

*The Ideal Christian*

**#4—Stepping  
Stones To  
Greatness**

**12 Lessons**

*Prepared by:*  
**Paul E. Cantrell**

**2010**



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## Lesson 1

**"A Person of Self-Worth"**

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How a person values him or herself will make a big difference in their outlook, their actions or lack of such, and how well they get along with people. Some people's value of themselves could be looked upon as **extreme** while others may be considered as fairly average in their view of self. A person can go to the extreme of pride and arrogance; or, go to the other extreme of always running one's self down. The "Ideal" is to have a correct view of ourselves and go to neither extreme position. It is also important to use the right terminology in trying to describe what I am talking about. Are we talking about self-image or are we talking about self-worth?

1. **How do I value myself?**
  - ◇ Too much on self?
  - ◇ Too little on self?
  - ◇ Just right?
  - ◇ Still working on it?
2. **How do others value me?**
  - ◇ Too much on self?
  - ◇ Too little on self?
  - ◇ Just right?
  - ◇ Still working on it?

**How Does God Value Me?**

Possibly the best question that can be asked would be—**How does God value me?** To those that are acquainted with the Scriptures, there should not be a "one-sided" answer! Again, there is a danger in seeing only one side of this issue and not seeing the full picture.

Notice the "**one-sided**" view of mankind from Scripture:

1. **Jn. 3:19**—"*This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.*"
2. **Jn. 8:44**—"*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*"
3. **Rom. 1:32**—"*...and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.*"
4. **Rom. 3:10**—"*There is none righteous, not even one...*"
5. **Rom. 3:23**—"*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....*"

If all have sinned; then, all are worthy of death! *"The wages of sin is death!"* (Rom. 6:23). What an epitaph for mankind! What a "put down" for humanity! We could very easily conclude from this brief "treatise" that humanity is nothing—valueless—good for nothing!

But our knowledge of mankind does not stop there—thankfully! We do have value! We do have worth! We do have self-worth! **And God says so!** Notice the other side of the picture!

1. **Ps. 8:5-6**—*"Yet You have made him a little lower than God (angels), and You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet."*
2. **Gen. 1:27**—*"God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*
3. **Matt. 6:26**—*"Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"*

Even though God sees man as rebellious, sinful, and lost; yet, he is **WORTH** saving! We have no means or merit of our own to redeem ourselves from our fallen estate; but, through Christ, we can be redeemed! This is God's way of giving us **self-worth!**

1. **Rom. 8:31-32**—*"What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"*
2. **1 Peter 2:9**—*"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..."*
3. **Acts 2:40**—*"And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'"*
4. **Phil. 2:12**—*"...work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."*
5. **Heb. 5:9**—*"...He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation..."*

It is quite obvious that Christ Jesus thought mankind was worth saving because He was willing to give up heaven and take on the form of human flesh and became "sin" for us that we might be redeemed unto life eternal. It is quite obvious that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit all see value in us.....to do what they did and are still doing!

### **A Proper Self-Worth**

Thus, for us to have the proper "self-worth" requires that we see our sinfulness and helplessness in being able to save ourselves by our own "bootstraps!" Once we have been properly evaluated by God, we can then get a true picture of ourselves by being redeemed by Christ. Our true value is seen—not in our greatness and goodness; but rather, in the God who has redeemed us by the precious blood of Christ! By being "redeemed" and "renewed," we then become new people with the right purposes and right attitudes and actions.

1. **Rom. 6:4**—*"Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."*

2. **Eph. 4:24**—"*...and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*"

If we really know to whom we belong, we have no reason to have a "poor" self-worth! We are the sons and daughters of the great King of this Universe! He has promised to give us all things that pertain to life and godliness! (2 Pet. 1:3). We have been given all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus! (Eph. 1:3). We have been promised eternal life with God! What more do we need in order to see the value that God places upon His obedient children!

### **Concluding Thoughts**

It is very important how I view myself! It is also critical how we allow others to wrongly influence our view of ourselves. But it is of the utmost importance how God views me. Until we see the "two-sidedness" view that God has of me, I will not have a correct "self-worth."

1. **How do you view yourself?**
2. **Would you rather be someone else and not you?**
3. **How well do you handle criticism?**
4. **Who do you allow to influence your self-worth?**
5. **Would you feel guilty to say that your self-worth is 100 %?**

### **Stepping Stones #1**

**Recognize that I am a person of worth or value because God said so!**

**Lesson Two****"A Person With an Open Mind"**

If a person's mind is not open to learn or to gain insight, he might as well be dead! Well, almost, anyway! The Ideal Person is one who is always learning! He has an open mind that makes such possible. But there must be an emphasis upon open-mindedness to God's Truth! A great deal is said about one's being open to the Truth:

1. Jesus talked about the truth throughout His public ministry.
2. He is the Truth (Jn. 14:6).
3. He is the God of Truth (Deut. 32:4).
4. He speaks only Truth (Prov. 12:17).
5. All His commandments are Truth (Ps. 119:151).
6. We are all encouraged to walk before Him in Truth (1 Kings 2:4).
7. We are to buy the Truth and not to sell it (Prov. 23:23).
8. Those who do Truth, come to the light (Jn. 3:21).

Look at the **CONTRAST** between being open-minded and closed-minded!

**Closed-mindedness:**

1. **People hide the truth.**
2. **People deny the truth.**
3. **People distort the truth.**
4. **People curse the truth.**
5. **People hate the truth.**
6. **People turn from the truth.**
7. **The Way of truth is evil spoken of.**
8. **In their hands, truth perishes (Jer. 7:28).**
9. **People will not speak truth (Jer. 9:5).**
10. **People will not obey the truth (Rom. 2:8).**
11. **People are destitute of truth (1 "Tim. 6:5).**

**Open-mindedness:**

1. **People are open to the truth.**
2. **People uphold the truth.**
3. **People stick with the truth.**
4. **People praise the truth.**
5. **People love the truth (2 Thess. 2:12).**
6. **People pursue truth.**
7. **People seek truth (Jer. 5:1).**
8. **People should desire that God lead them in truth (teach) (Ps. 25:5).**
9. **People should rejoice in truth (1 Cor. 13:6).**
10. **We are to speak truth in love (Eph. 4:15).**

We make the choice as to whether our mind is open or shut! We cannot be forced, even against our will, to be one or the other.

**Matthew 13:10-17**

Jesus points out people whose minds are closed in contrast to those that are open. He offers condemnation to those who will not use their faculties to understand and accept the Truth of God! These people were blind and deaf and dull of hearing. They had closed their eyes so that they would not see; they had stopped up their ears so that they would not hear the message that Jesus was bringing to them; and they had hardened their hearts so that they could not understand the message of salvation. Jesus then turns to His close disciples and says: ***"But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear."*** (v. 16). It is obvious that they made their choice—they did not want to understand! Notice this rebuked by the Apostle in Acts 13:46: ***"Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.'"*** But happily many of the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them..." (13:42).

In the midst of Jesus' rebuke of these people, He pointed out a great truth to those who are willing to listen and learn: ***"To you has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."*** (Matt. 13:11-12). When we are open to learning, this only leads to more learning, but to the closed-minded they become double losers!

**The Learning Process**

The learning process can be seen in several different ways and terms that identify them:

1. **To examine.** It is to inspect what is said carefully—to study something in detail.
2. **To investigate.** It is to analyze in order to understand.
3. **To test.** Learn how to put our knowledge to the test of Truth.
4. **To interrogate.** Ask and keep asking questions to be sure of our understanding.
5. **To Observe.** Scrutinize, look things over good.
6. **To research.** Make an effort to get all the details in order to have a correct understanding.
7. **To Appraise.** Make an effort to evaluate what has been learned.

The open-minded person is one who is willing to examine, evaluate, or put his knowledge to the best.

2 Cor. 13:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 26:2 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 9:3 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 11:28 \_\_\_\_\_

Our hearts also need to be proved, evaluated as well.

Ps. 173 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 66:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
Ps. 95:9 \_\_\_\_\_

God actually calls upon His people to test Him or prove Him.

Malachi 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We need to be open and willing to be examined or tested.

Exo. 10:4; 20:20 \_\_\_\_\_

Deut. 8:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Rom. 12:2 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 8:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 6:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 5:10 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Tim. 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion**

To be open-minded is not encouraging people to be naive or act foolishly. We are encouraged to ask, seek, and knock in order for us to learn (Matt. 7:7-8). Sincere seekers will enter in at the narrow gate that leads to everlasting life (Matt. 7:13-14). To be open-minded is to be open to all of God's Truth!

**Stepping Stone #2**

**Recognize that I am a Person with an Open Mind desiring to Learn God's  
Eternal Truths!**

## "A Person of Integrity"

What do we mean when we say that a person has "integrity?" How would you define the use of this term? What are some synonyms that help to identify the meaning of this term? The word is generally defined as:

1. Sincerity of heart;
2. Sincere intentions;
3. Truthfulness;
4. Uprightness;
5. Or, Soundness.

The word "integrity" is actually used in the NASV in the following references:

Gen. 20:1-7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Kings 9:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 7:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 25:21 \_\_\_\_\_

(Ps. 26:1, 11; 41:12; 78:72)

Prov. 11:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Prov. 19:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Prov. 20:7 \_\_\_\_\_

The references in the Book of Job are especially good to give insight to the use of this word.

Job 2:1-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

While the word "integrity" does not occur in the New Testament NASV, it does carry with it the concepts of: **Sincerity, Truth, Pure of Heart, Being Honest, Genuine, possessing true Character.**

### **A Person of Integrity will be Honest!**

Eph. 4:25 \_\_\_\_\_

He will be honest! His word is his bond! He stands behind what he says. He does not go back on a deal. He does not lie or deceive others. He pays his bills and takes care of his debts. He does not cheat or steal. Guile and falsehood are offensive to him (Prov. 20:7).

Rom. 13:6-8 \_\_\_\_\_

### **A Person of Integrity will be Sincere!**

Phil. 1:10 \_\_\_\_\_

"He is what he appears to be!" He is a sincere person. He is not a hypocrite; nor is he a "put on!" The apostle was an example of such sincerity.

2 Cor. 1:12 \_\_\_\_\_

### **A Person of Integrity will be Blameless!**

Phil. 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_

He is not a perfect person, but he is blameless! He is one who deals with sin in his life. He is one who is truly striving to live right! A young man wanted council from an older person. The older man stated that he had two questions to ask him.

*"Suppose you would never be found out and no one would be harmed, at least not in any physical way. If these circumstances were guaranteed, would you tell a lie for \$1,000.00?"*

The young man thought for a minute and said: "Yes!" Whereupon the older man ask: "Then, would you tell that lie for a dime?" Furious, the young man said: "Of course not! What do you think I am?" The older man said: "I already know what you are. I am now trying to establish your price."

One measure of a person's integrity is what he would do if he knew he couldn't be found out! We only have integrity when we allow God's truth to rule our lives!

### **A Person of Integrity will be Dependable!**

1 Tim. 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_

This person is one who possesses a sense of duty. Daniel had a sense of duty to pray to God. He continued doing it in spite of the dangers involved. This kind of person can be counted on through "thick and thin!" Give him a job and it will be done to the best he can do. The passage deals with appointing men to be Deacons who have been "proven!" They have shown "character." They have passed the test of their character.

Dependability is a much needed attribute that shows a person to be one of integrity.

### **A Person of Integrity will be one of Moral Purity!**

1 Tim. 4:12 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Thess. 4:3-8 \_\_\_\_\_

This person will have strong moral qualities. This becomes obvious by the choices that are made between good and evil (Heb. 5:14). It is making the right moral choices and staying with such! It is

shown by our speech (Eph. 4:29); by our course of action in face of temptation like Joseph (Gen. 39:10-12); and by the way we dress (1 Tim. 2:9).

### **A Person of Integrity will be shown Generally!**

#### **1. To be a living sacrifice for God (Rom. 12:1)**

- ◇ *Animals were slain as an offering to God.*
- ◇ *He wants man to be a living sacrifice to Him.*
- ◇ *One that continually brings glory and honor to His Redeemer.*
- ◇ *The basis for his appeal is because of God's mercy to His people.*

#### **2. To offer a reasonable sacrifice (Rom. 12:1)**

- ◇ *To offer yourself as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God.*
- ◇ *This is only reasonable in view of what God has done for us.*

#### **3. To allow God to transform our minds (Rom. 12:2)**

- ◇ *The world would like to press us into their mold—be like them.*
- ◇ *They want to impress our minds with what they have to offer.*
- ◇ *But one committed to God needs to allow the One He worships to transform his thinking.*

#### **4. To think soberly about ourselves (Rom. 12:3)**

- ◇ *Man's tendency is to think too highly of himself.*
- ◇ *Jesus warns us about this in Luke 14:11.*
- ◇ *Be committed to have a correct view of ourselves among our fellow human beings.*

#### **5. To be a functioning part of the great body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-5)**

- ◇ *The Lord's people are one—unified in Christ.*
- ◇ *It functions like a human body made up of many members.*
- ◇ *Each member carrying his part of the load as he has ability.*

#### **6. To use our special abilities (gifts) in God's service—to help His people and others (Rom. 12:6-8).**

- ◇ *All members are needed—all are important to the success of the body.*
- ◇ *Whatever the ability—find a way to use it to the upbuilding of the Lord's church.*

### **Concluding Thoughts**

What we have looked at in no way exhaust the material that deals with the concept of Integrity; but, we do hope that each of us has a little better understanding of what this word means and its importance in our lives.

### **Stepping Stone #3**

**Recognize that I am a person of Integrity!**

## Lesson Four

**"A Person of Restraint or Discipline"**

One of the stated reasons for the fall of the Roman Empire was a lack of restraint or discipline in the moral and ethical realm. Instead of restraint there was a desire for ease, luxury, self-indulgence and dissipation. As a nation, we face the same challenge today. If we will not face it, we too will perish as a people.

Discipline as a people is very important! Laws have to be made to regulate people's lives and behavior because they will not regulate themselves. With a lack of restraint comes the need for enforcing of laws upon the lawless.

**1 Tim. 1:8-11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The church also is expected to discipline those members who will not conform to "sound doctrine"—those who will not discipline themselves.

**Matt. 18:15-17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Cor. 5:1-5** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2 Thess. 3:10-15** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Why is there a lack of Discipline?**

**1. Because discipline requires strength and courage.** The easy way out at the moment is to allow things to drift. It is easier to warn softly when stronger measures are needed. It is to deceive one's self into believing that "all will work out right eventually." Firmness and determination are often needed to bring about a more disciplined life. The goal of extending discipline to another is to bring about the strength to be self-disciplined! (Matt. 16:24).

**1 Sam. 2:22-25; 3:13** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**2. Because proper discipline takes time.** It is too easy to make quick, rash, and harsh decisions. Fathers are told "*not to exasperate your children so that they will not lose heart.*" (Col. 3:21). It is important to study out the situation, listen to all sides, and to evaluate past decisions. The person who will not administer proper discipline is asking for problems.

**3. Because proper self-discipline grows out of "unselfish caring for others."** The selfish person will find it very hard (if not impossible) to be a disciplined person. We not only willingly bring ourselves under God's control for our own good, but also for the good of others. We exercise discipline over our physical appetites and emotions rather than to be enslaved by them. It is to discipline one's self so that he will not follow the crowd; but be able to think and act for himself and make decisions correctly. We should want to grow up, become responsible people and disciplined adults.

**Phil. 2:3**

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### **The Challenge of a Self-Disciplined Life**

There are several synonyms that help to identify this concept; such as:

1. Temperance
2. Self-Control
3. Orderliness
4. Restraint in its various forms of forbiddance
5. To teach, Train, Nurture, Admonitions, etc.

Jesus used the word "disciple" quite often (Lk. 14:33). A follower of Jesus has to be taught and trained to live right. He has to bring himself under the control of Jesus' Will. We are warned not to despise chastening that leads to self-discipline (Job 5:17; Prov. 3:11-12). The purpose of God's Word is to give us correction and direction so we can live a disciplined life. Self-control or discipline is one of the fruits of the Spirit of God (Gal. 5:23). It is definitely a virtue that needs to be added to our lives. The Christian life cannot be properly lived without discipline (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

A self-disciplined life is one of persistence! A person can have good intentions and high goals for his life; but, without persistence, they are worthless! (Heb. 3:14). Nothing can take the place of persistence—neither talented people, people of genius, nor educated people—because they can all fail! Just imagine what a life of persistent discipline can accomplish in a life-time for God:

- 1. I will never give up so long as I know I am doing right.**
- 2. I will believe all things will work out for me if I hang on to the end.**
- 3. I will be courageous and undismayed in the face of odds.**
- 4. I will not permit anyone to intimidate me or deter me from my goals.**
- 5. I will fight to overcome all physical handicaps and setbacks.**
- 6. I will try again and again and yet again to accomplish what is right.**
- 7. I will learn from others who have successfully overcome adversity.**
- 8. I will never surrender to discouragement or despair no matter what obstacles may confront me.**

### **Things necessary to a disciplined Life**

- 1. Learn to finish the task begun.** (Heb. 3:14; Prov. 22:29).
- 2. Subdue the body and its unlawful desires.** (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Cor. 6:20).

- 3. Bring our mind into control.** (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 15:18; Prov. 29:11; 1 Pet. 1:13).
- 4. Deal with over-indulgence.** (Prov. 23:20-21).
- 5. Handle responsibility gladly.** (Matt. 11:29-30; 25:19-30).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The Christian life is serious, challenging, and demanding. It is not a glorified picnic, nor a dress parade—but a battlefield! A disciplined life must come out of a spirit of:

- 1. Earnestness and commitment.**
- 2. A passion for improvement for Jesus' sake.**
- 3. A sense of stewardship towards life for Jesus' sake.**
- 4. A readiness for sacrifice and service for Jesus' sake.**
- 5. A steady application to the task at hand for Jesus' sake.**

We cannot live in self-indulgence and win a spiritual or moral victory! We have a challenge to bring our wills into conformity to God's Will and not have to have someone standing over me trying to make or coerce me to do right. We need to be able to make decisions that **show self-disciplined living.**

### **Stepping Stones #4**

**I Need to Recognize that I am a Person of Discipline or Restraint!**

Lesson Five

**"A Person of Balance"**

If you were to state about a person that he or she is a "middle-of-the-road" person, you would not have a very good view of them. They straddle the fence or they can't make up their minds which to choose. But there is also a good sense in which this concept can be used. When we say that a person has balance in their views, their lives, or their actions, we are saying something good about them. Or, when we say that a person has "steadiness" or that he is "well-adjusted"; we are saying something good about someone. It is in this sense that we would like to view this lesson on "Balance!"

The Pharisees were often unbalanced in their teachings and practices.

**Matt. 23:23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Israelites, at the time of King Saul, were unbalanced in their view about sacrifices and obedience to God.

**1 Sam. 15:22-23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God gave the correct view of balance in His admonition to Moses.

**Deut. 5:32-33** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A Balanced View of Salvation**

Men tend to go to extreme positions. The further the pendulum swings to one extreme, the further it goes in the other extreme. People have a hard time finding a balanced position that is correct and harmonizes God's Word. Extremes are evident by the expressions that are used by people:

- Salvation by Grace alone.**
- Salvation by Faith alone.**
- Salvation by Good Works alone.**

It should be obvious to anyone who reads the Scriptures that Salvation by Good Works alone is an extreme position held to by people who try to be "good" but don't want to have anything to do with religion. The Scriptures are very clear and plain in refuting this extreme position.

**Rom. 3:10** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Rom. 3:20** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Rom. 4:2** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gal. 2:21** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gal. 3:10-11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"Salvation by Good Works Alone" is an obvious "no-no!"

It is an extreme position that does not harmonize the teachings of the word of God. Works Salvation has to deal with man earning or meriting his right to Heaven. There is a distinct difference between "wages" and a "gift." Wages are something we earn or merit. A gift is something we do not earn, but it is something that is given out of the goodness of one's heart. There is a term that is often used that identifies this view also—**A Legalist!** It is this type of person who trusts in His "Law keeping" to make him acceptable to God. He feels that he earns his right to go to heaven on the basis of his good Law keeping. He feels that God is obligated to him. This is obviously an extreme position. HOWEVER, good works are a requirement in order for a person to be saved and go to Heaven as we shall see later.

Another extreme position is "Salvation by Grace Alone."

Man **has** to be saved by Grace because he cannot be justified by good works alone. But man is not saved by Grace alone! If this was possible, then all men would be saved because our salvation would depend entirely on God. This is obviously an extreme position that does not make good sense at all. And the Scriptures show that this is an extreme position.

**Eph. 2:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Rom. 6:1-2** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

"Grace alone" is viewed as a license to live any way we want to—it doesn't matter.

**Jude 4** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

But it does matter how we live! The New Testament is filled with exhortations on the necessity of living godly and righteously.

**Tit. 2:11-12** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**Matt. 7:21** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A **balanced** view of Salvation will involve not only God's grace, but as well, good works.

A third extreme position is "Salvation by Faith Alone."

Man has to be saved by faith because he is a responsible human being that has to give an accounting to God (2 Cor. 5:10). If he has no accounting to do, then he is not lost....nor does he need to be saved! However, Salvation is not by Faith Alone! A mere belief that God exist is not

what is involved in Salvation by Faith. If mere belief was all that we had to do, then (again) we could live anyway we wanted to! The inspired record tells us that faith is not acceptable faith until it is put into action.

**Jas. 2:17-24** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

A **balanced** view of Salvation will involve not only God's grace, but as well, faith that is shown by its good works.

### **Balance in My Life as a Christian**

Saul was the first king of Israel. His life went from bad to worse. Upon one occasion he was told to go and utterly destroy the Amalekites. Saul disobeyed by sparing the king and some of the animals. When confronted by the Prophet Samuel, he offered excuses (1 Sam. 15:1-15). Samuel, the Prophet, replied:

**1 Sam. 15:22-23** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Saul learned to his dismay that "sacrifices" were no substitute for obedience to God. He needed both to be right with God! His life was definitely out of balance.

What about our lives—do we have it in balance? God does not want our relationship with Him to be one of shallow, transient feelings, and empty words and rituals—or even hearts that are enthusiastic one day and frigid the next. A superficial ritual can never take the place of sincere love and faithful obedience to God. But, God wants both—it is not an either or matter (Matt. 9:9-13; 12:1-8). What God wants is balance in our lives! He wants both—not one or the other (Matt. 23:23). This is also illustrated with how we are to love (1 John 3:16-18). Zeal should be balanced with knowledge also (Rom. 10:1-4). Even God's kindness and severity are in balance! (Rom. 11:22).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

Extremes are not the correct way of living. One-sided emphasis is not correct living either. God wants us to be balanced and both-sided in our efforts. Let's be sure that our understanding of Salvation is correct and balanced in our understanding. And then, let's be sure that our life as a Christian is continually kept in a balance view of things.

### **Stepping Stone #5**

**I need to recognize that I am a person of Balance!**

## Lesson Six

**"A Person Who Deals With Temptation"**

*"Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder  
Why it should be thus all the day long,  
While there are others living about us,  
Never molested tho' in the wrong.  
When death has come and taken our loved ones,  
It leaves our home so lonely and drear;  
Then do we wonder why others prosper,  
Living so wicked year after year.*

Temptation is a fact of life! We are on this earth only a short time and we quickly see the reality of such! Temptations come and sometimes in a flood! How do we deal with them? Or, maybe we should ask, *"How well do we deal with them?"* The "Ideal Christian" is one who not only faces up to the temptations of life, but is successful in dealing with them. Such is surely one of the Stepping Stones to Greatness!

One thing we can be quite sure of—**Temptation** is not a sin; but, such can lead to sin! Temptation is an appeal made to mankind to do wrong. It is a desire or craving for something that is considered to be wrong. It can be the incitement of a desire or craving. It can come from our own hearts or it can come from others; or, it can come even from events or circumstances. Whatever entices us to think or act wrong, brings sin into our lives.

**Jas. 1:14** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

James gives the answer as to how a person is tempted and also gives the process as well. We can be tempted when we are enticed by our own desires. Deception is also a big factor in temptations. We can deceive ourselves or we can be deceived by others.

**Gen. 3:13** \_\_\_\_\_  
**2 Pet. 2:13** \_\_\_\_\_

Things, as well as people can be deceptive.

**Matt. 13:22** \_\_\_\_\_

In order to give into temptation, there has to be sometime in us that the appeal is made to. The Biblical concept seems to be that of "**Lust!**" When lust is conceived, it gives birth to sin. And sin, when it is finished, brings death (Jas. 1:14-15). All creatures are made to have wants, needs, desires, and appeals. This is the reason why we can be tempted. Without these things, there would be no avenue of temptation. Thus, temptations come because we are "flesh." Because Angels are not flesh, their temptations would have to be of a different kind from ours.

### The Two-Sided Concept of Temptation

There is a bad side of Temptation. It is an effort to entice people to do wrong—to do evil! Then, there is the good side of Temptation. It is putting people to the test—to try their faith to see if it is real; to test one's friendship or convictions, etc. It is quite obvious that humans can be tempted in both senses. But, the Bible plainly states that "**God cannot be tempted by evil, neither does he tempt anyone!**" (Jas. 1:13) God has no desire to cause anyone to sin! He cannot sin Himself! So, temptation in this sense is not possible with Deity! However, there are Scriptures that talk about God tempting humans and God being tempted.

Acts 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_

Heb. 11:17 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 10:9 \_\_\_\_\_

The way to harmonize this supposed contradiction is to see the two-sidedness of temptation. God cannot be tempted to sin nor does he tempt man to sin. But He can put man to the test in order for them to prove their loyalty and devotion to God. He not only tests men, but approves of their victory over temptation.

Another important concept about God and temptation is the "restraint" of God over temptation.

1 Cor. 10:13 \_\_\_\_\_

All temptation of man is common (reasonable—what can be expected). For God will not allow man to be tempted beyond what he is able to bear or hold up under. He will provide a way of escape, so that the person can **endure** it! The will of man has to be involved in the process.

### Satan's Temptation of God and Man

The Bible does say that Satan tempts God!

Acts 15:10 \_\_\_\_\_

But in what sense does he tempt God? In what sense is God tempted by man's disobedience and unbelief? (Exo. 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; 13:3; Ps. 26:2; 2Chron. 32:31)

Satan's temptation of man is different. His efforts is to entice man to doubt, unbelief, and rebellion against God. He is called **The Tempter!** He was evidently the first to fall! He also was able to deceive many of the angels to get them to rebel as well. And...he continues to dirty work on man continually. We are warned about his evil work and the end to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation.

Lk. 22:40 \_\_\_\_\_

Gal. 6:1 \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Pet. 5:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 6:13** \_\_\_\_\_

But, what about the temptation of Jesus? In what sense or senses was He tempted? How could the sinless Son of God be tempted? What force could be brought to bear to cause Him to be tempted—much less to sin? The temptations seemed to have been real!

**Heb. 2:8** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 4:1-11** \_\_\_\_\_

The appeal was obviously made to the three main areas of mankind's temptations—*"the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life."* (1 Jn. 2:15-16). (Turn stones into bread; If you are the Son of God; and I will give you all the kingdoms). Was Jesus able to be tempted because He was flesh?

**Concluding Thoughts**

It is obvious that we can easily see and hopefully understand what it means to be tempted by human beings; but the answer may not be so easy to come by when you deal with Deity, as well as, both Deity and human together.

We know that trials have a beneficial side and purpose. This is the reason why God permits such temptations. (Jas. 1:2-4). While Satan wants trials or temptations to lead to sin, it is obvious that God does not! God wants us to be fortified against temptation and to be victorious over all temptations. He wants to see us tempted, tested, tried, and proven! And, He wants to see us rejoicing over our victory after victory. *"Count it all joy, my brethren!"*

**Stepping Stone #6**

**I need to recognize that I am a person who deals successfully with Temptations!**

## Lesson Seven

**"A Person Who Handles Disappointments"**

How do we handle the challenges of life; how do we react to afflictions, frustrations, and the unexpected? How do we meet disappointments and difficulties? Do we become angry and vent our anger upon ourselves or others? Or, do we vent our anger upon God? Or do we just give up and quit? Do we allow ourselves to become bitter and blame our problems on circumstances or others? Do we let it cause break-ups in communities or destroy relationships? Or, do we continue in self-pity and make everyone miserable around us? Just how do we meet the disappointments of life?

**How would you handle these situations?**

A hard working man is cut down in his prime by an unexpected accident. He can't provide for his needs or the needs of his family. In despair, he cries out—what must I do? What would you tell him?

A lady has heavy burdens to bear and feels that she cannot go on. She lost her job and can't seem to find another. She finds it very difficult to live on welfare. She says that she lives a lonely life, gets depressed and has no one to turn to in time of need. What would you tell her?

Another lady is told (in the midst of her difficulties) that time heals all wounds and that God will comfort her. But she asked, *"does he walk with me to the cemetery to visit my 6-year old son?"* Or, *"Does He walk with me to cemetery to visit my 18-year old daughter who finally died of Lymphoma?"* Or, *"Does He cry with me, or ease my pain, or answer my prayers?"* And, *"Is there a loving merciful God who really cares?"* What answer can we give to some one like this? What reassuring words can we offer to such a person?

**Who can Help?**

Not everyone who might like to help or speak to those undergoing trials and tribulations can bring words of comfort and strength. How can such a person as the following be of comfort to another: (1) One who has been sheltered all of their life; (2) One who has not faced the clouds of doubt and despair; and (3) One who hasn't had to battle for their lives just to survive? But those who have triumphed over difficulties more than once by faith in God should be able to offer the kind of help that is needed.

**Job** was such a person! The unexpected happened to him in a BIG way! He was a righteous man that was highly respected by men, but praised by God for his righteousness (Job 1:8). His time of trial came one after the other:

- 1) All of his animals were taken and his servants slain that tended after them.
- 2) Most of his wealth was gone.
- .....3) His sons and daughters were all slain at one time.

What was his reaction? *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."* (Job 1:21). What

would have been our reaction if such should have happened to us? What could we have said to him? But that is not the end of the story! Job was then stricken with boils from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet (Job 2:7). His wife's reaction was what you would expect from human beings—"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" (Job 2:9). But what was Job's reaction? "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10). And later, at the end of his discussion with his friends, Job learned something—(Read Job 42:1-6). He was humbled by God, but greatly blessed as well—all was restored to him! Could Job have identified with us in our trials? Could he have had something worthwhile to say to help encourage us?

**Thoughts to Ponder**

Perhaps, no one can fully comprehend the reasons for mankind's suffering, afflictions, difficulties, frustrations, or having to deal with the unexpected; but we can live and learn not only from God's word, but from experience as well. And we can also profit from those who have lived life ahead of us and left some sage advice that we should ponder over.

- 1) Seek to understand the greatness of God.
- 2) Gladly submit your will to God.
- 3) Peace will come that will be a blessing (Phil. 4:7).
- 4) The God of Heaven can be trusted!
- 5) Faith in Christ can give the strength we need to bear up under all difficulties (Phi. 4:13).
- 6) Count your blessings (Phil. 4:6).
- 7) Use failure as stepping stones to higher ground.
- 8) Seek the help of those who have successfully gone through the trials of life.

**Scriptures to Ponder over**

**Ps. 34:8-9** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Jas. 1:17** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 7:7-11** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 6:33-34** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**1 Pet. 5:6-7** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Concluding Thoughts**

No special worked-out theory or formula can blank-out the great pain of some of our losses in this life. However, the Lord does provide a way for us to live with our sorrows and tribulations and gradually to overcome all the challenging things we have to endure. Job's latter end was great because he trusted in God. Peter's question to Jesus would seem to be most appropriate at this point: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life!"* (Jn. 6:68). To whom else can we turn but to Him that can give great consolation (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

### **Stepping Stones (#7)**

**I need to recognize that I am a person who handles Disappointments!**

## Lesson Eight

**"A Person that is Godly"**

I don't believe that anyone would deny that an "Ideal Christian" would be a godly person! The concept of this term indicates that a person is devout, has a God-ward attitude, and does that which is well-pleasing to God. Maybe, more in particular, this person is one who seeks after God—who has God as his goal in life. He is God-centered! It is certainly God's will that we be godly people!

**1 Tim. 4:7** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Pet. 1:6** \_\_\_\_\_

Godliness is profitable and has the promise of life with God (1 Tim. 4:8). Godliness with contentment is "great gain." (1 Tim. 6:6). God's people are challenged to act the way that is fitting for one who professes Godliness (1 Tim. 2:10). However, Godliness will have its trials also. (2 Tim. 3:12).

Since true Religion involves a two-fold concept (God and Mankind), it is suggested that "Godliness" may have reference to our relationship with God being right and "Righteousness" may have reference to our relationship with our fellow-man. (See Matt. 22:37-40).

**"God" is his "Goal!"**

God's people are admonished to *"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness!"* (Matt. 6:33). God is to be "pre-eminent" in our lives; He is to be before all others; He is not to be secondary, but primary. The first and primary thing to be on our minds is God (Col. 3:1). If we are to have a GOAL in life, it must be God! He should be our ultimate Goal!

Man has been designed by God to be "Goal-oriented!" We are built that way. We have been made to **conquer environment, solve problems, and achieve goals**. If life is not worthwhile, it is because we have no worthwhile goals to achieve. We should always have proper goals ahead to look forward to. There can be no greater goal than GOD!

**Seek After God!**

God has challenged us to SEEK AFTER HIM! *"Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances..."* (Zeph. 2:3)

**Psa. 63:1** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why Seek after God?**

- 1) Because He can be found! (Psa. 27:7-11; Prov. 8:17)
- 2) Because He is favorable to those who seek Him. (Ezra 8:22)
- 3) Because He brings rejoicing and gladness. (Psa. 40:16)
- 4) Because He helps us to understand all things. (Prov. 28:5)

- 5) Because we will not want for any good thing. (Psa. 34:10)
- 6) Because He will bless us (Psa. 119:2)

**How should we seek God?**

- 1) With our whole heart. (Psa. 119:2)
- 2) By observing His testimonies. (Psa. 119:2)
- 3) With diligence. (Prov. 8:17)
- 4) With all of heart and soul. (Deut. 4:29)
- 5) While he can be found. (Isa. 55:6)

**Why can God not be found?**

- 1) When people hate knowledge.
- 2) When they choose not to fear the Lord.
- 3) When they would have none of God's counsel.
- 4) When they despise His every rebuke.
- 5) When they will not prepare their hearts. (2 Chron. 12:14)

**Concluding Thoughts**

It should be obvious that Godliness is having a right relationship with God and maintaining that relationship day after day. It is to live daily the way that pleases the Lord. It is to daily walk with the Lord. This would involve:

- 1) Walking in the light and not in darkness (1 Jn. 1:6-7).
- 2) A continual cleansing by the blood of Christ (1 Jn. 1:7).
- 3) A continual confessing of any sins in our lives (1 Jn. 1:9).
- 4) The constant keeping of God's commandments (1 Jn. 2:3).
- 5) A continual loving of our brethren (1 Jn. 2:10).
- 6) One who continually does the Will of God (1 Jn. 2:17).
- 7) One who continually confesses their faith in Jesus as the Son of God (1 Jn. 2:22-23).
- 8) One who continually practices righteousness (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7).
- 9) One who loves in tongue, deed, and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18).

The "Ideal Christian" is one that is a Godly person! It is not a put on, nor a front, but sincere and truthful. What a great privilege it is to be able to live a Godly life!

**Stepping Stones (#8)**

**I need to recognize that I am a Godly person!**

## Lesson Nine

**"A Person of Righteous Vision"**

God is Righteous! He is Righteous in the absolute! Righteousness is an attribute of God (Deut. 32:4). It is the same as His faithfulness, His truthfulness, and His holiness. They are all tied in together. God **wills** and maintains His own Righteousness. He didn't become righteous, but He is righteous! He is righteous in his actions, judgments, and commands—they are all just and right. (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 5:5). His punishments are just and right. His hatred of Sin and the Sinner is Just. *"It is the Sinner who is punished, not the Sin."*

2 Thess. 1:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Tim. 4:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 15:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God's "**Legislative Righteousness**" would be the **Conscience** that He has placed in all men along with the **public Revelation of His will** (both direct and through His Scriptures).

Rom. 2:14-15 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 2:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God's "**Righteous Judgment**" would be **Just** according to His Nature. He must bring penalties upon the Law-breaker.

Gen. 18:25 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 5:5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God, in His Righteousness, reveals His love of Holiness. But in His Justice, he reveals His hatred of sin (that which is contrary to His Righteousness). God is Righteous and He expects His Creatures to be Righteous!

It should be obvious that the "Ideal Christian" would also be righteous, holy, and just! (1 Pet. 1:15-16). A righteous man is not the usual, but the unusual! When Jesus said: "**Many are called, but few are chosen**", He shows that the righteous are the unusual (Matt. 22:14; 7:13-14). But.....we need to see what makes a man righteous before God. It is quite obvious that man is not perfect as God is; so how can we be righteous as God is righteous or holy as God is holy?

**Man is called Holy or Righteous!**

Certain men (not all men) are called Righteous! A few passages from the New Testament are given below to show that this is true:

**Matt. 1:19** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 2:25** \_\_\_\_\_

**Luke 23:50** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 10:22** \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Pet. 2:7** \_\_\_\_\_

How could these (and many others in the Old Testament writings also) be called "righteous" and others not be looked upon as righteous? Even Jesus stated that certain men were "just" or "righteous." (Luke 15:7). He also stated that our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees or we will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 5:20). Mankind is told by Jesus to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first in our lives (Matt. 6:33). We can seek all day long and all of our lives and still not be righteous as God is righteous! The Apostle made this very clear in the quote from the Psalm 14:1-3 that there is **none** righteous—no, not one! (Rom. 3:10). If there is none righteous; then, how could certain people be called righteous by God? The answer is given over and over in both the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures—"**The Just (Righteous) shall live by FAITH!**" (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17). Since man cannot live perfectly, he cannot be righteous on his own merit; therefore, he has to have help from God in order to be looked upon as "just" or "righteous." But why aren't all men looked upon as righteous before God? The answer again is simple—Man's faith has to be an active, obedient faith or it is worthless to make him righteous (Jas. 2:24). Read the following Scriptures careful to see how and why certain people can be called righteous by now:

**Rom. 3:10** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 3:20** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 3:21** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 3:22** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 3:25** \_\_\_\_\_

When we accept the sacrifice of Christ that makes us righteous by surrendering our will to His Will; then, and only then, can we be called righteous. Our faith brings us into conformity to God's righteousness. People must have the will and make the effort to do right (even though we cannot be perfect). We must conform to God's standard of righteousness so we can be called "righteous" by God.

**Matt. 7:21** \_\_\_\_\_

**Matt. 5:6** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acts 10:35** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rom. 4:3** \_\_\_\_\_

**Jas. 2:23** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phil. 3:9** \_\_\_\_\_

This concept of Righteousness can accommodate mankind in all ages. This is what we call the changing element of Righteousness. Abraham was called righteous, but He did not have to be obedient to the Law of Moses (wasn't in force). He was justified by an obedient faith (whatever God required of him). Today, we must be justified by an obedient faith (we must do what God requires of us now). Being righteous does involve doing what is right!

### **Concluding Thoughts**

The "Ideal Christian" is a visionary one—he looks to the future and sees the "way of righteousness;" and, he desires to walk therein! The way he walks is based on truth or he walks in the light as God is in the light! (Jn. 8:32; 1 Jn. 1:7). He also sees or envisions that "good" can overcome evil by living righteous (Rom. 12:19). He also sees clearly that our being righteous depends not only on our living according to righteousness, but it also depends upon our faith in Christ as the means of our being made righteous by God.

### **Stepping Stones #9**

**I need to see myself as a person of Righteous Vision!**

## Lesson Ten

**"A Person of Great Knowledge"**

*"To know or not to know" or "To learn or not to learn" THAT is the question!* Our world is filled with knowledge—it is rapidly multiplying! Just how valuable is all of this knowledge to mankind? What good will it do for mankind? But a more important question would be—**What is the value of all of this knowledge to my soul?** How do I feel about obtaining all of this knowledge? How can I use it wisely? Do I really desire knowledge? But more in particular—**Do I really desire the knowledge of God?** I am convinced that the "Ideal Christian" is one who possesses great knowledge—but more in particular, great knowledge of God!

**Defining the Concept of Knowledge****1. It is to come to know, recognize or understand something.**

1. Jn. 8:32 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Jn. 13:12 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Jn. 15:18 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 Tim. 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. It is to become assured of something (Definiteness).**

1. Jn. 19:4 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Rom. 1:21 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Heb. 10:34 \_\_\_\_\_
4. 1 Jn. 4:2 \_\_\_\_\_

**3. It is to be approved.**

1. Matt. 7:23 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Matt. 25:12 \_\_\_\_\_
3. 1 Cor. 8:3 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Gal. 4:9 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. It is to know something from observation.**

1. 1 Thess. 1:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_
2. 2 Thess. 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. It is to understand something.**

1. Acts 10:28 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. It is to know something beforehand.**

1. Divine—Rom. 8:29; 11:2 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Human—Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17 \_\_\_\_\_

### Origin of Knowledge

God has so designed humans that we can observe, perceive, discern, recognize, and understand things about us. We can come to know things, peoples, events, etc. But from whence did all of this knowledge originate? We believe that God is the source of all knowledge. The term that is used to identify this concept is the **Omniscience of God**. (This means that God is all-knowing) the following Scriptures would indicate this concept.

- ◇ Ps. 139:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Ps. 147:4-5 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Ps. 33:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Isa. 46:9-10 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Acts 15:18 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Ps. 139:6 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Rom. 11:33 \_\_\_\_\_
- ◇ Eph. 3:10 \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge can be used for good or for evil...man makes the choice of how he will use it! God wants His people to grow in knowledge (Col. 1:10) not as an end in itself, but for the good that can be accomplished by this knowledge. Knowledge as an end in itself, puffs up; but, the use of such in love can accomplish great good (1 Cor. 8:1).

### The Challenge to Know!

God places before His people the challenge to grow in knowledge—the right kind of knowledge—that knowledge that can be helpful and beneficial. Look at the many ways that we are challenged in regards to knowledge:

- ◇ The knowledge of Christ Jesus is excellent. (Phil. 3:8)
- ◇ It has hidden treasures. (Col. 2:3)
- ◇ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. (Prov. 1:7)
- ◇ Knowledge is pleasant to the soul. (Prov. 2:10)
- ◇ Knowledge of God is understanding. (Prov. 9:10)
- ◇ The prudent are crowned with knowledge. (Prov. 14:18)
- ◇ The lips of the wise disperse knowledge. (Prov. 15:7)
- ◇ The man of knowledge increases strength. (Prov. 24:5)
- ◇ Knowledge preserves the lives of its possessors. (Eccl. 7:12)
- ◇ Wise men lay up knowledge. (Prov. 10:14)

We need to be zealous to gain (to grow) in the knowledge of the Lord. We are challenged to allow ourselves to be taught this great wisdom (Ps. 119:66). We are challenged to hunger and thirst after this knowledge (Matt. 5:6). We are challenged to ask, seek, and knock after this knowledge (Matt. 7:7-8). Those who do so will not be destroyed (Hos. 4:6; 1 Cor. 8:11)

### Concluding Thoughts

With proper knowledge I can gain understanding, enlightenment, discernment, and even wisdom. The real challenge is—am I willing to spend the time, money, and effort to gain such knowledge?

Some practical suggestions:

- ◇ See the great value of this knowledge.
- ◇ Be willing to be challenged to grow in this knowledge.
- ◇ Spend some time all along in accumulating this knowledge.
- ◇ The willingness and necessity of putting this knowledge into practice and use.

*"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes. The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver." (Ps. 119:71-72)*

*"Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation." (Ps. 119:97-99).*

### **Stepping Stones # 10**

**I need to see myself as a Person of Great Knowledge**

## Lesson Eleven

**"A Person of Peace"**

*"Peace, sweet Peace"*—What a wonderful and desirable **word**! This **word** can be used in reference to varied things—to people, to God, and even to greetings we wish for others. The Bible speaks of a "Covenant of Peace" (Num. 25:12); "A City of Peace" (2 Sam. 15:27); of God as a "God of Peace" (Rom. 15:33), and Jesus is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

The word "Peace" is often defined as *"the absence of conflict or war"* (Lev. 26:6). It is also defined as *"the absence of anger, contention, strife, animosity, hatred, jealousy, and pride."* But there is also a more basic idea behind this word in Scripture—that of completeness, soundness, or wholeness. It obviously would involve:

- ◇ Friendship between companions (Gen. 26:29; Ps. 28:3).
- ◇ Friendship with God through a Covenant. (Num. 25:12; Isa. 54:10).
- ◇ Contentment, safety, welfare, and happiness of others. (Isa. 32:17-18).
- ◇ As a Greeting, it has reference to a person's health, prosperity, well-being, and security. (Eccl. 3:8; Isa. 45:7).
- ◇ And generally—freedom from strife or war—a time of calm.

In this lesson, we want to briefly look at three concepts of peace: (1) Peace with other human beings; (2) Peace with God; and (3) Peace within us.

**1. Peace with other human beings.** Job observed that: *"Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble"* (Job 14:1) It seems that man is being constantly challenged to face all kinds of trials and afflictions (Christians and non-Christian alike). Every life is shaped to some degree or another by how we handle these trials and afflictions. But much of the trials we may face can come from other human beings. Just thing.....if we could survive by ourselves and didn't need other human beings around us, much of our frustrations, troubles, etc., would be gone. But since that is not the way man is made (Gen. 2:18), we have to learn how to get along with other people around us. They can be a blessing or possibly a curse in our lives—depending upon how we deal with such. This is the reason for this admonition: *"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."* (Rom. 12:18) Jesus pronounced a blessing on the **Peacemaker**: *"They shall be called sons of God."* (Matt. 5:10). To live in peace with one another is a great blessing. *"Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* (Eph. 4:1-3). James says, *"Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."* (Jas. 3:18).

**2. Peace with God.** Man's problem with God is that he wants to do his own thing rather than do what God says for him to do. He "often" thinks that he knows better than God! Of course, man is deceived or self-deceived in believing such! Peace with God requires two basic factors!

a) A Redeemer that can reconcile God and man. Jesus, the Son of God, had to come and pay the penalty of our rebellion against God in order for God to **justly** forgive us—so that we can be reconciled to God. *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their*

*trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.*" (2 Cor. 5:19). This is the reason why Jesus is called the "**Prince of Peace.**" (Isa. 9:6). And it is also the reason why the Gospel is called the "**Gospel of Peace!**" (Eph. 6:15). It is God's message to man to let him know that reconciliation is possible from God's standpoint. But at the same time, it is a message to let the wicked know that there is no peace for them unless they are reconciled to God (Isa. 48:22; Jere. 6:14).

b) A willingness on man's part to be reconciled to God. To have peace requires both parties to be willing and do their part to make for peace. God has done His part and is willing to be reconciled to man. Now, man must want this peace, as well, and do his part to have peace with God. Man's big stumblingblock is his pride! "**God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.**" (Jas. 4:6). And Jesus said: "**Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**" (Matt. 18:3). Humility on man's part is an absolute if he is to be at peace with God. To think or feel that one is at peace with God when he is unwilling to submit to the will of God is self-deception. Man's reconciliation with God comes through a faith that is submission to God's will (Rom. 5:1; Jas. 2:17-26; Heb. 5:8-9). He is to die to the old life of rebellion and become an obedient servant of God (Rom. 6:1k-4, 17k-18). This peace (tranquility of soul) comes from having a right relationship with God.

**3. Peace within us.** It should be obvious that if we are at peace with God and at peace with our fellow-man, then there should be a calm assurance that "*all is well with the world!*" However, there is a "*fly in the soup!*" We can be at peace with our fellow-man only to the extent that he will allow such—and there are a lot of times when nothing seems to help bring peace. This is the reason that wars have to be fought! This may be the only recourse to bring peace. One of the problems that the early Christians were going to have to face was persecution that would come upon them.

- a) The certainty of it was stated (2 Tim. 3:21).
- b) It was not something that was strange (1 Pet. 4:12).
- c) Even Christ was persecuted (1 Pet. 2:21).
- d) Jesus told the Apostles they would be persecuted and killed (Matt. 24:9).
- e) The Revelation Letter told about "**beheaded souls for the testimony of the Lord.**" (6:9).

In view of the above, Christians need to prepare themselves for such. We not only will have to face the common trials and afflictions of this life that comes to all men; but, in addition, we may have to face persecution for righteousness' sake. How do we have peace in the mist of all of these things? The answer is given in Phil. 4:6-7: "**Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.**" Do we believe this? Have we placed our faith fully in God's promises of:

- ◇ His love for all mankind (Jn. 3:16);
- ◇ His concern for His children (1 Pet. 5:6-7);
- ◇ That all things will work for our "eternal" good (Rom. 8:28);
- ◇ That we have no reason to fear what men may do to us (Heb. 13:5-6);
- ◇ He will not allow us to be tempted above what we can handle (1 Cor. 10:13);
- ◇ And that we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength we need (Phil. 4:13).

Our joy and peace comes through **BELIEVING!**

### **Our Challenge**

In view of what we have studied about peace, we believe that the following Scripture thoughts can serve as a great challenge to every Christian:

- 1) Seek peace and pursue it (Ps. 34:14).
- 2) Delight in peace (Ps. 37:11).
- 3) Speak peace to God's people (Ps. 85:8).
- 4) Those who love the Law have the promises of peace (Ps. 119:105).
- 5) Joy comes to the counselors of peace (Prov. 12:20).
- 6) Peace is a work of righteousness (Isa. 32:17).
- 7) Live at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18).
- 8) Speak peaceably to our neighbor (Jer. 9:8).
- 9) Lead a quiet and peaceable life (1 Tim. 2:2).
- 10) The wisdom from above is peaceable (Jas. 3:17).
- 11) Follow after the things that make for peace (Rom. 14:13).
- 12) God calls us to peace (1 Cor. 7:15).
- 13) Let the peace of God rule in your hearts (Col. 3:15).
- 14) Follow peace with all men (Heb. 12:14)
- 15) Seek peace and ensue it (1 Pet. 3:11).
- 16) Live in peace (2 Cor. 12:11).
- 17) A man of understanding holds his peace (Prov. 11:12; 17:28).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

It would be very hard to envision the "Ideal Christian" as one that was not strongly concerned for peace! In fact, we believe that he would be a "peacemaker" like God! We not only need to seek the peace that God offers, but seek to be at peace with all man. When we submit our will to God, then we should experience that peace that passes all understanding.

### **Stepping Stones #11**

**I need to see myself as a Person who is a Peacemaker!**

## Lesson Twelve

**"A Person of Concern for Others"**

The opposite of concern for others is usually looked upon as concern for self—which is considered to be selfishness. There is no question in my mind that God expects us to be concerned about ourselves. Two passages clearly show this:

1) *"Love your neighbor as you love yourself...."* (Matt. 22:39)

2) *"So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies...."* (Eph. 5:28)

Both of these passages not only emphasize the need to be concerned for others, but clearly shows the basic reason **how**...as themselves or their own bodies. The thing that is so important here is to realize that concern needs to be both ways. There is always a certain amount of concern for self that has to be there or we die! But when a person is only concerned for themselves, this we call "selfishness!" One person defined "selfishness" as *"a concern with one's own interests, needs, and wishes while ignoring those of others."* We have expressions to identify this attitude, such as: *"Take care of #1!"* We also have several undesirable terms to identify such actions, such as: **Indulgence, Self-seeking, Self-love, Self-interest, Egotism, Egocentric, Centered in, Ungenerous, Mercenary, and Covetous.** The "Ideal Christian" certainly will not be "selfish" but will be "unselfish"—concerned for others! In this lesson we want to look briefly at four things that will help us to truly show our concern for others.

**Self-Denial**

We believe that there needs to be some "self-control" (Gal. 5:23; Acts 24:25) if there is to be any self-denial. Certainly, the Christian should be in control in his life, show restraint, and to bridle his actions (1 Thess. 4:3-4; 5:22; Acts 15:20, 29; Ps. 39:1-2; Jas. 1:26); but there will also be times when there will be a need for self-denial. This concept is clearly taught in Scripture!

**Matt. 16:24-26** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gal. 5:24** \_\_\_\_\_

**Gal. 2:20** \_\_\_\_\_

**Tit. 2:12** \_\_\_\_\_

The Apostle Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all things in order to gain Christ (Phil. 3:7-11). This willingness to deny self has to be there if we are to truly show concern for others.

**A Life of Giving**

Giving can be a way of showing unselfishness and as well to show our concern for others. There are many ways to give. Giving of money is one way of giving of our time, energy, and effort. But we can also give of our food, shelter, clothing, help with a job, etc. Giving is a part of the Christian's management of money (Stewardship) before God. God owns everything—we do not! He allows us to have what we have to use correctly. We are workers together with God (1 Cor. 3:9). Giving is a duty, but it is also a privilege (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:8). Giving to help others is our way of showing our concern for them.

So, what are some obvious reasons for abounding in this grace of giving?

1. It helps me to put my trust in God, and not in money (1 Tim. 6:17).
2. It shows my concern for others (2 Cor. 8:1-5).
3. It is investing in my future, spiritually (Matt. 6:20).
4. Because of the rewards that it brings (Acts 20:35).
5. Because I want to be like God (Phil. 2:5-8).

Liberal, bountiful giving blesses both the giver and the receiver. It also shows where our love (concern) is fixed.

### **A Life of Building Relationships**

Why should we want to build relationships with others?

1. Because we need others (Gen. 2:18). The 2nd greatest command is to "**Love our neighbor!**" God only commands those things that are good or best for us! Also, there are some 48 times (in the New Testament books) that we are commanded to do things for one another; such as: **Confess faults, Pray for each other, Serve one another, Submit to one another, Forgive one another, Encourage one another, etc.** There is a good reason for all these commands!
2. Because God wants to build relationships with us! (2 Jn. 9). The 1st and greatest command is to love God with our whole being! What greater proof do we need in order to see the great value of building relationships?
3. Because it shows our concern for the welfare of others. The "one another" passages illustrate this clearly. What better way can we show our concern than by keeping these 48 commands? Even the "**Golden Rule**" encourages us to show our concern for one another.

### **Being A Servant**

There is no greater way to show our concern for others than to be a servant to others. There is no greater example of this than that of Jesus (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus points out that people are recognized as great because they serve others (Matt. 20:26-28). The world places emphasis on **Position**, but Jesus places His emphasis on **Servanthood!** The world emphasizes **Power & Authority**, but Jesus emphasizes the need to be **Lowly & Service!** He wants us to serve others for their good and their encouragement.

Some attitudes of a Servant:

1. Willingness to deny self, wants, and interests (Phil. 2:3).
2. Lowliness of mind rather than proud and haughty (Matt. 18:3).
3. To be sincerely concerned—not having the wrong motives (Phil. 2:4).
4. True affections for others (Rom. 12:10).
5. A Submissive attitude (Eph. 5:21).

### **Concluding Thoughts**

How willing are we to deny self, freely give, strive to make relationships, and truly be a servant to others? The challenge is great, but the rewards are unending for all eternity! The choice is ours to make—let's be sure that we make it wisely!

Jesus said that the greatest is a servant! We either believe Him and become a servant; or we do not truly believe Him and we continue in our selfish and self-centered ways. What choice have you made? Don't forget the great unselfish act of Jesus is what makes eternal life possible for those who will follow His example! Truly.....the "Ideal Christian" is one who is truly concerned for the welfare of others.

**Stepping Stones #12**

**I need to think of myself as a Person that is Concerned for Others!**









