth?

Read the Bible Regularly

One of the most important things you can do is to regularly read (or listen to) the Bible. There is no replacement. Becoming familiar with the whole counsel of God is essential and profitable (2 Timothy 3:16), for all Scripture reveals to you who God is, what He has promised, and how He has worked and is working. “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

To “endure” is to remain under pressure an extended period of time. Endurance requires focusing on the promises of God (not focusing on unmet desires). God makes promises to His people and He wants His people to trust in these promises. Through “endurance” and the “encouragement of the Scriptures,” your hope grows.

Do you have a regular time in the Word? What does it look like for you?

What keeps you from being in the Word, both inward attitudes and outward obstacles?

What are you willing to sacrifice to be in the Word?

A Personal Testimony

I sacrifice to be in the Word. I can't study the Word at night because that is my time to spend with my family. So I choose to wake up early before everyone else is awake so I can have some quiet time to read the Word and to pray. I sacrifice sleep, watching TV, looking at my phone—checking email and social media. But I love the Word, so it is well worth it.

The Word is at Work in You and Energizes You

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

2 Peter 1:3

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...

The author of Hebrews writes, "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). The Bible is alive and powerful, so every time you read it, it can work in your heart with surprising precision to discern your thoughts and motives. It will convict, instruct, and revive you, and as it does you will behold God's glory.

Have you been experiencing Scripture alive and active in your life? Give an example.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

This is God's instruction book for life.

In no more than fifteen minutes a day you can read through (or listen to) the entire Bible in less than one year! So pick a time in your day that you can commit to the Word, and to pray, and do it. Ask the Lord to help you guard this time. If you miss a day or two, or a week or two, or a month or two, do not be defeated. That is just what the enemy desires. Keep at it.

One favorite reading plan is the 5 Day Bible Reading Program. This is a chronological reading plan with five readings a week allowing for catch-up days. (See [www. BibleClassMaterial.com](http://www.BibleClassMaterial.com) for the schedule as well as a companion study guide.)

In addition, the ESV Chronological Podcast by Crossway is an excellent option for listening through the Bible.

MEDITATE ON THE WORD

Throughout Scripture the importance of meditating on the Word is instructed. Donald S. Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* defines meditation as “deep thinking on the truths and spiritual realities revealed in Scripture for the purposes of understanding, application, and prayer.”¹ God has designed you to stop and ponder His truths so that you are not only familiar with the Word but captivated by it and build your life on it.

As the Psalmist declares, “Blessed is the man...[whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2). The blessed one, the happy one, is the one who loves the Word of God.

How are you to meditate on the Word? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Psalm 119:15

I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

Psalm 119:27

Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works.

Psalm 143:5

I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands.

In your daily Bible reading you may come across a verse or passage that catches your attention. Spend some intentional time at different points in your day thoughtfully considering the Scripture. Whitney suggests several ways to think on the passage (pages 56–68 from his book). A few of his suggestions include:

1. Emphasize different words in the text. Ponder every word and what it brings to the meaning of the sentence.
2. Rewrite the text in your own words.
3. Ask: What does it teach about God, Jesus, the Gospel?
4. Ask: What question is answered or what problem is solved?
5. Ask: Is there a command for me to follow or a sin for me to avoid?
6. Pray through the text.
7. Memorize the text.

Notice how meditation is precious to the Psalmist. Review the following meditations recorded in Psalm 119.

- “on your precepts” (15, 78)
- “on your statutes” (23, 48)
- “on your wondrous works” (27)
- “Your testimonies are my meditation” (99)
- “Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (97)

MEMORIZE THE WORD

Psalms 119:11

I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Knowing and memorizing scripture is an invaluable way to grow in God's Word. Many men will claim to have a hard time memorizing scripture. Yet, if you ask them about their favorite sports team or hobby like cars, they can rattle off all kinds of stats and obscure facts. Every person can memorize and every person has the choice to memorize.

Pray to God for help.

Perhaps you need some incentive.

What are some benefits of memorizing the Word?

As you gaze upon God

1. You will become more like Him and enjoy Him more fully.
2. You will be better able to renew your mind.
3. You will be better equipped to fight temptation with God's truth.
4. You will be better able to comfort and care for others.
5. You will be better equipped to share the gospel with others.

“I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture.... No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified.”²

Chuck Swindoll

If you are not in the habit of memorizing the Word, begin by memorizing Psalm 1. It is only six verses and can be recited and reviewed in less than one minute. Why not memorize Psalm 1:1 today?

Tips for Memorizing

- Pray to God to help you.
- Choose a Bible version you like and stick to this version.
- Write out the passage on a 4 x 6 card and/or use a Bible app (like www.fighterverses.com).
- Begin by repeating the first verse 10x in a row. The next day review the first verse and continue with the next one, repeating it 10x in a row. Continue in this pattern.
- Use the time (e.g., when you are driving) to recite and review.
- Be sure to review at least twice every day, in the morning and evening.
- Create a review schedule.
- Have an accountability partner and check in once a week with each other.

OBEY THE WORD

Reading, meditating upon, and memorizing the Word should always result in your obeying it. Obeying the Word brings blessing—your faith grows, your character becomes more Christ-like, and your joy increases.

James 1:22-25

²²But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

KNOW GOD’S WORD AND BEHOLD HIS GLORY

Perhaps you are feeling discouraged because you do not treasure God’s Word. Or you feel you have tried to develop a regular time in the Word to read, pray, and meditate but it never lasts long. Remember, there is a war going on for your heart every day. So ask the Lord, plead with Him, to teach you (Psalm 119:33) and to increase your understanding of His Word (Psalm 119:34) that you might taste and see that He is good. Then choose each day to keep your date with Him. Abiding in the Lord by beholding the glory of the Lord through His Word changes you into His likeness. A man who wants to be transformed must see the glory of the Lord over and over again.

1 Peter 1:22-2:3

²²Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, ²³since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴for “All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵but the word of the Lord remains forever.” And this word is the good news that was preached to you.

¹So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. ²Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

As a believer, you have the Spirit and the Word of God to help you through this crazy world. Reading the Word of God and choosing to obey the Spirit will equip you and nourish you spiritually. The more you are exposed to the truths of God, the more you will desire to know them and live by them.

Are you willing to allow God to do His work in you?

“Memorizing in the Word” – A Personal Testimony

My thoughts, I’ve realized, can be extremely destructive. Whether I’m driving, going to bed or simply bored, my mind can easily wander to useless or sinful things. A while back I decided to start memorizing Colossians. From that point on, whenever I got in my car or was trying to fall asleep at night, I would immediately start working on my verses and would recite them over and over again. I was literally consuming my mind with God’s Word.

Because my thoughts were turned more to the Lord, I noticed that my emotions were affected as well. For example, a few weeks ago I was disappointed by someone close to me. In the past I would have allowed something like this to affect me negatively. As I walked away from this disappointing conversation, I was flooded with verses that I had been memorizing. Colossians 1:15–17 says, “He is the image of the Invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in Heaven and on Earth, visible and invisible—whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” I was able to praise God knowing that He is intimately involved in EVERYTHING. He holds everything together and I can trust that He was involved in that circumstance too! When I got in my car I was filled with peace and even joy! I laughed and said, “Well I guess I’ll just keep living my life!”

There are days when I don’t necessarily want to go over verses. It is so easy to do nothing and be tempted by our own desires and to let them consume us. But I found that when I trust that the Holy Spirit is going to produce fruit through my efforts of discipline, it is incredible to see the crazy awesome things He does. We can expect Him to move and that should excite us and make us want to do some of those things that may go against our flesh nature!

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

LESSON 2: GROWING IN PRAYER

Prayer is an important part of abiding in Christ; it is an intentional way to recognize and acknowledge God's greatness. "Prayer is a spiritual practice of the presence of God. It is a way we become aware of and experience God's presence and character, allowing us to become aware of our desperate need for Him."¹ As a child of God you have access to the Father through prayer every moment of every day. He is eager for you to pour out your heart to Him in small and great matters (Psalm 62:8; Lamentations 2:19). Prayer is a command (Ephesians 6:18; Romans 12:12), but more than that, it is your awesome privilege as a follower of Christ. In this lesson you will examine what it looks like to develop the habit of prayer.

CONSTANT AND INTENTIONAL PRAYER

It is important to have both an intentional, focused prayer time each day as well as an attitude of prayer throughout your day.

Constant Prayer

What do you think it means that you are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)?

Praying without ceasing means you can keep in step with the Spirit. So as the Spirit convicts, you are able to recognize it and offer a prayer of confession. It means when you are in the midst of a conflict or dilemma, you can offer a quick prayer for help—a “breath” prayer. It means that you can “multi-task” (i.e., work and pray at the same time). You can praise God in the middle of whatever you are doing.

Intentional Prayer

It is also important that you are intentional about setting aside time in your day for focused prayer. Read the Scriptures below and answer the questions.

Psalm 5:3

O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch.

Luke 5:16 (NIV)

But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Do you have an intentional prayer time(s) in your day?

What things have you learned that are helpful in keeping intentional prayer in your day?

CONNECTING IN PRAYER

List the attitudes of the heart that may prevent you from connecting with the Father in prayer. Read the following passage and list your response.

James 4:2-6

²You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. ⁴You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. ⁵Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us"? ⁶But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Hindrances to Prayer

Read the following verse and record your responses to the questions below.

Psalms 66:18

If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

List some of the things that hinder you or challenge you in praying.

What can you do differently?

STRUGGLES IN PRAYER

The Psalms teach you to pour out your heart to the Lord. Jesus said, “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:7). You may ask for healing or for a loved one to be saved or for your marriage to be restored. You may not believe that God answered you because you may not see the answer you desired. However, God answers all your requests, either in His own way or in a “no.” But remember, the Father’s heart is for you, and He is faithful to you.

Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, asked His Father to take the cup of the cross from Him. The Father’s answer was “no.” Jesus’ submission to the Father’s will is described in Unit 5 Lesson 3, including the Scriptures. Second Corinthians 12:7–10 describes Paul’s prayer—to have his “thorn in the flesh” removed. Three times Paul pleaded with the Lord. The Lord’s answer was, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Paul determined to “boast all the more gladly of [his] weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon [him].”

Christ was more important to Paul than the specific answer Paul had asked for. In both situations God provided what they needed even though they didn’t get the answer they requested. Luke 22:43 describes the help the Father gave to Jesus. He sent an angel to strengthen Him. Hebrews 4:16 tells you to come confidently to the throne of grace “that [you] many receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” God always gives you what you need if you are coming to Him.

Are you viewing God as your personal genie?

RIGHT ATTITUDES OF PRAYER

As you overcome hindrances in your prayer life and make prayer a daily habit, your heart will become more and more aligned to God’s heart. Prayer will change your attitude toward situations and persons. It will humble you and help you see God more clearly and accurately. The most precious gift you will receive in prayer is God Himself—knowing Him more intimately.

Have a Right View of God

How do you view and treat God? Do you treat God like a vending machine, where if you do enough good works God will answer your prayer? What about treating God like a genie, where you come to him only when you have needs and expect Him to grant them? Or do you view God as your almighty, all wise, and all loving Father.

You go to Him with the big and the small things, the good and the bad, and all the time. You are honest with Him about your doubts, your questions, and your fears. You trust Him in all situations, even when you don’t understand

1 Chronicles 29:10-13

Therefore David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly. And David said “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of Israel our father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might, and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.”

Are there any heart changes you need to make to see God the way David does?

Be Steadfast, Watchful, and Thankful

Colossians 4:2

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

What does it mean to be steadfast in prayer?

What does it mean to be watchful in prayer?

When you do not see an answer to prayer, how can you be thankful (i.e., have a heart of gratitude)?

Seek an Undivided Heart

Psalm 86:11b-12a

¹¹Unite my heart to fear your name. ¹²I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart....

Have a Humble Heart

James 4:10

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you.

*Acknowledge your need for God and
ask Him to unite your heart to His.*

PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES

Personalizing and praying Scripture is a powerful and encouraging way to communicate with God and to allow Him to communicate with you. Several examples are listed below:

Hebrews 13:20-21

²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Personalized

Thank you that you are a God of peace and that you brought Jesus back to life to be my peace and to be my Great Shepherd. Thank you that you keep your promises for all eternity. Thank you that you equip me with every good thing so that I am able to do your will. Help me recognize the ways you are equipping me in the situation I am now dealing with. Help me to do your will. Work in me what is pleasing and honoring to you. May the Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in my life now and forever and ever. Amen!

Psalm 62:1b-2

¹For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. ²He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

Psalm 62:1-2 Personalized

Thank you Lord that you alone are my salvation for all eternity. You are my salvation even now, when my soul is distressed, when my soul is evaluating other sources of comfort. Thank you for reminding me of the truth I already know, that you alone satisfy my soul!

Now read the following Scriptures and write a personal prayer for each one.

Hebrews 12:1-2

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Personalized

[Blank lines for personalization of Hebrews 12:1-2]

[Vertical column of blank lines for personalization]

Psalm 31:14–16

¹⁴But I trust in you, O LORD ; I say, “You are my God.” ¹⁵My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! ¹⁶Make your face shine on your servant; save me in your steadfast love!

Psalm 31:14–16 Personalized

Praying Scripture may be a new concept for you. If so, as you read the Word each day, pause as you come across something that stands out to you or “speaks to you.” Pray this back to the Lord. It can be very encouraging to keep a journal of all your prayer Scriptures. Date them. They will be reminders of God’s intimate presence in your life throughout all the seasons of your life.

FOR WHAT SHALL I PRAY?

Different types of prayers are listed below. This is not an exhaustive list.

Thanksgiving

Psalm 118:1

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!

Guidance

Psalm 25:4–5

⁴Make me to know your ways, O LORD: teach me your paths. ⁵Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

Jesus Instructed Us To...

⁹Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread, ¹²and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Matthew 6:9-13

THE LORD'S PRAYER

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”

What a beautiful declaration. Through Jesus our mediator, we have access to come before our loving Father (Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Peter 2:24). We need not fear approaching God in prayer because He loves us and calls us His own.

He is not only our Father but also our Supreme King for He is sacred and ultimate (hallowed). So we are to ask God to help us honor, esteem, revere, value, treasure, and love the name of God in our hearts, and we are to ask Him to cause His name to be treasured above all things everywhere in the world. (There are more than 900 names of God in the Bible!)

Deuteronomy 32:3-4

³“For I will proclaim the name of the LORD ; ascribe greatness to our God! ⁴The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

“Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

Next, Jesus instructs us to pray that God’s reign will expand and come to fullness, to completion. “But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13). We are to hunger for God’s kingdom to come in all its righteousness.

Because God is our loving Father who faithfully cares for our every need, because He is our Holy God who is above all things and worthy of all our praise, we can cry out

“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

In the final petition Jesus instructs us to ask the Father to help us not fall victim to temptation and to rescue us from evil.

All things that come into our lives, both good and bad, have the potential, depending on what we believe and choose, to draw us to the Father or to propel us away from Him.

As we pray, we are to appeal to the Father to keep us from the prospect of giving into temptation and sin. We are to view everything that comes into our lives as from the Father’s hand and respond accordingly. If we do, we will choose to trust and obey Him. If we do not view things in this way, we may not recognize God or we will find it difficult to trust and obey God, and we will likely give in to temptation and sin.

ALL our experiences are both tests from God and temptations from Satan. In every experience, both pleasant and painful, we have a choice either to acknowledge God and respond in humble dependence and gratitude, or we have a choice to forsake our allegiance to God, give in to temptation, and respond in prideful disobedience.

In pleasant experiences the...

- test is—Will we recognize God and thank Him for His care and provision?
- temptation is—Will we idolize the experience? Will we become complacent and not acknowledge God or thank Him? Will we take credit or take things for granted?

In painful experiences the...

- test is—Will we trust God? Do we believe that through the experience, God desires to refine us into His likeness and increase our dependency on Him and our intimacy with Him?
- temptation is—Will we curse God and blame Him? Will we turn away from Him to the things of the world? Will we seek control of the situation or person?

What are the keys to resisting temptation?

1. God’s Word is our best defense. The better we know His Word, the easier it will be to victoriously fight in our daily struggles.
2. Remember what Jesus endured. Jesus endured the torture of the cross and God’s wrath on our behalf (Romans 5:8). How much does the love of Jesus occupy our hearts?
3. Keep watch and pray. Jesus warned in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41).

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Take some time now to pray about whatever is on your heart.

Psalm 141:1-2

¹O LORD, I call upon you; hasten to me! Give ear to my voice when I call to you! ²Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice!

Application

How often do you pray? Never Occasionally Regularly Daily

If regularly or daily, do you have a specific time?

What needs to change in your daily routine to give you time and space to pray regularly?

When will you make the change necessary?

LESSON 3: GROWING THROUGH COMMUNITY

Scripture gives a beautiful picture of the role of the church in the spread of the gospel as well as the growth and care of Christ-followers. In Lesson 3 you will explore the role of the local church in the life of a believer. To begin you will look at the gathering of the first church described in Acts 2:42–47.

What common purpose(s) do you see in the following Scriptures? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

I Corinthians 15:1-4

¹Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, ²and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

Ephesians 4:46

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Matthew 28:18b-20

¹⁸“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

As a follower of Christ...

- You are united with all other followers of Christ because of your core belief in the gospel (Philippians 1:27).
- You have a common calling, identity, and purpose (1 Peter 2:9; Philippians 2:14–16a).

AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

What makes a relationship authentic?

According to the model of the first church, you are to live out your Christian beliefs in the context of authentic relationships in the church community. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 Paul describes the church as one body with many members and each member having a unique function. The members are all interconnected and interdependent. The

things you are called to do as part of the church cannot effectively be done in any way other than through honest relationships in a close-knit community of believers.

How can you stir up (motivate and stimulate) and encourage others “to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24–25) if you do not know others well enough to know their gifts, joys, struggles, etc.? How can others do that for you if you do not allow them to know you in the same way?

What are the benefits of being involved in a local community of believers? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Hebrews 3:12–13

¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 13:17a

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.

1 Thessalonians 5:14–15

¹⁴And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all. ¹⁵See to it that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone.

How have you benefitted from being involved in your church community?

Take time to pray and ask God who He wants you to encourage.

WE ARE FAMILY

Because you are in Christ, you are a child of God, and that makes you part of the family of God with all His other children. Neil Anderson, in his book, *Who I am in Christ*², talks about the insecurity a person faces when a significant relationship is threatened by desertion, danger, or destruction. Being involved in a close-knit community of believers is one of the best ways to tangibly experience God’s unconditional love and security as expressed in Romans 8: “nothing can separate us from the love of God.” When the church responds like the family of God, a hurting person can be nurtured and loved in a way that brings healing and promotes spiritual maturity. It is to be the training ground that gives opportunity to grow in God’s grace toward one another. As God develops His character in you, you will grow in caring for others.

What are the directives given to you? Read the following passages and circle the directives.

Romans 12:10

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Romans 15:1

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:5-6

⁵May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, ⁶that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

James 2:1

My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.

Colossians 3:12-14

¹²Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Which of these family characteristics seem to come easily to you? Which ones are difficult? Why?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to the first question.

Jesus established a high standard for how the family of God is to love one another.

John 13:34-35

³⁴“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Based on how Jesus loved, how are you to love?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to the second question.

What is accomplished when the family of God loves each other as Jesus loved/ loves us?

Horizontal lines for writing answers to the third question.

Vertical column of horizontal lines for writing answers to all three questions.

CONFLICT AND SIN IN THE FAMILY

The Father’s Guidelines for Resolution and Restoration

When you live in close relationship with others, even in the family of God, you will have conflict; however, Scripture provides clarity and direction for resolving conflict in a biblical way. First, be sure you have forgiven the person for how you think they may have sinned against you as well as confessed your own sins in the situation/ relationship (see Unit 6 Lesson 1—My Forgiving & Confessing Heart). Make sure you have taken the steps to reconcile (see Unit 6 Lesson 2—My Reconciling Heart).

“All sin is serious and dishonors God. But to help you think through whether an offense is too serious to be overlooked, ask yourself if the sin is:

- Publically dishonoring God
- Damaging your relationship
- Hurting other people
- Hurting the offender”³

Tara Barthel

Do Not Judge Indiscriminately

Matthew 7:1-5

¹“Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”

This passage is not saying do not judge, but do not judge indiscriminately with the wrong motive. Be sure you have evaluated your own heart before you speak truth into another person’s life.

Let This Be Your Attitude

Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Ephesians 4:29

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

Conflict Resolution

Matthew 18:15–17

¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

The passage is clear that you are to first speak to the offender privately. If the offender is not receptive to your admonishment, you are to take one or two witnesses along to establish evidence. This is not to browbeat or to condemn the person, but to encourage repentance and reconciliation. The ultimate goal is the unity of the body of Christ to glorify God and show Christ to the world. If this step is ineffective, you are to take the matter to the church. This is by no means permission to gossip to the whole church about the situation. You are to take this to the shepherd(s) of your church, and let them determine the next step. Some churches have an elder board, and the men serving on that board provide spiritual leadership as the shepherds of that church community.

It is your responsibility to do what God directs in calling a person to repentance. It is not your responsibility to convince the other person to see her sin. It is not your responsibility to change the other person's heart. Only the Holy Spirit can do that. If the other person is not willing to repent, continue praying for her heart.

The Scripture “let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17) means to treat the person as one who is not a true follower of Christ. Treat the person as Jesus treated the tax collector and Gentile—with concern, respect, and with the desire that they come to know the Father.

See also, *1 Corinthians 5*.

When you think someone has sinned against you or when you think there is a need to admonish, first consider the following:

Proverbs 19:11

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

In humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Philippians 2:3b

Admonishment

You are called to admonish. To admonish means “to warn.” Admonishing is a ministry of restoration. It is a picture of someone being caught in a snare (trap) and you are called to help.

Luke 17:3-4

³“Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

James 5:19-20

¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

What does it mean to be “spiritual”?

What does it mean to “restore”?

What attitude should you have when you admonish an offender?

SERVING THE FAMILY

Personalize how you can serve God’s family as each Scripture instructs. Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

There are four lists of spiritual gifts: 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4. Each person is given a unique blend of spiritual gifts to live out the varied grace of God (manifold—multi-faceted) (1 Peter 4:10).

Romans 12:13

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Galatians 6:6

Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

What other ways of serving one another come to your mind?

How do you think God has gifted you? For what do you have passion?

Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:13

How are you using your gift(s) to serve others in the family of God in this season of life?

Take time to write a note to someone in your community who has encouraged or blessed you.

Nothing Replaces the Family of God

In today's Internet world, Christians have access to biblical teaching, sermons, devotionals, Bible studies, and even on-line interaction with other believers. For that reason many people may not see the need to be involved in a local community of believers; however, in this lesson you have learned the biblical mandate, the directives, and the blessings of being involved in a local church.

PRAYING FOR THE FAMILY

Paul's prayers for the saints give you a beautiful example of how to pray for one another.

Look up the following prayers. Choose one to pray out loud.

Ephesians 1:15–20

Ephesians 3:14–21

Colossians 1:9–14

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

“Community” – A personal testimony

In 1997 we moved to a new area, which meant new schools for our kids, new neighbors to meet, and a new church to connect with. Did I mention that we were also new believers? We had come to Christ at a church in Southern California, and two months later, we were in Northern California. The word “community” was not the buzzword then, but we knew we needed to be with other believers.

Upon recommendation from our church in So Cal, we set off to the Bay Area with a single name and phone number. After driving up north on a Sunday, we reached out to Joe that night. Joe warmly welcomed us with an invitation to his small group that met on Tuesday nights. We went.

At first we thought we were in the wrong group. We were in our late 20s and the average age of the other attendees was about 60. However, as the weeks passed, we realized this was the very best group for us. These empty nesters had life experience, wisdom, and time. Having time was a key component to building relationships. They had time to help us move into a house; they had time to watch our kids in a pinch; they had time to invest in us spiritually.

Although we were really connected to our small group, we didn’t feel connected with the teaching at the church. As new believers, it was difficult to understand the sermons and make life applications that would spur us on. But thankfully we had Tuesday nights to help us with understanding.

At one point we decided to look for another Sunday morning option. Looking for something more like our Southern California church, we set out church shopping for a couple of months. Sunday after Sunday we tried out different churches, all the while still attending our small group each Tuesday night. Graciously each week our small group would ask about our latest church experience. With no judgment and no

expectation, our small group family continued to invest in us.

After a few of months of trying out different churches, we decided that really our small group family was the community we needed and loved. We made a commitment to attend the small group church. The Sunday morning sermons became more meaningful as time went on. Our community stretched into other ministries as we served. But our roots run deep with this small group of people that changed our lives. We will be forever grateful.

All who believed were together
and had all things in common.

Acts 2:44

LESSON 4: GROWING THROUGH SUFFERING

Just as you are to abide in the Father through His Word, prayer, and community, so you are to abide in Him through suffering. In this lesson you will examine the certainty and purpose of suffering.

THE CERTAINTY OF SUFFERING

Suffering shows no favoritism. The fall of man (Genesis 2:17; Genesis 3:16–19) assured that all people will suffer. Sin resulted in all creation being vulnerable to death, decay, disease, destruction, and despicable acts. Our loving Father never delights in wickedness (Psalm 5:4; Isaiah 5:20), and He grieves over the suffering world. Yet, He remains sovereign over and determines suffering for His purposes.

“Modern Western culture sees no value in suffering and it does its best to minimize it. In older cultures suffering has always been viewed ‘as an expected part of a coherent life story, a crucial way to live life well and to grow as a person and a soul.’ But the meaning of life in Western society is individual freedom.... [If] the meaning of life is individual freedom and happiness, then suffering is of no possible ‘use.’ In this worldview, the only thing to do with suffering is to avoid it at all costs, or if it is unavoidable, manage and minimize the emotions of pain and discomfort as much as possible.”¹

Timothy Keller

Biblical worldview stands in stark contrast to popular secular worldview. No one lives in individual freedom. All people are enslaved to either sin or righteousness (Romans 6:17–18). The highest quality of life is lived as one yielded to Christ. Humble submission to Christ is the essence of true freedom.

Why is there evil? Why does God allow it?

THE OPPORTUNITY IN SUFFERING

The Bible teaches that one of the privileges of being in Christ is that you will have the opportunity to suffer for the sake of Christ. “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29). God has appointed specific sufferings for you that will be for your best good (Romans 8:28–29) and for His glory. “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed but let him glorify God in that name” (1 Peter 4:16).

Why does God allow suffering?

What is the difference in suffering for Christ and suffering in life?

CHOOSING TO GROW THROUGH SUFFERING

Paul was acquainted with suffering. After saving Paul on the Road to Damascus, the Lord told Ananias, the prophet whom He sent to open Paul’s eyes, that He would “show [Paul] how much he must suffer for the sake of my name” (Acts 9:16). Paul endured unimaginable trials over his lifetime.

Consider how Paul responded to his circumstances. What did he choose?

Look up the following Scriptures and record your response.

2 Corinthians 4:8–10

2 Corinthians 11:23–38

Paul chose to trust God in the midst of his circumstances, and he remained steadfast in the hope of Christ. He chose to not be driven to despair.

In your suffering you will be faced with a crossroad of choice, either to trust God or to trust your own ways of handling the suffering and the fear that it entails. If you do not trust God, you will rely on your control responses: fighting, fleeing, or feeling paralyzed. Consequently, you will not be able to access the presence and the power of Christ.

“The greatest gifts I have received in life have entailed the greatest suffering.”

Elisabeth Elliot

A HIGH HOPE

Paul experienced first-hand the inspired words he recorded in Romans 8. As children of God we are “fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” (Romans 8:17–18; see also Luke 24:25–26; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1, 10).

In light of the glory that will be “revealed to [you]” and the “living hope” that you have in Christ, you are to “rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6–7).

“Suffering” Defined

What qualifies as suffering in this present time? Suffering includes “all the daily anxieties, tensions, and persecutions you face.” (see Romans 8:17; Luke 9:23; 2 Timothy 3:12; Hebrews 12:6–7.) It is the futility of the present age—all calamity, disease, and death. Suffering has a broad scope and includes “any suffering you meet on the road to heaven and endure by trusting in Jesus.”²

Elisabeth Elliot (wife to Jim Elliot and missionary to the Auca Indians, today known as the Waidani Tribe) defined suffering as “having what you don’t want, or wanting what you don’t have.” Suffering covers the gamut and is not quantified nor qualified. Every act of obedience to God is a choice to die to self, which is a form of suffering (see Matthew 16:24–26.) You are never to minimize or trivialize your personal suffering nor someone else’s. But suffering is “not for nothing.” Whether you are suffering persecution directly for Christ’s sake or you are suffering from any other life circumstance, you have the potential to glorify God in your suffering. Elisabeth Elliot claimed, “The greatest gifts I have received in life have entailed the greatest suffering.”

“Glorified” Defined

What does it mean to be glorified? You will share in God’s glory by being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) so that you will enjoy all that Christ enjoys—God and all His gifts. This inheritance is so great that every trouble you may encounter is small by comparison.

Praise be to God that eternal glory will far outweigh your worst suffering. “Present sufferings must be seen in light of the promise of eternal happiness in God. The scales can’t be balanced in this life alone.”³

(See 2 Corinthians 4:17–18.)

Peter also teaches that suffering is the path to glory. In 1 Peter he writes, “But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:13).

***Also see 1 Peter 4:16
and Matthew 5:45***

The Path to Glory

Scripture places “strong emphasis on the principle that suffering is the path to glory.”⁴ (See Romans 8:16–18.) This was the Messiah’s path (Isaiah 53:3; Luke 24:26; Mark 8:31). Jesus learned obedience through what He suffered (Hebrews 5:8-9; see also Hebrews 2:10). “Jesus moved from untested obedience into suffering and then through suffering into tested and proven obedience.”⁵ Jesus was tested and tempted in every way yet without sin. His tested perfection makes Jesus the Perfect Savior. He bore the wrath of all sin and as a result He experienced suffering representative of every kind of human suffering. So Jesus not only paid your debt and secured for you an eternal life, but He also intimately understands and meets you in your pain and suffering. Jesus suffered not so you would never suffer, but so you could endure suffering as He walks with you through it.

What do the following verses teach regarding your future glory? Read the following Scriptures and record your response.

Colossians 3:4

When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

REJOICE IN SUFFERING

Paul tells his readers in Romans 5 to rejoice in suffering not only because of the guarantee of future glory but also because suffering presently produces endurance, character, and hope (Romans 5:2-5). As you suffer you can be assured that you are becoming more spiritually fit (endurance). As your faith is tested, you are being approved and you are becoming more Christ-like (character). As a result, your hope will increase and expand and you will be certain that God is faithful to keep His promises to make all things right. (See also Matthew 5:4, 10–12; Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 12:9–10.)

Peter and James share the same message as Paul.

What do you think it means to rejoice in suffering?

It does not mean that you are happy but that you are sustained and comforted in your suffering because your future is not attached to your circumstances. You have a future beyond your suffering.

When you reflect on the fact God sent His only Son to redeem you, you realize how blessed and privileged you are. Christ is not only in you but also going through your suffering with you. Because You are called to be a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), you are able to offer your suffering to Christ as a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13: 15).

Rewrite the following verses as a personal prayer. How do these truths bring you comfort?

1 Peter 1:6-7

In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

James 1:2-4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

“If suffering was the means by which the sinless Christ became mature, we in our sinfulness need it that much more. Significantly, James uses the same language of ‘perfection’ or ‘maturity’ in relation to Christians. Just as suffering led to maturity through obedience for Christ, so it leads to maturity through perseverance for us.”⁶

John Stott

GOD USES SUFFERING TO MATURE YOU

There are many benefits that come through suffering, including the following:

Suffering humbles you and helps you realize your desperate need for God. It uncovers your vulnerability and the areas in which you are relying on someone or something other than Him.

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Suffering provides an opportunity for you to go deeper in your relationship with Christ.

1 Peter 4:19

Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

In the midst of suffering, you are to be confident in God's sovereignty, trust God completely, and live faithfully while doing good.

Philippians 3:7-11

⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

God always wants us to go deeper than our emotions, what we are feeling. Our faith

must be based on objective truth. Outside of God’s faithfulness, you cannot be faithful to Him. Ask God to help you always live faithfully to Him.

Suffering increases your capacity to care well for others.

There is no way to truly empathize and sympathize with others unless you have personally endured suffering. As you endure the pain of suffering and experience God’s comfort, you will be able to comfort others.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Suffering reveals your attachments (idols)-the things that compete with your knowing and trusting God.

It gives opportunity to evaluate who/what is truly important to you.

What are some specific ways that suffering has matured you?

What are some specific ways that suffering has matured you?

5 Things I Learned Through Suffering A Personal Testimony

A few years ago I went through a near-death medical emergency. I spent several weeks in the hospital and my recovery was very difficult. As I passed through my suffering, the Lord was kind and faithful to teach me several things. Five key things I learned were the following:

1. Greater certainty of my faith (John 5:24; 11:25).
2. Greater humility before God and a greater understanding that I have no control over my life. God is the one who gives life and breath (Acts 17:25; Colossians 1:17).
3. Greater optimism for life and desire for fruitful labor (Philippians 1:21–25).
4. Greater skill in dealing with stress, tension, and anxiety. I learned in a new way how to repeatedly give to Jesus with all my strength the things that were eating me up. And each time I did, I said to myself, “Your peace is more powerful than my pain and I cast my troubles on you because I am certain you care for me” (see 1 Peter 5:6–7).
5. Greater appreciation for my family and my church.

A HIGH VIEW OF GOD

Having a high view of God is essential to suffer well. Set your gaze on Him rather than on the seemingly hopeless situation or circumstance. By setting your gaze on Him—remembering His glory, sovereignty, power, and tender mercy—you will be able to rest in Him who is your Hope. Reflect on these truths.

God alone is worthy of all praise.

Revelation 4:11

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

God is sovereign. He is in ultimate control of the world—all things great and small.

Isaiah 46:9b–10

⁹“I am God, and there is no other. ¹⁰My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.”

God is supreme.

Romans 11:33-36

³³Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! ³⁴“For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵“Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” ³⁶For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

God is immutable.

Job 23:13-14

¹³“But he is unchangeable, and who can turn him back? What he desires, that he does. ¹⁴For he will complete what he appoints for me, and many such things are in his mind.”

God is eager to show mercy and kindness to those who trust in Him.

Exodus 34:6b

“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness....”

Why is having a high view of God essential to suffer well?

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

God promises to walk with you in your suffering. Pain, sadness, fear, doubt, envy, even horror and anger are all (natural, instinctual) responses to suffering that remind you to bring your suffering—all that you are experiencing and feeling—before the Father with honest pleas for mercy and to trust that you are not alone. In 2 Timothy 4:16-17, Paul spoke this wonderful truth, “At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion’s mouth.” The Lord Jesus was with Paul, and the Lord Jesus is with you.

Not only is God always present with you, He also always hears you. “I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live” (Psalm 116:1-2). The word “inclined” represents a beautiful picture of how God bends down to listen to you. Like a mother who bends down to look into the face of her child with her full attention, so Your Father attends to you. Thanks be to God that He is always with you and always hears you.

Write out the following Scriptures that promise His presence and provision in suffering.

Psalm 23:4a

Psalm 57:1-3a

Isaiah 43:2-3a

IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SURVIVE?

1. Spend time with the Lord every day.

Take time to quiet yourself before the Lord. Ask Him what He wants to speak to you about and take time to listen.

When you read the Word, ask the Lord to give you an encouraging Scripture (a statement, a promise, a command) that you can keep in your mind. Write it down on a notecard and read and reflect on it throughout the day. Save these cards and re-read them often. These will serve as a lifeline to truth.

2. Confide in one or two trusted friends.

Be willing to honestly share your struggle and heartache. Ask them to faithfully pray for you and give them permission to speak truth into your life.

3. Cry out to Lord.

As the Psalmists did in the Psalms of Lament (e.g. Psalms 22, 86, 142), cast your cares on Him and recall Who He is. Pray through the Psalms.

4. Acknowledge your pain.

It is natural to resist pain, but choose to feel your pain in order to grieve your hurt or your loss and to receive what the Lord has for you through your suffering.

5. Remember that God's mercies are new every morning

Lamentations 3:22–23

6. Do not be anxious about tomorrow.

Trust the Lord will give you what you need for each day. (Matthew 6:34)

7. Journal.

Take time to record what is on your mind and troubling your heart. This is a great way to process.

8. Record your thanksgivings.

Every day make yourself write down at least one thing for which you are thankful. Ask the Lord to bring these things to mind and keep a running list.

9. Keep a list of answered prayers.

Recall, remember what the Lord has done.

10. Stay involved in community.

You may be tempted to withdraw from others, but being with others will provide needed support and help you not be self-focused.

11. Serve someone else.

This will encourage you.

12. Listen to worship music.

13. Get outside for some exercise. Enjoy nature.

14. Be sure to get proper rest and nutrition.

15. Pray and Listen.

Pray that the suffering you are experiencing will increase your faith, your love for the Lord and others, and your ability to endure affliction. (See 2 Thessalonians 1:4.)

When you are suffering, what practical things help you?

How have others helped you through suffering?

WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO

Here are some things for you to consider when God calls you to walk alongside someone who is suffering:

Listen

Listening is the most important thing you can do besides praying for the person. Giving the sufferer the time and space to share thoughts, how and when they come up, is a gracious gift. Listen without interrupting and without giving advice. Allow them to share doubts, fears, and frustrations.

Empathize

Seek to understand what someone is going through and feeling, acknowledge it. You cannot relieve or fix the pain. You can be present, be supportive, and acknowledge what they are going through.

Do not compare the situation to yours

(or something you have gone through in the past). Each person’s suffering is unique to them. When you say you understand or share your story, you minimize pain.

Say, “I’m glad to see you” rather than “How are you doing?”

This lets one know you want to be around; they are not a burden to you, and you are not expecting them to be “okay.”

Leave a text message

They may not want to talk on the phone, but will be glad to see a text message from you. It does not need to be long, just enough to let them know you are thinking of them and praying for them.

Be slow to redirect to truth

A time will come for you to speak truth and share Scripture, but wait for the appropriate time. Trust the Holy Spirit to direct you.

Send a note or card

A Personal Testimony

After my son passed away, these were a few things that were and were not helpful:


Do:

- Be available.
- Listen without offering advice.
- Let them talk about the loved one and share memories. (It was important to me that my son was remembered by others.)
- Call and let them know you are praying for them. Do this daily at first.

Don't:

- Ask how they are feeling or coping.
- Ask what they need; they probably don't know.
- Ask what verse they are leaning on.
- Be reluctant to bring up the loss; they will be glad you remember.

So rejoice, for suffering is not for nothing. Your great hope is that one day you will see and savor the glory of God Himself (Romans 5:11) in your redeemed and glorified body, fully able to enjoy the new heavens and new earth free from sin and its corruption (Romans 8:22–23). (See Unit 7 Lesson 5)



I cry out to God most
high, to God who fulfills
his purpose for me.

PSALM 57:2

*“Drawing Nearer to God Through Suffering”
—A Personal Testimony*

On September 27, I went into surgery at 8:00am—my wife came to see me at 1:00am the following morning after I had recovered. What she saw was a man under sedation, bloated, broken, and with a machine breathing for him. It was me, her husband, but I can only imagine what must have been going through her mind. After a few attempts to bring me out of sedation, I finally came to consciousness at the sound of her voice. After that I saw my dear friend and mentor and held his hand and began the process that would take me a month and a half to get back on my feet. Today, I am walking, much more slowly. I am driving. I can throw a baseball, but my basketball game has taken a devastating blow.

What I went through was a resection that involved the removal of about one third of the muscle behind my right knee, and harvesting one of my back muscles and skin from my left leg to reconstruct my right leg. What I really went through was much more than that, though. As I lay in the ICU the first day or two of having regained consciousness, I had a strong desire to die. It was simply too much. Right when I was about to break, a delightful brother in Christ and chaplain at the hospital, came to visit me. He offered prayer and I accepted whole-heartedly. When I struggled for oxygen, my friend was there to hold my hand and encourage me. I would lay in my hospital bed at night, wondering if I could make it through my stay in the hospital, much less the recovery process ahead of me. I would turn my head to the right and see my beautiful baby daughter. As soon as our eyes met, she would stare at me and smile while laying on my beautiful wife’s chest. It gave me strength for the night. When I didn’t think I could take one more night in the hospital and I was ready to check myself out (for better or for worse), another dear friend came to stay with me. These may seem like trivial things to some, but for me these were huge moments.

“Trowing Through Suffering” —A Personal Testimony

I understood when I proposed to her—and if she said “yes”—that our marriage journey would most likely be marked with difficulty. She was born with an extremely rare and terminal disease and had already been delivered from the grasp of death on multiple occasions. But marrying her was (and continues to be) worth it.

We began our journey of suffering together three days into our honeymoon. We ended up spending the majority of what was meant to be 10 days of blissful enjoyment in a cramped hospital room in Kauai, Hawaii. And now, 10 years into our marriage, the difficulties have not let up. We have spent more days in hospitals than we have on vacation. Our house has been converted into a care facility on multiple occasions. Doctors have told us to be prepared for “the worst” more times than we imagined. Family has flown in, from across oceans, to say good-bye. And yet, the Lord has preserved her life.

We pray and long for healing—that she would leave behind the chronic pain, the pulmonary issues, the invasive fluid that rails against her organs. The Lord hasn’t granted that. Not yet. But we stand in the certainty that one day, when she stands in the presence of her Savior, all of these things will instantly be done away with. And we will both see, with joy beyond imagination, how God has used this trouble for His good—and ours. I have learned to bask in the glow of the eternal, in such a way that had we the opportunity to go back and change what we have walked through, we never would.

That’s what hope does. Not wimpy hope. But concrete, certain hope. As God has taken us through immense seasons of suffering, we have witnessed how He refines and forms our perspective—not only with suffering, but with our lives as a whole. What Paul writes in his letter to the Romans has been proven time and time again in our journey:

Romans 5:3–5: ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Hope not only forms our excitement for what’s to come, it informs our response to the immediate. It allows us a glimpse into God’s wisdom and sovereignty. We can trust that no matter the chaos, or the suffering, or the hardship—that it will not be wasted on God. He will use it for His purposes. And one day, when we stand perfected in both body and heart, we will see, in the grandest of ways, the glory of our suffering. That it reflects—through all eternity—the glory of Christ’s suffering. Hope protect us from giving up.

2Cor. 4:16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, 18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

We can say with absolute confidence that when compared to what’s in store for us as God’s children, the suffering of this life is truly a light and momentary affliction. And though our suffering remains a painful and difficult part of our life together, we know what’s coming. We live our lives with eternity in mind. The trial may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

Reflection

Choose a Scripture from this lesson to meditate on. Thank God that He is with you in your suffering, remembering it is a privilege to suffer for the Lord Jesus. 2 Corinthians 9:8

Application

Why does God allow suffering?

When going through suffering what can you expect from God?

What is the most trying time of suffering in your life?

How did you get through it?

How will you trust early on in the suffering?

LESSON 5: GROWING IN THE HOPE OF HEAVEN

As you saw in Lesson 4, no follower of Christ is exempt from suffering. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33a.) In the book of Revelation Jesus also warned, “Do not fear what you are about to suffer... Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

Your ultimate hope will be realized only after you die (unless the Lord Jesus returns before your death). The Apostle Paul said, “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19). But praise God that your hope goes so much deeper and beyond this life! In this final lesson you will be encouraged to grow in your understanding of heaven.

“It is the hope of eternal life in heaven. Our resurrection is not to another period of earth life. It is a resurrection to eternal life with God in heaven [and the new earth].... It is resurrection to abide forever in the presence of the Lord (Rev. 21:3) where ‘God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain’ (Rev. 21:4). It is a resurrection to ‘rest from their labors’ (Rev. 14:13). It is a resurrection to drink the water of life (Rev. 21:6) and to eat of the tree of life (Rev. 22:2).”¹

Mike Willis

YOUR LIFE IS A VAPOR

Your life is “a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away” (James 4:14b, NASB).

Review the following verses that affirm the brevity of life:

1 Peter 1:24

“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls....”

Psalms 144:4

Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.

Psalms 102:11

My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

Psalms 39:4-5

“O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! ⁵Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath!”

Moses understood this and he asked the Lord, “So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). Understanding the brevity of life is an essential element of wisdom.

YOUR LIFE WILL NEVER FULLY SATISFY YOU

Not only is your life short, but very little in your life will turn out the way you hope it will. And even if it does, your heart will not be fully satisfied. The most wonderful moments of your life are but echoes of what your heart ultimately longs for.

“The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here.... [These] are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the ocean.”²

Jonathan Edwards

All people desire to “live happily ever after.” Everyone is searching for that someone or something that will fulfill their deepest longings. As a follower of Christ, however, you have “found him whom...[your] soul loves” (Song of Solomon 3:4a). This is not wishful thinking or a fairy tale. It is “your life...hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3b). And your truest and happiest life has yet to begin!

Read the following verses about the joys of heaven and underline the words that indicate that fact.

2 Corinthians 5:8

Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

Philippians 1:21, 23

²¹For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain... ²³My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Isaiah 65:17-18

¹⁷For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ¹⁸But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

“[C]onsider that we all desire to be happy. We all have the same goal—Joy. We search for it in different places and in different ways. But in the end, there is only one source of ultimate pleasure: ‘In your presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.’ Psalm 16:113”

Randy Alcorn

HEAVEN—OUR ULTIMATE HOPE AND HOME

God has set before you the hope of heaven—to encourage you and strengthen you in this life (Hebrews 6:18; Colossians 1:5). The writer of Hebrews states that this is “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain” (Hebrews 6:19). As a follower of Christ, you are a citizen of heaven now; your true citizenship is in the New Jerusalem.

Ephesians 2:6

[God] raised us up with him [Christ] and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus....

Philippians 3:20

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ [.]

How might it change the way you live if you daily viewed heaven as your true and ultimate home?

Scriptures command you to “set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13b), and to “seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” You are to “[s]et your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Colossians 3:1–2). Likewise, 2 Corinthians 4:18 reminds believers to “look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

In Hebrew 11's "Hall of Faith," we see that the Old Testament saints "acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For...they desire[d] a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Hebrews 11:13b,16). Focusing on the hope of heaven is how these Old Testament saints were able to both suffer and endure temptations well:

Hebrews 11:24-26; 33-38

²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward... ³³[They] conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵[were] tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. ³⁶Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated[,] ³⁸...wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

The discipline of focusing on heaven and on the fact that you will see the Lord face-to-face when your faith becomes sight (2 Corinthians 5:7) will steady you during the many ups and downs of this life and inspire you to "renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives...waiting for [your] blessed hope (see Titus 2:12-13). Abiding in the hope of heaven not only helps you to suffer well but also helps you to resist temptations to sin, for suffering and temptations can be "two sides of the same coin."

"The effect of this kind of focus is to make our present pain seem small in comparison to what is coming: 'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us' (Romans 8:18; see also 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)."⁴

John Piper

You need to constantly remind yourself that your hope, which goes behind the curtain into the Holy of Holies (Hebrews 6:19), is not a hope for this life only but ultimately in what Christ's death and resurrection accomplished for you. This is the hope of eternal life with Him, which will ultimately and definitely come when Christ returns in His glory.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

¹⁶For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

“We will constantly be more amazed with God, more in love with God, and thus ever more relishing his presence and our relationship with him. Our experience of God will never reach its consummation.... It will deepen and develop, intensify and amplify, unfold and increase, broaden and balloon.”⁵

Sam Storms

How does the hope of heaven (Hebrews 11:1, 6) help you face life now?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I DIE (BEFORE CHRIST'S SECOND COMING)?

“Although we don’t have as many details as we might want, the Bible clearly teaches that at our death we go from earth to Paradise, and then come back to the renewed earth in our new resurrected bodies as citizens of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21). It’s then that heaven and earth will be joined together and we’ll be residents of one really grand city.”⁶

Elyse Fitzpatrick

Philippians 3:20-21

²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Isaiah 25:6-9

⁶On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸He will swallow up death forever; and the LORD God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹It will be said on that day, "Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."



THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF GOD AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Again, although all of the details of the final judgment are not revealed in Scripture, there appears to be two judgments when Christ returns: the Judgment Seat of God (see Romans 14:10b; 2 Corinthians 5:10) and the Great White Throne Judgment (see Revelation 20:11–15).

Romans 14:10b

[W]e will all stand before the judgment seat of God...

Revelation 20:11–15

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it.... ¹²And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.... ¹⁵And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 3:5

The one who conquers. I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

As a follower of Christ, you need not fear the Great White Throne judgment where Christ will separate the sheep from the goats (see Matthew 25:31–46) because you can be assured that you are His sheep and that your name is written in “the book of life” (see Revelation 20:15). No condemnation awaits you because you have been saved by Christ’s atoning work on the cross (see Romans 8:1–2).

However, even as a follower of Christ you will have to give an account of your life to Christ before the Judgment Seat of God (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). Read the following verses about this judgment:

Romans 14:12

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

1 Corinthians 3:12–15

¹²Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Ephesians 6:8b

[W]hatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord....

Revelation 22:12 (NIV)

“Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.”

Revelation 21:3–4

³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

The word “appear” in 2 Corinthians 5:10 means, “to make manifest,” “to make clear,” “to make visible,” or “to reveal.”

“To be made manifest means not just to appear, but to be laid bare, stripped of every outward façade of respectability, and openly revealed in the full and true reality of one’s character.”⁷

Philip E. Hughes

This is the “bema” (translated “court” or “tribunal”) judgment where everything you have done in your life, including all of your motives and desires, will be disclosed and made bare to you before Christ. The purpose of this judgment is not to condemn you but to reward you for the good works you did for God’s glory—rewards for all of the work that is not burned up in the fire of God’s judgment. (See 1 Corinthians 3:12–15.)

“The failures and shortcomings of...believers... will enter into the picture on the Day of Judgment. But—and this is the important point—the sins and shortcomings of believers will be revealed in the judgment as forgiven sins, whose guilt has been totally covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.”

Anthony Hoekema

The most beautiful aspect of this bema judgment is that when you stand before Christ you will more fully realize the depth of your sin and the depth of Christ’s atonement (see 2 Corinthians 5:21). Although you are presently grateful for His work on the cross, when all of your life is laid bare before Him and you, your gratitude will be increased ten thousand-fold so that forever and ever you will be propelled to worship Christ. You will sing and shout with all of the heavenly hosts, which will number “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,” this verse: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:11–12).

You may never fully grasp the greatness and depth of God’s love for you—the love He had for you when He wrote your name in the book of life even before He created the world (see Revelation 13:8) and the love He displayed when He formed His plan of redemption to unite you to Him through Christ. (See Ephesians 1.) When Christ returns and your adoption is consummated and you receive your new body (see Romans 8:23), all of history from the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 2) to the final defeat of Satan (see Revelation 20) will have come full circle, and you will revel in God’s majesty and His intimacy forever! (See Revelation 22:1–5.)

Colossians 3:1-2

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

Be Heavenly Minded

- When you see something beautiful in nature (e.g., a full moon or a sunset), think “these are but scattered beams, but God is the sun!” How beautiful God will be to you when you see Him face-to-face!
- Every day, purpose to think that you are one day closer to seeing Him and being in His presence. Embrace the brevity of life!
- When you are enjoying a wonderful and pleasurable moment, whether alone or with others, imagine what these moments will be like in the New Jerusalem, without any sin—no more tears, death, mourning, crying, nor pain, “for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)
- When you are going through various suffering, remind yourself that these temporary pains are not worth comparing with the glories of heaven that you will experience one day very soon.
- When temptations are luring you, recall to mind the fact that you will stand before the Lord at the bema judgment, where you will give an account of your life to God. (See Romans 14:12.)

Let us be men who “long for His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)) because “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)

End your study...

Summarize what you learned from this lesson.

Reflection

Meditate on this verse, reflecting on the importance of abiding in Christ.

1 John 2:28

And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming.

“Do not let yourselves be so absorbed by anticipations of what you are going to do and where you are going to be tomorrow that you have no leisure to think of what you are going to do and where you are going to be through the eternities.... Live in the continual contemplation of that blessed future, and Him who makes it...; fasten [your heart and your hope] to the anchor of your souls which hath entered within the veil.”⁸

Alexander MacLaren

Application

How would you live this week if knew you will face God by the end of it?

UNIT 7 WORKS CITED

Lesson 1: Abiding in God's Word

- 1 • Whitney, Donald. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. NavPress, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2014, pg. 46.
- 2 • Swindoll, Chuck. *Growing Strong in the Seasons of Life*. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994, pg. 61.

Lesson 2: Abiding in Prayer

- 1 • As defined by Wycliffe Bible Translators. See <https://www.wycliffe.org/prayer/why-we-pray>.
- 2 • Miller, Paul. *A Praying Life*. NavPress, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2009, pgs. 25, 32–39, 117, 201–203.
- 3 • Carson, D.A., *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*. Baker Academic, 1992, pg. 33.

Lesson 3: Abiding in Community

- 1 • Frazee, Randy. *The Connecting Church*. Zondervan, 2001.
- 2 • Anderson, Neil. *Who I am in Christ*. Bethany House Publishers, 2001.
- 3 • Barthel, Tara. *Living the Gospel in Relationships*. Peacemaker Ministries, Billings, Montana, 2007, pg. 60.

Lesson 4: Abiding in Suffering

- 1 • Keller, Timothy. *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*. Dutton, New York, New York, 2013, pg. 23.
- 2 • Piper, John. "Children, Heirs, and Fellow Sufferers." *Desiring God*, 21 April 2002, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/children-heirs-and-fellow-sufferers>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 3 • Alcorn, Randy. "C.S. Lewis on Heaven and the New Earth: God's Eternal Remedy to the Problem of Evil and Suffering." *Desiring God*, 28 Sept. 2013, <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/c-s-lewis-on-heaven-and-the-new-earth-god-s-eternal-remedy-to-the-problem-of-evil-and-suffering>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 4 • Stott, John. *The Message of Romans*. InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1994, pg. 235.
- 5 • Piper, John. "How Did Jesus Learn Obedience and Become Perfect?" *Desiring God*, 30 June 2016, <http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/how-did-jesus-learn-obedience-and-become-perfect>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 6 • Stott, John. *The Cross of Christ*. InterVarsity, Downers Grove, Illinois, pg. 308.

Lesson 5: Abiding in the Hope of Heaven

- 1 • Willis, Mike. "Hope: The Anchor of the Soul." *Truth Magazine*, 19 Oct. 1989, <http://www.truthmagazine.com/archives/volume33/GOT033268.html>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 2 • Edwards, Jonathan. *Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733* (The Works of Jonathan Edwards Series, Volume 17.) Yale University Press, 1999, from sermon delivered in 1733 entitled "The True Christian's Life, A Journey Towards Heaven."
- 3 • Alcorn, Randy. "Longing for God and Joy, from Augustine." *Eternal Perspectives Ministries*, 11 Feb. 2008, <http://www.epm.org/blog/2008/Feb/11/longing-for-god-and-joy-from-augustine>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 4 • Piper, John. "Rejoicing in Pain." *Desiring God*, Nov 2 Devotional, <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/rejoicing-in-pain>. Accessed 9 May 2017.
- 5 • Storms, Sam, as quoted by Alcorn, Randy, "Heaven Would be Hell without God," 24, April 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/heaven-would-be-hell-without-god>. Accessed 5 May 2018
- 6 • Fitzpatrick, Elyse. *Home, How Heaven and the New Earth Satisfy Our Deepest Longings*. Bethany House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 2016, pg. 91.
- 7 • Hughes, Philip E. *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians; The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1992, pg. 180.
- 8 • MacLaren, Alexander. *MacLaren's Commentary—Expositions of Holy Scripture*. Delmarva Publications, 2014.

Appendix A

Two-Minute Testimony Guidelines

The story of our personal journey to salvation through Jesus Christ is one of, if not the most important tool we have in communicating the gospel to others. Because it is our own unique story, it conveys a message that is relevant and real to people, much in the same way parables were to Jesus' audiences, and to us.

Many of us have different testimonies about what God has done and is doing in our lives. We also may have various versions of our conversion testimony—the account of our salvation story from lost sinners to redeemed sons and daughters of God. Some versions may be quite lengthy, which may be appropriate in some situations. But we should all have a summarized version of our conversion testimony, as well. Many times, we only have a limited amount of time with people, or they may not be interested in listening to all the details of our lives. Take Paul, for example. His testimony is perhaps the most well-known and influential testimony in history. However, set up a timer and read the summarized version of his testimony (Acts 22:3–16). How long did it take? Under two minutes! If Paul can share his story in less than two minutes, all of us should be able to do the same.

Prayerfully prepare your story. Spend sufficient time asking God to reveal to you what to share and how to share it. Praise him again for saving you and giving you abundant life!

Consider your audience. Assess the age, familiarity with God, the Bible, and Christ, and other factors that may influence how you share and what you share with those who will be listening to you.

Avoid clichés or terminology unfamiliar to the unsaved or unchurched. We often use unclear, overused, or even inaccurate terms when sharing a testimony. Examples often include: “I prayed the prayer”; or “My walk with God has gotten strong”; or “I asked Jesus into my heart.” Every statement you make should be as clearly understandable to your audience as possible. If you are speaking to a group of people who are primarily unsaved and aren't familiar with the Bible or language we use in the church or commonly with other believers, then be careful not to use those words or terms.

Speak the truth accurately. For example, according to the Bible, it is not true to say, “I've been a Christian all of my life.” No one is born a Christian. You may not remember the day or events that led you to place your faith in Christ, but there was still a point in time when you went from a state of unredeemed sinner to redeemed child of God (Romans 10:9–10). It is therefore important, to include important details such as how you came to understand your sin, repentance, forgiveness, grace, salvation, eternal life, etc. A good model to use is to explain the following:

1. An illustration to introduce yourself (you can even weave this throughout your story)
2. Your life before Christ
3. How you came to realize your need for Christ and how you surrendered your life to him
4. How your life is different now that you live for Christ

Enjoy the opportunity and privilege of sharing how God has revealed his amazing love and truth through your own story!

Appendix B

A Cry for Help—Fighting Fear and Anxiety

Psalm 18:1-6

¹I love you, O Lord, my strength. ²The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. ⁴The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of destruction assailed me; ⁵the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. ⁶In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.

Psalm 18:27-36

²⁷For you save a humble people, but the haughty eyes you bring down. ²⁸For it is you who light my lamp; the Lord my God lightens my darkness. ²⁹For by you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. ³⁰This God—his way is perfect; the word of the Lord proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him. ³¹For who is God, but the Lord? And who is a rock, except our God?—³²the God who equipped me with strength and made my way blameless. ³³He made my feet like the feet of a deer and set me secure on the heights. ³⁴He trains my hands for war, so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze. ³⁵You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great. ³⁶You gave a wide place for my steps under me, and my feet did not slip.

Psalm 28:7

The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

Psalm 31:1-8

¹In you, O Lord, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me! ²Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me! ³For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me; ⁴you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge. ⁵Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God. ⁶I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord. ⁷I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul, ⁸and you have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place.

Psalm 34:4, 18

⁴I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears.... ¹⁸The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.

Psalm 55:22

Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved.

Psalm 56:3-4

³When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. ⁴In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?

Psalm 57:1-3

¹Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by. ²I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me. ³He will send from heaven and save me; he will put to shame him who tramples on me. God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness!

Psalm 73:23-26

²³Nevertheless, I am continually with you; you hold my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me to glory. ²⁵Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Psalm 116:1-7

¹I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. ²Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. ³The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. ⁴Then I called on the name of the LORD; "O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!" ⁵Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; our God is merciful. ⁶The LORD preserves the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. ⁷Return, O my soul, to your rest for the LORD has dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm 121:1-2

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ²My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Proverbs 3:5-6

⁵Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Isaiah 26:3

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

Isaiah 41:10

[F]ear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 55:8-11

⁸"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

John 14:27

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.”

Philippians 4:4-8

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 13:6

So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”

1 Peter 5:6-7

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Appendix C

Do The Next Thing (Author Unknown)

From an old English parsonage,
Down by the sea,
There came in the twilight,
A message to me;
Its quaint Saxon legend,
Deeply engraven,
Hath, as it seems to me,
Teaching from Heaven.
And on through the hours
The quiet words ring
Like a low inspiration-
DO THE NEXT THING.

Many a questioning, many a fear,
Many a doubt, hath its quieting here.
Moment by moment,
Let down from Heaven,
Time, opportunity,
Guidance, are given.
Fear not tomorrow,
Child of the King,
Trust them with Jesus,
DO THE NEXT THING.

Do it immediately;
Do it with prayer;
Do it reliantly, casting all care;
Do it with reverence,
Tracing His Hand,
Who placed it before thee with
With earnest command.
Stayed on Omnipotence,
Safe 'neath His wing,
Leave all resultings,
DO THE NEXT THING.

Looking to Jesus, ever serener,
(Working or suffering)
Be thy demeanor,
In His dear presence,
The rest of His calm,
The light of His countenance
Be thy psalm,
Strong in His faithfulness,
Praise and sing,
Then, as He beckons thee,
DO THE NEXT THING.

Appendix D

My Heart Unchained Chart

COMMON CONTROL-RESPONSES AND FEARS

Control-Responses

Flight

- Withdrawing
- Hiding
- People-pleasing
- Minimizing sin
- Escaping
- Denying
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Avoiding conflict
- Fantasizing
- Focusing on another's sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Numbing
- Denying

Fight

- Arguing
- Manipulating
- Intimidating
- Convincing
- Anger
- Escaping
- Acting as a martyr/victim
- Being negative or critical
- Condemning
- Focusing on another's sin
- Blaming others
- Lying/deceiving
- Being passive-aggressive

Underlying Beliefs/Fears

- Fear of the unknown
- Fear of the future
- Fear of failure
- Fear of missing out
- Fear of rejection
- Fear of consequences
- Fear of exposure
- Fear of pain and suffering
- Fear of loss (health, financial, relationship, security, reputation)

My Heart Unchained

My Situation

My Response

FEELING

THINKING

CHOOSING

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

Why Am I Responding This Way?

PERCEIVED NEED/DESIRE

CONTROL-RESPONSES

UNDERLYING BELIEF/FEARS

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------	-------------------------------

Steps To Walk In Obedience

GOD'S TRUTH

ACTION STEPS

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-------------------------------	-------------------------------