



MAKING DISCIPLES

A Bible study guide for evangelism

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE STUDIES

THE WORD OF GOD	3
DISCIPLESHIP	5
SIN/DARKNESS	7
DEFINITIONS OF SINS IN GALATIANS 5	9
SALVATION/LIGHT	10
REPENTANCE	12
THE CROSS	13
A MEDICAL ACCOUNT	15
THE CHURCH	18
COUNTING THE COSTS OF DISCIPLESHIP	20

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SEEKING GOD	23
REFUTING FALSE DOCTRINES	24
FEELINGS	26

FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

TALKING TO GOD	28
BIBLE STUDY	29
CONFESSION	30
THE BODY OF CHRIST	31
TITHES & OFFERINGS	32
DISCIPLING	33
PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL	34
HELPING THE POOR	35

ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

REMEMBER	37
GOD LOVES YOU	38
SELF-DISCIPLINE	39
FASTING	40
ACADEMICS: OBSTACLE OR OPPORTUNITY?	41
THE COMPASSION OF JESUS	42
DATING AND MARRIAGE	43
CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: CORD OF THREE STRANDS	44
THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY: PARENTS AND CHILDREN	45

THE WORD OF GOD

Purpose

To establish the Bible as the inspired word of God and the standard for our lives.

THE BIBLE—GOD'S WORD

- » Is the greatest selling book in history
- » Contains 66 books (39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament)
- » Was written over a period of about 1,500 years
- » Was written by more than 40 authors from varied backgrounds (shepherds, fishermen, kings, theologians, a doctor, a tax collector, etc.)
- » Contains hundreds of fulfilled prophecies
- » Is historically accurate – archaeology continues to affirm the biblical accounts

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

- » All scripture is inspired by God, God-breathed—from God himself; communicated through the personalities of chosen men such as Moses, Paul, John and Luke
- » It is useful for every area of our life and should be applied to our life.

Q: What does it mean for scripture to be “God-breathed”?

Q: Do you believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God?

- » The scriptures are useful—they teach, correct, rebuke and train us in righteousness.
- » The scriptures equip us—they can be used in every aspect of our lives: areas such as marriage, parenting, work, finances, decision making, relationships, etc.

Q: Do you see the Bible as relevant and useful to you?

HEBREWS 4:12-13

- » The Bible is relevant to today. It transcends time and culture.
- » The Word cuts (hurts) - compare it to a scalpel.
- » It is good to be cut because the scalpel cuts the “cancer” (sin) out.

Q: Are you willing to let the Bible cut things out of your life that need to be removed: sin, unbiblical ideas, etc.?

2 PETER 1:20-21

- » There is no private interpretation of the Bible.
- » The Holy Spirit inspired the men who wrote the books of the Bible.

Q: Do you believe the Bible is from God and not from men?

1 TIMOTHY 4:16

- » God cares about our life (how we live and the choices we make) and our doctrine (what we believe) so we need to pay careful attention to both.

Q: Consider an airplane flight. Which of the two wings is more important?

- » If we are to be saved and to help save those around us, we must persist in studying the truths of the scriptures and living out those truths in our daily lives.

MATTHEW 15:1-9

- » Many of us have grown up learning and practicing religious traditions, some of which may contradict scripture.
- » Following scripture is always more important than honoring our traditions. If our traditions contradict scripture, Jesus says we are worshipping “in vain.”
- » God wants more than lip service and religious traditions. He wants our hearts! God is looking for hearts that value his commands over man-made tradition.

Q: How might tradition come between us and doing the will of God?

JOHN 8:31-32

- » Intellectual belief is not enough—nor can we go by feelings (sincerity).
- » Holding to his teachings goes beyond mere obedience—it is to “abide” or “remain” or “continue” in his word.
- » Holding to his teachings helps us “know the truth,” understand better, and be set free by obeying it.

Q: Jesus claims that his words are a source of truth and freedom. Do you see the teachings of Jesus as a source of freedom or constraint?

JOHN 12:47-48

- » The truth is that we will all stand in judgment before God.
- » The good news is that he has already given us all we need to know.

Q: Ask yourself this question: Will I live by the Bible OR my feelings, traditions, needs, etc.?

ACTS 17:10-11

- » Be eager and enthusiastic to read the scriptures daily: it is NOBLE.
- » Religious leaders can be wrong. Read and study the Bible for yourself.

Q: Are you willing to make the Bible your standard?

Homework: *Read and study your Bible every day.*

DISCIPLESHIP

Purpose

To understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

MATTHEW 28:18-20

- Q: What does Jesus want everyone to become?
- Q: What does it mean to be a "disciple"? Student or follower.
- Q: Why all nations? So everyone has the opportunity to know the truth and be saved.

- » Once someone has been made into a disciple, they need to be baptized.
- » Once someone is baptized they need to continue to learn and walk with other disciples in a mentoring, one-another relationship.

ACTS 11:19-26

- » "Christian" was a derogatory name those in the world gave the disciples, 7 years after the church began.
- » The term "disciple(s)" occurs more than 270 times in the NT.
- » The term "Christian" occurs only 3 times in the Bible.
- » Biblically, a disciple and a Christian are the same thing.

- Q: What has been your mission in life up to this point?

MARK 1:14-16

- » The beginning of Jesus' ministry was the same as that of the end: Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.
- » The earliest disciples left everything behind to follow Jesus!
- » Jesus gives us a new mission. He calls us to be "fishers of men."
- » If you want to "come follow" Jesus, then you must also become a fisher of men. Jesus gives us a real purpose for living.

- Q: What does it mean to be a fisher of men? Have you been a fisher of men (up to this point)?
- Q: Do you want to learn how to be a fisher of men?

LUKE 9:23-26

- » **"If anyone"** – Jesus' call of discipleship is the same for all of us.
- » **"He must deny himself and take up his cross daily"** – following Jesus requires surrender and an absolute denial of self.
- » **"Whoever loses his life"** – only when we surrender our lives and deny ourselves will our lives be saved – a great paradox. If we try to hold onto our lives, we ultimately lose them!

Q: Is this a decision that you have made in your life, to deny yourself?

Q: What will that look like in your life?

LUKE 14:25-33

» **“Disciple”** – following Jesus is to be his “disciple.” Jesus didn’t use the word “Christian.”

Q: What do you make of Jesus’ teaching here to “hate” our families? What does this mean?

- » “Hate” is used here as a hyperbole similar to “I could eat a horse.” Exaggeration to make a point.
- » Jesus must be our #1 love, second to none.

Q: Who/what do you practically put before God?

- » It is important that you count the costs before becoming a disciple, not just make an emotional decision. The call of discipleship is not one to be taken lightly.
- » We must be willing to surrender control of absolutely everything in our lives to him.

JOHN 13:34-35

» As disciples, we are called to love one another to the same degree that Jesus loves us.

Q: How would that show the world that we are Christians?

MATTHEW 28:18-20

Recap the main points from each scripture you have already looked at.

Q: Have you ever embraced the call of Jesus to make disciples?

Q: Do you feel God calling you to a life of discipleship? How do you feel about that call?

Q: Are you a disciple? Are you a Christian? Are you saved? Do you want to be?

SIN/DARKNESS

Purpose

To define sin and show how sin separates us from God.

1 PETER 2:9-10

- » **Called out of darkness** – becoming a Christian is to move from darkness to light, and it results in a dramatic change in one's identity. There is no grey area or middle ground.

Darkness	Light
Not a people of God	People of God
No Mercy	Mercy
Lost	Saved
Not a Christian	Christian
Not a Disciple	Disciple

Q: Where are you? In the darkness or the light?

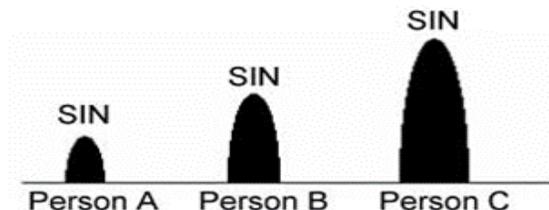
ISAIAH 59:1-2

- » Our sin separates us from God. In order for someone to have a relationship with God the wall must be broken down – sin must be forgiven.

Darkness (Man)	Wall of Sin	Light (God)
-------------------	----------------	----------------

ROMANS 3:23

- » Everyone has sinned and fallen short. One definition of "sin" means "to miss the mark."



- » Who is further away from God? No one. Everyone is equal; everyone is lost. A good moral life won't save you. Only the grace of God will save you through faith in the blood of Jesus.

MARK 7:20-22

- » Sin comes from within – from our hearts. We can't blame our sin on our environment, our upbringing or our society.

» Jesus is very specific here about some of the sins that come from within and that make us “unclean.” God wants us to be able to clearly identify the sin in our lives so that we can repent and deal with our hearts.

Q: What is the ultimate source of our sinfulness?

GALATIANS 5:19-21 (Sins of Commission)

» Sinful deeds are obvious. We need to take our sin seriously. Those who live in unrepentant sin will not go to heaven.

Note: *Now is a great time for you who are leading the study to share openly about the sin you had to face in becoming a disciple. Invite the person you are studying with to share briefly as well.*

ROMANS 6:23

» We have earned death by the way we have lived. But God offers us a gift in exchange!

Homework: *Suggest to the person studying that they write a list of their personal sin that separates them from God. Encourage them to be specific about their sins so they might see the gravity and magnitude of their sin.*

EXTRA PASSAGES

James 4:17

Sins of Omission

Ephesians 5:3-5

Not even a hint

2 Timothy 3:1-5

Not so obvious sins of the heart that are harder to see

DEFINITIONS OF SINS IN GALATIANS 5

SEXUAL IMMORALITY: Fornication, any sexual union outside of marriage. Denotes ungodly sexual acts and relationships – prostitution, rape, homosexuality, petting, adultery, child abuse, bestiality.

IMPURITY: Any sinful thinking, anything vulgar, wrong thoughts, lust, masturbation, wrong motives, pornography, sexual fantasy, smoking.

DEBAUCHERY: Any misuse of the body. Usually referring to sexual excesses, but in general refers to a readiness to indulge in any pleasure. In this state, man is at the mercy of his passions, impulses, emotions, etc. He is completely undisciplined (i.e. gives in to gluttony, laziness, smoking, cravings, masturbation, unlimited video games).

IDOLATRY: Worshipping anything other than God. Giving or devoting one's time, substance, talents, and/or self to anything that keeps one from obeying and following God in every way (i.e. status symbols, investments, engrossing sports or hobbies, selfish ambitions, relationships, property, possessions, pleasure and wants, school, work, pride). Also includes praying to anyone other than God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit, such as praying to saints or Mary.

WITCHCRAFT: Seeking or being involved in any spiritual realm other than God's. Includes astrology (i.e. the stars' control – consequently, saying God does not rule), horoscopes, Satan worship, the occult, magic spells, good-luck charms or pictures, drug use, tarot cards, palm reading, channeling (the New Age movement), Ouija Board, etc.

HATRED: Wishing ill or harm on anyone, looking down on anyone, bitter feelings, resentment, wanting revenge, murder, abortion.

DISCORD: Anything that breaks up relationships, stirring up trouble, an inability to get along with people, arguing, slander, gossip, malicious talk, criticalness.

JEALOUSY: Possessiveness, not sharing.

FITS OF RAGE: Uncontrolled anger, losing your temper, temper tantrums, quick temper, angry shouting, swearing, profanity, fighting.

SELFISH AMBITION: Living to please self, wanting one's own way, getting what one wants at any cost, desiring to be first at any cost, overly competitive spirit. Not willing to do menial or demeaning tasks, refusing to admit being wrong, arrogance, doing things for honor or glory, wanting to look good for others, refusing to compromise, pride, selfishness and independence.

DISSENSION: Rebelling against authority, not submitting, habitually disagreeing, arguing, causing division, starting arguments, stirring up trouble, harming unity.

FACTIONS: Feeling superior to others, cliques, refusing to associate with anyone because they are different or for any other reason, wanting to be with "own" kind, prejudice, bigotry, racism, elitism.

ENVY: Desiring something another person has, and even feeling that if you don't have it then they shouldn't either (i.e. wealth, status, ability, physical features, spirituality, relationships).

DRUNKENNESS: Anything that causes one to lose control – intoxication, alcohol, drug abuse, addictions.

ORGIES: Living without restraint. Includes partying, sexual parties, unrestrained sex, vandalism, carousing.

AND THE LIKE: Lying, stealing, cheating, deceit, etc.

SALVATION/LIGHT

Purpose

This study shows the Biblical plan of salvation. Here is the good news!

1 PETER 2:9-10 (Review)

- » **Called out of darkness** – becoming a Christian is to move from darkness to light, and it results in a dramatic change in one’s identity.

Q: Where are you? In the darkness or the light?

JOHN 3:1-7

- » We must be reborn of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of heaven.

ACTS 2:22-24

Q: Do you believe: Jesus is the Son of God? He died on the cross for your sins? He rose from the dead?

ACTS 2:36-41

- » **God made Jesus both Lord (master) and Christ (savior)** - He cannot be your savior if he is not your master.
- » **The people were “cut to the heart”** – they had godly sorrow.
- » When we grasp what happened at the cross, our response is “What shall we do?”
- » He told them to:
 1. Repent
 2. Be baptized
- » They then received:
 1. Forgiveness of their sins (salvation)
 2. The Holy Spirit

Q: What does it mean to repent?

Q: What two things happen at baptism?

ROMANS 6:1-7

- » Baptism is our participation in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.
- » We are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to live a new life.



EXTRA PASSAGES

Acts 9:1-19, 22:6-13

The conversion of Saul

Acts 8:26-40

The Ethiopian eunuch's baptism

Acts 16:25-34

The Philippian jailer's baptism

1 Peter 3:21

Baptism is not a symbol

Colossians 2:12

Baptism is tied to faith.

REPENTANCE

Purpose

This study defines repentance and its significance .

PSALM 36:1-2

» Pride will keep us from taking our sin seriously. We must hate our sin.

LUKE 13:1-5

» The word is clear. There are only two choices: repent or perish.

ACTS 17:30-31

» God commands everyone to repent, and all will be judged accordingly.

» True repentance is ultimately demonstrated by one's deeds.

ACTS 26:19-21

» Repentance is a change of heart and mind. It is a decision, followed by action. A person's life must reflect the change. It can be done in an instant, though the effects last a lifetime.

2 CORINTHIANS 7:8-11

» Worldly sorrow is being sorry that you got caught (a speeding ticket). Godly sorrow is being sorry that your sin hurt God. Godly sorrow is essential for salvation. It produces a visible change in our character:

Earnestness (seriousness about our sin)

Eagerness to clear yourselves (don't wait, correct past wrongs)

Indignation (righteous anger about our actions)

Alarm (fear, urgency)

Longing to see justice done (whatever it takes to make this right, regardless of consequences)

ACTS 3:19

» Repentance is a blessing, it brings refreshment!

Homework: *Talk through the person's list of sin in more detail, and encourage them to create a specific **plan of repentance** for the sins listed.*

EXTRA PASSAGES

Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus is an example of radical repentance.

Matthew 5:29-30

God wants us to have a radical attitude toward eliminating our sin.

THE CROSS

Purpose

Seeing Jesus' emotional, physical and spiritual pain; the cross demonstrates how much God loves you. It demands a response from you.

ISAIAH 52:13-53:12

- » These scriptures were written approximately 700 years before Jesus was born. They prophecy and accurately reflect Jesus' life and death. It may be helpful to put the name of the person studying into Isaiah 53:4-6 to make it more personal.

MATTHEW 26:31-35

- » Jesus predicts Peter's denial.

MATTHEW 26:36-46

- » Jesus provides an excellent example for us when we are struggling to surrender our hearts to God's will. He prayed until he was surrendered and then rose to face his path. (Emotional pain.)

MATTHEW 26:47-56

- » Jesus knew the horrific death he faced. He could have stopped the crucifixion, but he didn't. Why not? Out of love for us. He knew God's plan was the only way to ensure our salvation.

MATTHEW 26:57-68

- » The Sanhedrin had to prove to the Roman Empire the need to put Jesus to death. They created lies to support their desires. Jesus remained righteous throughout the trial.

MATTHEW 26:69-75

- » The pain Jesus felt was not solely physical, it was also emotional. Despite Peter's insistence that he would never deny Jesus (verse 35), our Lord listened to him outright deny the existence of their relationship. Jesus felt truly alone.

MATTHEW 27:1-10

- » Peter and Judas had very different responses to their sin. Peter had godly sorrow which allowed him to repent and go on to become one of the greatest preachers of the New Testament church. Judas had worldly sorrow. He was so consumed with himself that he committed suicide and was never able to do anything great for God again.

MATTHEW 27:11-26

- » Pilate offers the crowd the choice to set free one of the condemned men. Similar to our lives, the guilty man is set free while the sinless man is condemned to die. The very people Jesus came to serve repaid him with the words, "Crucify him."

MATTHEW 27:27-31

- » The physical torture continues. After a severe flogging which nearly killed him, Jesus is beaten over the head while wearing a crown of thorns. (Physical pain.)

MATTHEW 27:32-44

- » Even while enduring an excruciating death, Jesus hears the mocking from the very people for whom he is dying.

MATTHEW 27:45-54

- » Jesus refuses a drink to dull the pain, showing us the extent of his love for us. Jesus is separated from God to take responsibility for our sin. (Spiritual pain.) After a number of hours of excruciating pain, Jesus dies.

READ A MEDICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

ROMANS 8:31-32

- » The cross demands a response from you. God wants us all to respond with gratitude for what Jesus did for us on the cross. Your response needs to show in your life, not simply your words.

A MEDICAL ACCOUNT

Note: *This is a simplified medical account of Jesus' crucifixion adapted by Douglas Jacoby, with assistance from Alex Mnatzaganian, in December 1989, and is used with permission. For a full version with additional notes, go to www.douglasjacoby.com.*

INTRODUCTION

Hanging, electrocution, knee capping, gas chamber: these punishments are feared. They all happen today, and we shudder as we think of the horror and pain. But as we shall see, these ordeals pale into insignificance compared with the bitter fate of Jesus Christ – crucifixion.

No one is crucified today. For us, the cross remains confined to ornaments and jewelry, stained glass windows, romanticized pictures and statues portraying a serene death. Crucifixion was a form of execution refined by the Romans to a precise art. It was carefully conceived to produce a slow death with maximum pain. It was a public spectacle intended to deter other would-be criminals. It was a death to be feared.

SWEAT/BLOOD

Luke 22:24 says of Jesus, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground." The sweat was unusually intense because his emotional state was unusually intense. Dehydration coupled with exhaustion further weakened him.

BEATING

It was in this condition that Jesus faced the first physical abuse – punches and slaps to the face and head while blindfolded. Unable to anticipate the blows, Jesus was badly bruised, his mouth and eyes possibly injured. The psychological effects of the false trials should not be underestimated. Consider that Jesus faced them bruised, dehydrated, exhausted and possibly in shock.

FLOGGING

In the previous 12 hours, Jesus had suffered emotional trauma, rejection by his closest friends, a cruel beating and a sleepless night during which he had to walk miles between unjust hearings. Despite the fitness he must certainly have gained during his travels in Palestine, he was in no way prepared for the punishment of flogging. The effects would be worse as a result.

A man to be flogged was stripped of his clothes and his hands were tied to a post above his head. He was then whipped across the shoulders, back, buttocks, thighs and legs, the soldier standing behind and to one side of the victim. The whip used – the flagellum – was designed to make this a devastating punishment, bringing the victim close to death: several

short, heavy leather thongs with two small balls of lead or iron attached near the end of each. Pieces of sheep's bone were sometimes attached as well.

As the scourging proceeds, the heavy leather thongs produce first superficial cuts, then deeper damage to underlying tissues. Bleeding becomes severe when not only capillaries and veins are cut, but also arteries in the underlying muscles. The small metal balls first produce large, deep bruises which are broken open by further blows. The fragments of sheep's bone rip the flesh as the whip is drawn back. When the beating is finished, the skin of the back is in ribbons, and the entire area torn and bleeding.

The words chosen by the gospel writers suggest that the scourging of Jesus was particularly severe. He was certainly at the point of collapse when he was cut down from the flogging-post.

MOCKING

Jesus was allowed no time to recover before facing his next ordeal. Made to stand, he was dressed in a robe by jeering soldiers, crowned with a twisted band of thorny twigs, and to complete the parody, given a wooden staff as a king's scepter. Next, they spat on Jesus and struck him on the head with the wooden staff. The long thorns were driven into the sensitive scalp tissue producing profuse bleeding, but even more terrible was the re-opening of the wounds on Jesus' back when the robe was torn off again. Further weakened physically and emotionally, Jesus was led away to be executed.

CRUCIFIXION

The wooden cross used by the Romans was too heavy to be carried by one man. Instead, the victim to be crucified was made to bear the detached crossbar across his shoulders, carrying it outside the city walls to the place of execution (the heavy upright portion of the cross was permanently in position here). Jesus was unable to carry his load – a beam weighing around 75 to 125 pounds. He collapsed under the burden, and an onlooker was ordered to take it for him.

Jesus refused to drink the wine and myrrh offered him before the nails were driven in (it would have dulled the pain). Thrown down on his back with arms outstretched along the crossbar, nails were driven through Jesus' wrists into the wood. These iron spikes, about 6 inches long and 3/8 inch thick, severed the large sensorimotor median nerve, causing excruciating pain in both arms. Carefully placed between bones and ligaments, they were able to bear the full weight of the crucified man.

In preparation for the nailing of the feet, Jesus was lifted up and the crossbar fixed to the upright post. Then with legs bent at the knee, a single nail was used to pierce both feet, one foot being placed over the other. Again there was severe nerve damage and the pain caused was intense. It is important to note, however, that neither the wounds to the wrists or feet caused substantial bleeding, since no major arteries were ruptured. The executioner took care to ensure this, so that death would be slower and the suffering longer.

Now nailed to his cross, the real horror of crucifixion began. When the wrists were nailed to the crossbar, the elbows were intentionally left in a bent position so that the crucified man would hang with his arms above his head, the weight

being taken on the nails in the wrists. Obviously this was unbearably painful, but it had another effect: it is very difficult to exhale in this position. In order to breathe out, and then take in fresh air, it was necessary to push the body up on the nailed feet. When the pain from the feet became unbearable, the victim would again slump down to hang by the arms. A terrible cycle of pain began: hanging by the arms, unable to breathe, pushing up on the feet to inhale quickly before again slumping down, and on and on.

This tortured activity became more and more difficult as Jesus' back was scraped against the upright post, as muscle cramps set in because of the inadequate respiration, and as exhaustion grew more severe. Jesus suffered in this manner for several hours before, with a final cry, he died.

DEATH

Many factors contributed to Jesus' death. A combination of shock and suffocation killed most victims of crucifixion, but in Jesus' case, acute heart failure may have been the final trauma. This is suggested by his sudden death following a loud cry, after only a few hours: a quick death, it seems (Pilate was surprised to find Jesus already dead). A fatal cardiac arrhythmia (or perhaps, cardiac rupture) are the likely candidates.

SPEAR

Jesus was already dead as the executioners broke the legs of the criminals crucified alongside (in order to speed their deaths). Instead, we read that a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear. Where on his side? The word chosen by John suggests the ribs, and if the soldier intended to make Jesus' death certain, a wound to the heart was the obvious choice.

From the wound came a flow of "blood and water." This is consistent with the spear blow to the heart (especially from the right side, the traditional site of the wound). Rupturing the pericardium (the sac surrounding the heart) released a flow of watery serum, followed by blood as the heart was pierced.

CONCLUSION

The detailed accounts given in the gospels, combined with the historical evidence on crucifixion, bring us to a firm conclusion: modern medical knowledge supports the claim of the scriptures that Jesus died on the cross.

THE CHURCH

Purpose

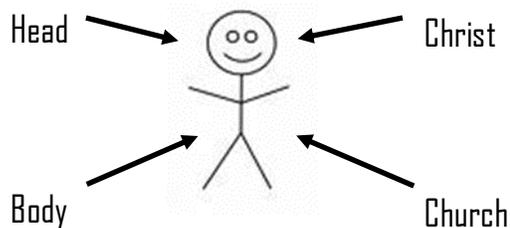
To understand God's intent for the church and how each of us can contribute to its overall impact

ACTS 2:42-47

- » This is the birth of the New Testament Church. Our church should imitate the first disciples and their fellowship.
- » They were devoted to:
 - The apostles' teaching
 - The fellowship
 - Breaking of bread (communion)
 - Prayer
- » They shared everything they had and filled each other's needs. They met together and ate together daily. And God added to their number. God wants his church to grow numerically.

COLOSSIANS 1:15-18

- » The church is the body of Christ. Jesus is the head; we are the body.



EPHESIANS 2:19-22

- » The church is the family of God. We become sons and daughters of God the Father and brothers and sisters with each other. Jesus is the Cornerstone of the church. The church's foundation is the Apostles and Prophets (The Bible).

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

- » The Bible teaches that there is one church – one body. These are the 7 essentials of unity we strive for.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-13

- » There should be no divisions within the body. Don't follow people. Follow Christ.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27

- » We enter the body of Christ in baptism.
- » We need the body and the body needs us.
- » It is vital that we are involved on a relationship level in the church.

Q: What strengths/gifts/talents do you bring to the body?

Note: Take time to encourage your friend with the strengths/gifts/talents you see in them.

HEBREWS 3:12-13

- » In the church, we strive to give and receive daily encouragement to protect us from the deceitfulness of sin.

Q: How has the encouragement of the church helped you in your own fight against sin?

MATTHEW 6:19-21

- » In the church, we give generously to meet the needs of the church and to help spread the gospel, starting with a tithe—which is ten percent.
- » When we give sacrificially we store up treasures in heaven— treasures that last!
- » Giving is a heart matter. Our giving reflects where our hearts are invested.
- » Giving is a faith matter. As we give to meet the needs of the church, we trust that God is able to meet our needs.

HEBREWS 10:23-25

- » The fellowship helps us to be unswerving in our commitment to Christ.
- » Do not give up meeting together – consistent fellowship needs to be a priority in our lives.

Q: What will you need to change in your schedule to make the body (the church) a top priority in your life?

Homework: Write a letter to God expressing your thoughts to the following questions (to prepare for counting the costs):

1. Why do you want to become a Christian?
2. What does the cross mean to you?
3. What commitment are making to God when you get baptized?

EXTRA PASSAGES

Philippians 2:1-4

We are called to be one in spirit and purpose

2 Corinthians 9:6-9

We give to meet needs and spread the gospel globally

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Be devoted to only dating/marrying another disciple

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Giving takes planning and intention, not an afterthought.

COUNTING THE COSTS OF DISCIPLESHIP

Purpose

This study helps to ensure that we have done a good job of teaching and that our friends have done a good job of learning, prior to their baptism.

LUKE 14:25-33

- » God wants us to “estimate” the cost of following him. Think through what it will take to be committed for life. Jesus does not want a rash, emotional or short sighted decision.

REVIEW

Note: Review homework from last study: letter to God

- » What has been your greatest challenge so far?
- » Why do you want to be a disciple?
- » What will your greatest challenge be in becoming a disciple?
- » Do you see discipleship as a lifetime commitment? (Luke 9:62)
- » Are there any areas of life that you are holding back from surrendering to Jesus?

DISCIPLESHIP

- » Please explain how to become a Christian.
- » Who do you know who is a Christian? How do you know?
- » Is there any sin you have yet to repent of? Do you have any unconfessed sin (“skeletons”)?
- » Do you have any obstacles that would hinder your commitment: financial, mental health challenges, schedule, etc.?
- » Persecution is the inevitable result of preaching repentance. (Acts 26:21, Luke 6:22-23, 2 Timothy 3:12)

BAPTISM

- » Who is a candidate for baptism?
- » Should someone be baptized before they repent?
- » Can someone be saved if they repent but are not yet baptized?

THE CHURCH

- » What have you come to understand about God’s church?
- » Do you understand that there is only one church? Explain.
- » What is your biblical commitment to the church? (Acts 2:42)

LUKE 9:57-62

- » Are there any “but firsts” in your life?

ACTS 2:36

- » God made Jesus both “Lord” and “Christ.” For him to be savior of your life he also needs to be Lord of your life. A commitment you make.

AREAS OF JESUS’ LORDSHIP

1. Marriage/Dating

- » What costs do you need to count within your marriage?
- » How does your husband/wife feel about you becoming a disciple?
- » Single disciples should only date and marry disciples. Where will you find a disciple to date?
- » Do you have any same sex attraction?

2. Parenting

- » What costs do you need to count within your parenting?
- » Are you committed to seeking advice on your parenting?

3. Job/Career/School

- » What costs do you need to count at your place of employment/education?
- » Is your job or education an idol in your life?
- » If you have to move for school or your job, do you have a conviction to move only where there is a church of disciples?

4. Finances

- » Are you willing to sacrificially give back to God, his church and the poor?
- » Do you have a Biblical conviction about tithing or more?

5. Discipling/Mentor Relationship

- » Are you committed to a one-on-one discipling relationship? (*Discuss who that person will be.*)
 - Get together for follow up studies
 - Confess sin together
 - Seek advice together
 - Share your faith together

6. Time

- » Are you committed to attending the meetings of the body? (Sunday, Wednesday, Devotionals, Bible Talk)
- » Are you committed to being an active member of a Bible Talk?
- » How are your Quiet Times? Are you committed to daily time with God?

7. Mission

- » How is your personal evangelism?
- » Are you committed to your new mission as a disciple, seeking and saving the lost?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SEEKING GOD

Purpose

This study illustrates the need to earnestly seek a relationship with God.

MATTHEW 7:7

» This is a great promise. God is a loving Father, and he wants you to find him. If you seek him, you will find him.

MATTHEW 7:13-14

» The way is narrow. If only a few find the way to eternal life, then only a few are truly seeking.

Q: How should you seek?

MATTHEW 6:33

» The only effective way to seek is to seek God first.

Q: What keeps you from making this your top priority? (friends, family, job, studies, fear...)

ACTS 8:26-35

» The Ethiopian was a great example of someone “seeking first.” He was an important and very busy man, yet he still made time for God (the Jerusalem trip). He sought the right place (the scriptures). He was humble (asked for help). When he found, he did not continue to seek – it was time to act. It has been said, “When a sincere seeker finds what he has been looking for, either he stops seeking or he stops being sincere.” From his example, we can see that it is beneficial to let another person help you understand the word of God.

ACTS 17:11

» The Bereans were another example of people “seeking God first.” They had noble character (integrity). They were enthusiastic. They sought in the right place (the scriptures). They read daily. They were not naïve; they had a healthy skepticism. They responded to the truth and became believers. It is important that you do your own homework!

EXTRA PASSAGE

MATTHEW 13:44-46

The man in the field stumbled across treasure. Most of us were like him in that we were not actively seeking truth. There were three results: joy (the result of finding); sold everything (commitment); and obtained the treasure (as always happens when people seek first). The merchant, however, was looking for fine pearls. Some of us were like him in that we were actively seeking the truth. He experienced similar results.

REFUTING FALSE DOCTRINES

Purpose

This study addresses and refutes commonly taught false doctrines.

INFANT BAPTISM

COLOSSIANS 2:12

- » A baby cannot have faith, and since we are baptized through faith in the power of God, babies should not be baptized. And babies cannot repent. This false doctrine began in approximately 300 A.D.

ORIGINAL SIN

EZEKIEL 18:20

- » Proponents of infant baptism cite its necessity from another false teaching – the doctrine of “Original Sin.” This false teaching became church doctrine in 549 A.D. Guilt is not transferrable. While we are all born with a sinful nature, we are not guilty of sin at birth. God holds each and every one of us responsible for our own sin that we commit, at the age when we can make that choice. We are not responsible for our parent’s sin, nor will our children be responsible for ours.

THE SINNER’S PRAYER/PRAYING JESUS INTO YOUR HEART

REVELATION 3:20

- » This scripture is commonly used to support the “sinner’s prayer.” However, the term “pray Jesus into your heart” is never mentioned or practiced in the Bible. This verse does not teach how to become a Christian and be saved, but rather how to come back to God after being lukewarm. It is addressed to disciples who already responded to Christ in faith, repentance, confession and baptism. Praying and asking Jesus to come into your heart is a relatively new, popular false doctrine. It began in the early 1800s in America.

JUST BELIEVE or “ACCEPTING JESUS”

ROMANS 10:9-10

- » These verses are commonly used to support the idea that if you just sincerely believe in Jesus Christ or “accept him in your heart” (similar to praying Jesus into your heart) you are saved. However, you must look at these verses in context. Romans is written to the disciples in Rome, not non-Christians telling them how to be saved. They had already died to their old selves and been baptized as referred to earlier in Romans 6. And Paul is addressing the problems of the Israelites: unbelief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Read further on in Romans 10:13—when do you call on the name of the Lord? At baptism (Acts 22:16).

LUKE 23:39-43

- » **What about the thief on the cross?** This passage is incorrectly used to prove that Jesus will forgive everyone who believes in him and welcome them into paradise. This is a false doctrine that many believe today.

MATTHEW 9:6

- » Jesus had the authority to forgive sins of anyone he chose while he was here on earth; and he forgave multiple people during his ministry. Once he died and resurrected his teaching of repentance and baptism became the means by which we are forgiven.

OTHER FALSE TEACHINGS / BELIEFS ABOUT BAPTISM

- **“Baptism does not save you”**: 1 Peter 3:21 says that baptism DOES save you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Acts 2:38 teaches that sin is forgiven at baptism—one is saved at the point sin is forgiven.
- **“Baptism is a work—yet we are saved by faith”** (Ephesians 2:8): Colossians 2:12 teaches we are saved by FAITH in the working of God at baptism. Believing, in and of itself, is a work.
- **“Baptism is an outward sign of an inward grace”**: Romans 6:2-4 states that baptism is an actual participation on the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. It is not merely a sign, seal, or symbol.
- **“The thief on the cross was not baptized and Jesus told him that they would see each other in paradise”**: Jesus had not even died yet, and baptism is participating in his death (Romans 6:1-4); also on earth, according to Matthew 9:2-6, he had the power to forgive sins.
- **“Believers Baptism”**: This is baptism as an adult, but is not done in conjunction with the understanding that one is being saved at this point in time (John 3:5, Acts 2:38). “Retroactive Understanding” is not sufficient for salvation.

FEELINGS

Purpose

This study is to understand the correct role that feelings should have in your life.

PROVERBS 3:5

» Although God created us to have emotions, we need to trust in God, not your own feelings.

PROVERBS 14:12

» We'll pay the penalty if we follow our own feelings.

PROVERBS 28:26

» It's foolish to follow perceptions, hunches, feelings, intuitions, etc.

JEREMIAH 17:9

» The human heart is deceitful.

1 KINGS 13:1-26

» The story of the young prophet and the old prophet. This is particularly useful because it deals with the issue of ultimate authority.

GALATIANS 1:6-9

» Even if you were convinced that you had received angelic visitation, or a revelation from an apostle, no one has the right to change the gospel message.

JEREMIAH 23:16, 21-22, 25-32, 35-36

» False prophets of OT times.

JUDE 19

» These men confuse natural instincts with the Spirit.

LUKE 9:23

» Discipleship means denying your selfish feelings, not following them. **Deny** feelings and follow Christ: or follow feelings and **DENY** Christ.

MATTHEW 7:21-23

- » Religious, sincere people on judgment day.
 - Many of them will be surprised on judgment day.
 - God expects obedience.
 - True spirituality is obeying God, not just feeling him.
 - Are you sure you know the Lord? (1 Corinthians 8:3).

FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

TALKING TO GOD

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to teach the disciples to have a prayer life (start a prayer journal) based on the six sections of the Lord's Prayer and give them a basic understanding of prayer.

Q: Why do you think communication is important in a relationship?

- » Good communication is at the heart of every relationship. A relationship with God thrives on communication as well. In prayer we both speak to and listen for God on a personal level.

MARK 1:35

- » Jesus was a busy man, but he made his time with God a priority. He always found time to pray and found places to pray that were free from distraction so that he could connect with God.

Q: What are the potential challenges in your life for finding the time and place to pray?

WHY DO WE NEED TO PRAY?

LUKE 11:1-4

- » Give us each day our daily bread...When a first century Jew heard "daily bread" they would have immediately remembered the exodus. In Exodus 16, when the Israelites received manna from heaven, the Israelites had to rely on God for nourishment. As they collected the manna, they could only collect enough for one day (anything extra would spoil with maggots). This made God's people go to God every day to get what they needed to survive. In the same way today, we must understand that we cannot survive spiritually if we just rely on weekly times of fellowship and worship for our spiritual nourishment. Like the Israelites we must learn to go to God every day to sustain us.

Q: What would have happened to the Israelites if they had stopped going daily into the desert for manna?

Q: What will happen to us if we do not go spend time with God daily?

- » Jesus used this basic model when teaching his disciples to pray:
 - "Our Father" — Acknowledge God
 - "Hallowed be your name" — Praise God (Read some Psalms for inspiration!)
 - "Your Kingdom come" — Pray for others (The church, family, enemies, leaders, & anyone you want to see in heaven!)
 - "Give us each day our daily bread" — Pray for your daily needs (Think spiritual, emotional, physical needs; your daily schedule)
 - "Forgive us our sins" — Confess and ask forgiveness. (Pray specifically through your sins. Remember, the more aware you are of your sin, the more grateful you will be for Jesus!) (Luke 7:36-50)
 - "Lead us not into temptation" — Put on your spiritual armor. (Pray for God's protection.)

LUKE 11:5-13

Q: What does Jesus' story teach us about our prayer lives?

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 / 1 PETER 5:7

- » God cares for you! Prayer is a time where we can bring our burdens, anxieties and worries to God.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17

- » "Pray continually;" prayer is something that should become a continuous habit. Even when we are engaged in other activities, we can always include God in our thoughts and heart.

The Spiritual Exercise: Start a prayer journal using the outline that Jesus gave his disciples. Have a regular distraction-free time to pray every day, and find special/inspiring places to have prayer times.

BIBLE STUDY

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to teach disciples how to have effective, daily Bible studies and teach them to use basic Bible tools (concordances, etc.)

Having gone through the Word study, you should have a sufficient understanding for how important God's word is. The following study delves a little further into the importance of personal Bible study.

LUKE 4:1-13

- » It was the habit of Christ to overcome temptation by knowledge of the scriptures. He knew them so well; he was even able to see where Satan was misusing them! (v.10-12; 2 Peter 3:15-16). Satan's temptations and deceptions will be something we battle day-in and day-out, overcoming them means building the Christ-like habit of answering the temptations with the Bible.

Q: What kinds of temptations does Satan bait you with? How can scripture help you overcome?

PSALM 1:1-3

- » The Bible does not actually say that we should have a quiet time everyday...it actually goes much further! The blessed man is the one who meditates on God's word day and night (not just for 30 minutes in the morning)!

Q: What is the difference between meditation and just reading?

Q: How has meditation on the Word led you to "prosperity" in your life (v.3)?

PSALM 119

- » The longest chapter of the Bible extols the benefits and virtues of God's Word:
 - Keeping a pure and upright life comes from hiding God's word in your heart (v. 9- 10)
Jesus teaches us that man's heart is a source of sinfulness (Mark 7); our hearts are changed by the work of the Holy Spirit and by "hiding God's word in our hearts" we can take preventive measures to keep us from sinning.
 - We should not delay to obey God's commands. (v. 59-60)
Bible study is rendered worthless if we do not put what we learn/know into practice. (James 1:22-25)

Q: What are some reasons why you might delay to obey God's commands?

ACTS 8:26-29

- » The Ethiopian eunuch was a busy, important man who found the time to study God's word. Discuss his heart and desire to learn.

PRACTICAL BIBLE STUDY TIPS

- » Decide in advance what you want to study.
 - Suggestions: Study one book/section of a book of the Bible (read, outline, study, Sermon on the Mount, Last Supper, etc.)
 - Study one topic (i.e. Grace, faith, impurity, etc. / Use concordance).
 - Study the life of one character (Abraham, Moses, David, Ruth, etc...).
 - Study out a sermon you've heard, be a Berean (Acts 17: 11).
 - Ask a question you don't know the answer to and dig for an answer.
- » Read out loud.
 - Read different translations.
 - Use a notebook to write down thoughts and questions about your Bible study.
 - Share what you are learning with others.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Have a Bible study together. Learn to use a concordance and any study tools that will complement your Bible study.*

CONFESSION

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to teach disciples how to confess their sins and restore others who have sinned.

The Bible says that we should “carry each other’s burdens” and when we do this we will “fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2)

Q: What kinds of burdens or challenges do you think you will have, or have had already, as a disciple of Jesus? *Persecution, temptation, family challenges, health issues, financial hardships, conflict in relationships, problems at school, problems at work, etc..*

CONFESSION

JAMES 5:16

» The Bible tells us to confess to one another and to pray for one another. Being vulnerable and helping one another spiritually is one biblical way that we can carry one another's burdens.

Q: Do you confess your sins consistently and ask for specific prayers?

1 JOHN 1:5-10

» “Walking in the light” means our lives are an open book and on display. The Bible tells us that “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”

Q: Can we be close to God if we live in darkness or dimness (living in a little darkness)?

» Claiming to be without sin equates to deceiving ourselves and calling God a liar. Confessing our sin allows us to “walk in the light;” this has 2 effects:

- We have fellowship with one another (builds deep, authentic friendships), including God.
- Jesus’ blood purifies us and allows us to have a relationship with God.

Q: What are some obstacles that would prevent you from being open about your life and confessing sin?

PROVERBS 28:13

» Concealing sin will cause downfall but we will find mercy if we confess and renounce our sins.

RESTORING ONE ANOTHER

GALATIANS 6:1-2

Q: What should we do when someone confesses their sin to us or when we are trying to help someone deal with their sin?

- » Important Principles in Restoring One Another:
- NEVER be harsh! Do not overreact. God calls us to “restore gently.”
 - Communicate your appreciation for the person’s vulnerability, but don’t leave it at “thank you.” God calls us to help RESTORE them”. Call them to repentance.
 - Make sure that they bring things into the light (no dimness). Make sure you are getting enough information to really pray specifically and also help them to come to repentance.
 - Always ask them “What do you think repentance looks like?” The goal is to help them to bring everything into the light and help them to repent (be restored) so that times of refreshing can come. (Acts 3:19)
 - Pray. Praying together after confession is always helpful.

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

» “Pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” We need people in our spiritual lives to help us up when we struggle and fall.

Q: What is the advantage of having a close spiritual friend?

The Spiritual Exercise: *Have a time of confession together. Role play how you would confront someone who has fallen into sin and how to respond to those who confess their sins to you.*

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to teach disciples about their relationships and roles within the body of Christ (the church) and to help them consider how their individual gifts can be used to serve the body of Christ.

When we enter the body of Christ, relationships are radically transformed! Instead of having ourselves as the center of our focus, we are to “consider others better than ourselves” (Philippians 2:3). The Bible teaches us that church is not something we attend; it is an opportunity to serve and tend to the needs of others.

OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOHN 13:34-35

» Jesus commanded us to love each other as he has loved us. This quality of love and our relationships with one another are what make us distinct as Christians.

Q: How did Jesus express and demonstrate his love for the disciples?

Q: If you loved other disciples like Jesus loved his disciples, what would that look like?

- Serve one another— Galatians 5:13.
- Look after each other’s material needs—1 John 3:17.
- Being concerned about each other’s spiritual well-being—Colossians 1:28.

MARK 3:35

» We are Jesus’ brothers and sisters if we do God’s will. Because of this common purpose, Christian relationships transcend even blood relations.

OUR ROLE

EPHESIANS 4:14-16

» Everyone has a role to play and work to do in the church; finding that role and doing that work is essential for the church to be built up and grow into maturity.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-26

Q: What is it that we can never say as members of the body of Christ?

Q: How unified should we be as the body of Christ?

Q: How essential is your role in the body?

» Everyone is essential to the body functioning as God intended it! Even the weakest part is incredibly important! We must value everyone’s gifts and roles in the church and understand that we need one another! We rejoice and hurt together (that’s sincere love, from the heart!—1 Peter 1:22)

WHAT’S YOUR GIFT?

» A gift is a particular talent/ability that God has put in your life. While some spiritual gifts were “miraculous” (it is our belief that these gifts were specific to the apostolic age and are no longer available to us today); the “non-miraculous” gifts are just as powerful and critical for building up the body of Christ.

- Non-miraculous gifts—Romans 12:4-8
- Leadership gifts—Ephesians 4:11

1 PETER 4:10

» Whatever gift you have received should be used to serve God’s people. As individuals, God has placed gifts, talents and abilities in our lives to be used to build up his kingdom in unique ways.

Q: What are some of your gifts? How can you use those gifts to serve God’s people? *Examples: Leadership, Children’s Ministry, Ushering, Youth Ministry, Administration, Hospitality, Benevolence etc.*

The Spiritual Exercise: Find an area in the church where you can serve. Next time go out and serve or offer hospitality to someone together.

TITHES & OFFERINGS

Introduction: A scholar once noted that money/wealth is the second most mentioned topic in the Bible (after the topic of “love”). The way that we handle our money/wealth says a lot about our spiritual lives. Sometimes the attitude toward giving our weekly offering is that we are taking part of our paycheck and offering it to the church leaders/administrators.

While it is true that this weekly contribution meets practical needs of the church (facilities, salaries, ministry budgets, missions growth), such a view does not capture the spiritual reality of our giving. The reality is that God has given us everything we have, and by giving this weekly offering we are returning a portion of that to God as a willing sacrifice. In this study, we’ll examine three ideas that should govern our attitude toward giving to God through our weekly contribution to the church.

A SPIRITUAL ACT

PROVERBS 3:9-10

» In the same way that the OT Israelites honored God with their tithes/first fruits to the temple, we are honoring God with our contribution.

Q: What does scripture say can result from you giving your first fruits to God?

Q: What is your perspective on giving contribution?

A SACRIFICE

MARK 12:41-44

» The widow’s offering was the greatest in Jesus’ view because it involved the greatest personal sacrifice; it was not about the \$ amount, but about the sacrifice behind the amount.

Q: What do you think is the difference between viewing contribution in terms of “sacrifice” instead of strictly “\$ amount”?

Q: How would that change your giving?

A WILLING HEART

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-7

» Paul communicates 2 important principles for “giving” in these verses:

- Give much = receive much; give little = receive little
- God loves a cheerful giver

Q: What is the difference between giving “cheerfully” and giving “reluctantly”?

Q: Why do you think it matters to God what we are feeling in our hearts when we give?

WEEKLY OFFERINGS TO GOD

- Pray and decide what is a willing and sacrificial amount to contribute (it is between you and God).
- “Set aside” for God before other financial obligations. God wants to be first in all areas.
- Be consistent (weekly/monthly) and have integrity about your giving (if you miss a contribution, plan to “double up” the next time you give).
- Budget a saving plan and be organized about your contribution (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

OTHER PASSAGES

ACTS 2:44-47

» The sacrificial attitude of early Christians.

ACTS 4:32-5:11

» Barnabas’ acceptable contribution vs. Ananias and Sapphira’s unacceptable contribution.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Look over your personal budget (if you don’t have one, get some help and create one). Pray. Decide what would be a sacrifice and commit that amount every week as an offering to God.*

DISCIPLING

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to help disciples understand the importance of discipling and to inspire them to develop dynamic and healthy one another relationships.

Discipling is simply the training and learning process of becoming like Jesus. Discipleship and discipling are woven throughout virtually every page of the NT. In the spirit of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), where the apostles are commanded to “disciple the nations” and “teach obedience”, church members “disciple” and “teach obedience” to one another through individual and group settings.

CHRIST-CENTERED DISCIPLING

1 CORINTHIANS 11:1

» In our discipling relationships; Christ is the standard and our lives are examples.

Q: What is the difference between setting an example with our lives and making our lives a standard?

Q: Why is it important to know this distinction?

» We need to have the humility and desire to imitate the Christ-like qualities in one another. However, the foundation and focus of our discipling relationships should always be our desire to be just like Jesus.

TEACH & ADMONISH

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Q: What should always be “richly” a part of our discipling relationships?

Q: What is the difference between “teaching” and “admonishing”?

» *Teaching* is to impart skills or knowledge. This is proactive discipling. *Admonishing* is to warn or notify of a fault; to reprove gently or kindly, but seriously; to exhort; to counsel against wrong practices; to caution or advise; to warn against danger or an offense. This is reactive discipling. We need both “proactive” and “reactive” discipling to have a healthy walk with God.

PROVERBS 27:4-5

» The Bible teaches us that it is better to be corrected harshly in love, than to have someone who does not love you enough to correct you at all.

Q: Do you have spiritual friends that you trust enough to allow them to correct / challenge you on a regular basis?

Q: Are people who tell you “what you want to hear” rather than “what you need to hear” really good friends?

ONE-ANOTHER PASSAGES

» There are dozens of “one-another” passages in the Bible. These passages give simple direction for how Christians should and should not act toward one-another. These passages help govern and instruct our discipling relationships.

–Hebrews 3:13—encourage one another daily

–Hebrews 10:24 – spur one another on toward love and good deeds

–Galatians 6:2 – carry each other’s burdens

Q: Do you have these kinds of “one-another” relationships? Do you actively seek them out for your life?

Important Discipling Practicals:

–Have a designated discipling partner and/or group in your life; meet regularly.

–Have dynamic “discipling times” with your partner/group: confess sins, share burdens, talk about what you are learning from God, pray together, share your faith together, challenge one another’s faith, etc.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Have a time of good point/bad point; as a way to learn to encourage and spur one another on. Start out with coming up with 3 good points (areas they are Christ-like) about one another and then sharing 1 bad point (an area they need to repent/grow in) about one another. See how many “one another” passages can you find in the scriptures?*

PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL

Objectives: To equip and inspire disciples to bold, respectful, and (most of all) effective evangelism. Evangelism is part of living out the Great Commission of Matthew 28 and a responsibility all Christians have. To “evangelize” literally means to “proclaim the gospel”. This Bible study teaches us the balance between tact and boldness that we need to effectively “proclaim the gospel.”

MOTIVATION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:10-21

- » We proclaim the gospel (trying to persuade men) because we know and fear God. Furthermore, Christ’s love “compels” us to live our lives for Him as His ambassadors. We need to understand that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

BOLDNESS

ROMANS 1:16-17

- » The gospel is nothing to be ashamed of because it has the power to save.

LUKE 9:23-26

- » If we are ashamed of Jesus and his words, he will be ashamed of us.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELISM

MATTHEW 10:11-14

- » Be discerning and do not be focused on, or be discouraged by, those who aren’t serious about God.

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7-8

- » Invest in a friendship, don’t just get together to do Bible studies; have fun together, study books together, eat meals together...share your life!

MATTHEW 5:14-16

- » Be an example. It is God’s intention that our lives shine in the world for all to see and for our good deeds to bring him glory.

Q: Does the example of your personal life, academics, finances, work ethic, etc. bring glory to God and make the gospel attractive, or would you be ashamed to show people how you behave in certain areas of your life?

ACTS 4:29-31

- » Pray for boldness! God will answer your prayers.

1 PETER 3:15-16

- » Show gentleness and respect.

HELPFUL HINTS

1. Push yourself to be friendly and to start conversations wherever you go.
2. Have a notebook/journal where you collect names and phone numbers of those you are reaching out to; this doubles as a follow-up list and as a prayer list.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Make a list of people you would like to see become disciples in the next year (family, friends, co-workers, classmates, etc.). Add this list to your prayer journal. Pray that God will open a door for you to share your faith with the people on your list. Pray for boldness and then go proclaim the gospel together.*

HELPING THE POOR

Objectives: To teach disciples the importance of helping the poor and to inspire them to serve and sacrifice for the poor and needy.

We can help those less fortunate than us in various ways: by contributing money to charity causes, by volunteering or simply by taking opportunities to help those less fortunate on a personal level. In any case, it is very important that a disciple adopts the heart to serve those in need.

MATTHEW 25:31-46

» Jesus judges between the “sheep” and “goats”. Sheep = those who give to others indiscriminately. “Goats” = those who do not, and simply take for themselves. The Bible says that we will be judged on how generous and helpful we are to the poor and needy!

Q: Who can you identify in your life that is among the “least of these”?

Q: How can you serve them?

PROVERBS 21:13

» The way that we respond to the poor/less fortunate has implications for the way that God will treat us.

PROVERBS 14:31

» We are honoring God when we are kind to the poor.

JAMES 1:27

» God has a heart for those who are in distress, who are vulnerable and unable to take care of themselves.

GALATIANS 2:9-10

» The preaching of the gospel around the world is to be accompanied with service to the poor. They go hand-in-hand.

Q: Why do you think it was so important for the apostles to establish that the spread of the gospel be done along with service to the poor?

Q: Why is it important for us today to accompany our preaching with service?

Q: How eager are you “to remember the poor?”

» As we proclaim the gospel, we must “continue to remember the poor.” When we do this we honor God and are a light to the world. As Jesus said, “let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

The Spiritual Exercise: *Give a regular poor contribution, make every effort to serve the needy in your community (Be on the lookout for local HOPE Worldwide projects in the church) or even consider praying about the possibility of adoption.*

ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

REMEMBER

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to encourage disciples to remember how God has worked in their life and to teach disciples how to take communion.

The longer we are disciples; spiritual Alzheimer's can set in – we can begin to forget how God rescued us, how He has worked in our lives and how sinful and lost we are without Him. Remembering these things are a powerful weapon against Satan's schemes and attacks. If Satan can get us to forget, it is only a matter of time before we will be tempted to return to the world.

REMEMBER GOD

EXODUS 16:1-3

- » Israel, even after being rescued from Egypt and experiencing the miracle at the Red Sea, was very quick to forget what God had done for them. When times became difficult the Israelites began to lack faith and trust in God. When Israel would cross the Jordan, to enter into the promised land, God commanded them to carry large stones from the middle of the Jordan River (which had been parted like the Red Sea) to be a "memorial for the people." (Joshua 4:1-7)
- » We too can set up "stones of remembrance" to help us remember God's power, love, and faithfulness in our lives. (Keep a journal of answered prayers, take or make objects that will remind you of God's goodness and faithfulness and how he has worked in your life.) Remembering God's past faithfulness is essential to trusting Him in the future!

DEUTERONOMY 8:10-18

- » Another danger, as we grow older as disciples, is forgetting God and His role in our lives. We can begin to believe that our lives and our blessings are the result of our own talents and abilities. God says that we will be tempted to forget Him not only in challenging times, but also in times of prosperity.

REMEMBER THE CROSS

ACTS 20:7

- » It appears from the evidence of the New Testament and that of early church history that the disciples broke bread together at least once a week.

1 CORINTHIANS 11: 23-30

- » Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. His instructions were clear, "do this in remembrance of me." Christ's sacrifice and covenant are holy and precious. The Bible teaches us that taking communion calls for self-reflection and unity among the believers. Before taking communion, reflect on the following:
 - Is there lingering sin I ought to confess?
 - Is there a relationship in the church that needs to be mended?

LUKE 22:14-20

- » The Passover was a CELEBRATION of how God rescued his people. Communion serves the same purpose for us today. It is an opportunity to reflect on God's love and mercy and how he has rescued us.
 - The bread – representative of Christ's body, broken for his people
 - The wine/juice – representative of Christ's blood, poured out for his people
- » By taking communion we (1) acknowledge/remember Christ's sacrifice for us and (2) reconfirm the covenant relationship that he established with us. (3) We celebrate/give thanks for being rescued by God.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Write out your conversion story. Keep it in a safe place and take it out and read it every year on your spiritual birthday (the anniversary of your baptism). Take communion together.*

GOD LOVES YOU

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to teach disciples how to have an accurate (biblical) view of God and inspire them to build a daily relationship with God.

- Q: How do you think your experiences growing up have shaped your view of God?
- Q: How was your relationship with your father?
- Q: How do you view authority? Do you have any negative experiences with authority figures in your past?

» Our relationship with our earthly fathers and our past experiences with other authority figures can have a profound effect on how we view God. God is NOT distant, aloof, or disinterested; He is NOT angry or short-tempered; God is not unjust or unloving. God is the perfect father and he desires to have a real, daily relationship with us.

YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO GOD

LUKE 15:3-6

» If you were the only person who needed to be rescued...God would come running after you! He loves you so much. This is who God is.

YOU ARE VALUABLE TO GOD

LUKE 15:8-10

- Q: Have you ever searched frantically for something you lost? What?
- Q: Would you go through the garbage or mud for a single penny? How about a \$100 bill or winning lottery ticket?

» How valuable an item is determines our earnestness in finding it, and what we would be willing to do to recover it. There are many scriptures in the Bible that show us how valuable we are to God. In the Old Testament, God called his people, his "treasured possession" (Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; Psalm 135:4). In the New Testament, he calls us sons and daughters, a royal priesthood, a chosen people, a holy nation, the body and bride of Christ and tells us that he loved enough to send his One and Only Son to die for us (Ephesians 1:4-8; 1 Peter 2:9; John 3:16). The Bible teaches us that we are very valuable to God!

PSALM 40:1-4

- Q: From what mud/mire did God save you?

GOD LONGS TO BE WITH YOU

LUKE 15:11-32

» God loves us and desires to have a daily relationship with us. The only thing we can do to mess that up is to forget how much God loves us and allow Satan to convince us that we are better off with the pigs (in the muck/mire of sin) or that God will not accept us if we return.

- Q: Do you think the prodigal son was initially eager to return to his father after what he had done?
- Q: How did the father respond when his son returned home? Describe the father's love for his son.
- Q: How does God feel if we choose to stay in the muck/mire of sin rather than repent and return home to him?
- Q: How will God respond when we choose to repent, come home and spend time with him?

The Spiritual Exercise: Take some time and write a letter about your upbringing, and specifically, how it may have affected your view of God. Work on having a biblical and accurate view of God.

SELF-DISCIPLINE

Objectives: To inspire disciples to learn discipline from a biblical perspective and where to implement it in their lives.

- » How many of us have had great dreams for how God was going to use us—how he would mold us into what he wanted us to be? Yet when the going got rough and the process became painful, we resisted—perhaps even took a couple of steps backward! Few of us are naturally disciplined; discipline must be learned. And yet without it, how do we suppose that we will take the gospel into all the world? Surely this is fantasy! Discipline, therefore, must be built into our Christian lives from the earliest possible moment.

1 TIMOTHY 4:7

- » Train yourself to be godly. Physical training (e.g. sports) is of limited value, but spiritual training is immeasurably valuable. The Christian life is a process of training in righteousness.

LAZINESS

HEBREWS 6:12

- » Do not become lazy. Laziness is a constant threat to the life of every Christian, young or old. Imitate those who are patient, faithful and disciplined. Look for good examples; learn from them. Realize laziness is a sin.

Suggested—Proverbs 12:1, 24:30-34, 26:13-16

IDLENESS

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

- » Be constructive members of society and of the church. Hard-working people win the respect of others. Try not to be dependent on anybody. Do not go into or remain in debt.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:3-15

- » Follow the example of disciplined people. Do not be a “busybody”—appearing busy, but not really achieving anything.

GOD’S DISCIPLINE

HEBREWS 12:11-12

- » No discipline seems pleasant, but it yields a more satisfying life. Make your life count! *Suggested—1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Timothy 2:4-6, Hebrews 5:14*

PRACTICALS:

- Make a timetable of how you use your time. Get suggestions.
- Set goals.
- Spend time with a disciplined person and learn from him or her.
- If you are not a punctual person, make an effort to be early.

Suggested: *The Disciplined Life* by Richard Taylor and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey

The Spiritual Exercise: *Do one of the practical suggestions mentioned above, or read one of the recommended books.*

FASTING

Objectives: The main objective of this study is to give you a basic understanding of fasting, including why, when, and how to fast. In brief, fasting is something that people do when they are drawing close to God, seeking out his will and depending on him. Like Jesus in the desert, fasting is another way we learn to depend on God.

MATTHEW 9:14-15

» Jesus expected that after he departed, his disciples would dedicate themselves to the spiritual act of fasting.

THE BIBLE TEACHES US THAT THERE ARE MANY REASONS WE SHOULD FAST

» Repentance:

Nineveh fasted as a whole nation for God's mercy (Jonah 3:5-8, 10)

Paul fasted after being confronted by Jesus (Acts 9:9)

» To draw near to God:

Moses fasted for 40 days (Exodus 34:27-28)

Fasting was used in conjunction with worship to draw near to God (Luke 2:36-37, Acts 13:1-3)

» For God's deliverance:

Daniel prayed for God to deliver Israel from slavery (Daniel 9:3)

To seek God's will in appointing and guiding leadership (Acts 14:23)

» For other people :

David fasted for those who were sick. In this case, they were even his enemies! (Psalm 35:13)

God called his people, through Isaiah, to not be self-centered in their worship, prayers, and fasting (Isaiah 58:6-8).

In the days of Isaiah, when the nation of Israel fasted, they were fasting for their own personal deliverance, but they were not concerned for other people around them that were starving, naked, and homeless. God wanted them to have a heart to fast about other people's spiritual needs as well as their own, and to bring forth the good works of helping the needy. This the most important principle of fasting, to draw closer to God and to seek His righteousness and His will in our lives.

THE BIBLE ALSO TEACHES HOW TO FAST

» Fasting should be done in humility, in secrecy and without complaining. (Matthew 6:16-18)

» Fasting should be accompanied by prayer and Bible study. (Nehemiah 1:4; Nehemiah 9:1-3; Joel 2:12; Acts 13:1-3)

» Fasting can be specific (abstaining from only specific things) or absolute (no food or water at all).

Absolute fast (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16)

Specific fast (1 Corinthians 7:5; Daniel 10:3)

» Fasting can be done corporately (group) or individually (personal).

Corporate – 1 Samuel 7:5-7; Ezra 8:21-23; Acts 13:1-3

Personal – Daniel 9:3; Psalm 35:13

» Fasting should be a regular part of a Christian's life. Fasting helps us draw near to God, depend on Him, and be strengthened and empowered by Him. Those who had a great relationship with God in the Bible (Moses, Elijah, Daniel, David) all made fasting an essential part of their spiritual lives. We should follow their example, along with Jesus' example, in making fasting a regular part of our spiritual lives!

The Spiritual Exercise: *Before beginning a fast, please consult a doctor if you have any relevant health issues and remember that God desires us to be good stewards of our bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Decide to fast (to be closer to God, for a friend, for repentance, etc.). Pick a day and the type of fast that you will dedicate yourself to. Keep the fast between yourself and God.*

ACADEMICS: OBSTACLE OR OPPORTUNITY?

Introduction: God certainly expects excellence of Christian students: if not excellent results, at least excellent effort. Too often undisciplined students become Christians and then use evangelism or “the church” as an excuse for mediocre performance. We must see that academics are a God-given responsibility. There is nothing unspiritual about studies. The unspiritual course to take is to neglect academics. Without perseverance the student suffers great loss in character, discipline, confidence, and credibility—not to mention future prospects.

CLEAR COMMISSION

2 CORINTHIANS 5:18-20

» God called us to be Christians as students for a reason! We are his ambassadors at school, in the dorm and at home.

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24

» Attitude is more important than aptitude. Academics are a vital part of a student’s spiritual life. To have consistent motivation, work for God, not for self.

EVANGELISTIC EXAMPLE

1 THESSALONIANS 4:11

» A consistent example has an impact! Classmates will be drawn to those who can help others.

MARK 7:37

» People were amazed by Jesus’ all-around excellence. You will amaze family and friends if you excel in all areas. Conduct your ministry through academics, not in spite of academics.

POWERFUL PREPARATION

JAMES 1:2-4

» Persevering with academics leads to spiritual maturity: discipline, focus and faith.

Suggested—Proverbs 6:6, 18:9, Philippians 2:14-16, 1 Timothy 3:7, 4:15-16

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS:

PROVERBS 11:14

» **Get Help/Advice** —Many advisors make victory sure. So seek discipling in your academics and get input from professors, lecturers and classmates.

PROVERBS 13:4; 21:5

» **Be Diligent in Your Studies**

PRACTICALS:

» There is no substitute for diligence. So attend every lecture. This is also very important for your example.

—Take good notes and catch up on missed lectures.

—Go through homework within a day of receiving it, and plan how you will get it done.

—Keep current at all times (for conscience’s sake, as well as for practical reasons)!

—Aim to sleep reasonably, especially during exams.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Do at least one of the practical suggestions mentioned above during your next academic week.*

THE COMPASSION OF JESUS

Objectives: The two main objectives of this study are to inspire disciples to see the world through Jesus' eyes (from His perspective) and encourage them to have the heart and compassion of Jesus.

MATTHEW 9:35-38

- Q: What did Jesus do "when he saw the crowds"?
- Q: What does it mean to have compassion for people?

» Hebrews, in the days of, Jesus saw compassion as "being moved" to kindness, benevolence, or love.

- Q: Have you ever seen anything that moved you to kindness, benevolence, or love? (*homeless people, disaster victims on news, etc.*)
- Q: What does he mean "sheep without a shepherd"?

» A sheep without a shepherd has no one looking out for it, no one protecting it from the predators of the world. The Bible tells us that Satan is a devouring lion in our daily spiritual lives. People we pass every day have no one to care for them spiritually, they are all alone and wandering without direction. This is how we should see people as we go through our day.

MARK 6:30-44

» Life can be exhausting! Jesus and his disciples were tired and hungry and left to get some rest. However, when they got to where they were going they found more people in need.

- Q: What was Jesus' heart? What motivated Jesus to meet the needs?
- Q: Think of times that you have had a long, tiring day (of work, school, family responsibilities, serving in the church); were you still willing to have compassion for the needs of others?

» We may feel like the disciples, who didn't feel like they had the physical or emotional resources to meet the needs of others. However, we must never forget that if we are willing to act faithfully, God will give us the resources to meet the needs of others and be strengthened ourselves.

MARK 1:40-42

» Jesus was willing to risk his personal well-being, his reputation, and even his life to help this man. Jesus had the heart to love the people who were looked down upon and were regarded as outcasts because of their physical, moral, or social condition.

- Q: Would you be willing to risk your well-being, your reputation, and even your life to help someone?
- Q: Do you love those around you who may be considered outcasts by others because of their physical, moral, or social condition?

MARK 2:13-17

» Jesus saw not only people's physical and emotional needs, he saw their spiritual needs. These people may have looked okay on the outside but they were spiritually sick, hurting, and needy!

- Q: Do you see the spiritual needs of those around you?

PSALM 116:5-6

» The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion and when I was in great need, he saved me. As disciples of Jesus we must always remember why we serve, why we evangelize, and why we deny ourselves for the needs of others. We do these things to be like God. God is full of compassion and, when we were in "great need," He saved us!

The Spiritual Exercise: *Imitate Jesus' heart for people by having compassion that leads you to action. Decide to see the spiritual and physical needs of those around you and have a heart to help!*

DATING AND MARRIAGE

Introduction: Marriage and dating relationships are heavily influenced by cultural norms. Dating, as one would commonly understand it today, is relatively recent practice, developing in America since the 1950s. Before that time, and in many places in the world today, marriages were typically arranged by families or a formal “courting” took place. This was the case in Biblical times as well. Consequently, one will not find the term “dating” anywhere in the Bible. With regards to dating and guy-girl relationships, many of us may come out of the world with bad experiences or low expectations. The Bible offers some very important principles that draw right boundaries and set us on a path for building successful friendships and dating relationships.

YOKED TO BELIEVERS

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18

- » The context to this scripture is about who we give our affection to. Paul told the disciples in Corinth that he and his companions had given their affection (hearts) to them (2 Cor. 6:11) but the Corinthians were “withholding” their affection from Paul and the other disciples (2 Cor. 6:12). Paul was encouraging them to give their hearts to other disciples but NEVER be yoked to, be partners with, (give their affection and hearts) unbelievers!

1 CORINTHIANS 7:39

- » Widowed Christians were instructed to only remarry other Christians. This is neither encouragement nor suggestion; it is a clear command of God: “...he must *belong to the Lord*.” Disciples marry disciples.

DEUTERONOMY 7:3-4

- » The Israelites were commanded not to marry outside of their faith, knowing it would cause them to leave God and worship false gods.

TYPES OF DATING

- » Discuss the church’s two general views of “dating”.
 - Friendly dating: guys and girls going out to encourage one another and get to know each other with no romantic strings attached and no expectations except friendship...this should happen a lot!
 - Steady dating: having an exclusive boyfriend or girlfriend...this should happen after taking the time to build a regular friendship and consulting MANY advisors!

NEED A BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND

PSALM 37:4

- Steady dating (i.e. getting a “boyfriend/girlfriend”) in the world can take place for all the wrong reasons: insecurity (needing to “be with someone” in order to feel loved or special), social pressure, lustfulness, status.
- First and foremost, our delight should be in the Lord. He is the primary source for what our hearts desire in terms of intimacy, feelings of worth, security and confidence.
- Sometimes** our impulse to want to “date” may be premature or based on worldly motives. Ask this question: What is it that you are seeking in a dating relationship?

SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIPS (GUY/GIRL) PRINCIPLES

- Be considerate of one another. Do not be a stumbling block – **1 Corinthians 10:32-33** Go on dates with a double; home before midnight; dress appropriately, etc.
- Be absolutely pure – **Ephesians 5:3, 1 Timothy 5:2, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5**. In all guy-girl relationships (dating and non-dating) the standard of purity is very high.

Q: What kinds of things, short of sexual immorality, would still be a “hint” of sexual immorality/impurity? (Inappropriate kissing, touching, making out, etc.)

- Get Advice - **Proverbs 19:2, 19:20** Our worldly notions of dating should not be imported into God’s kingdom; be humble enough to admit that you do not know how to successfully build a spiritual dating relationship with a Christian...you need advice!

The Spiritual Exercise: Write out a list of things / principles that God says are essential to building a spiritual friendship (with the opposite sex) and entering into a godly marriage. Make a list of people you can get advice from regarding building these relationships.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: CORD OF THREE STRANDS

Introduction: God's word and power provide us with everything we need for a happy, godly, fulfilling marriage. The area of marriage is crucial, and if a marriage is not going well, serious spiritual problems will also be present. And to the contrary, a Christian marriage is one arena in which disciples will dramatically outshine the many worldly examples surrounding them. A great marriage draws others to Jesus!

GOD'S PLAN

GENESIS 2:24, PROVERBS 18:22, ECCLESIASTES 4:12

» Marriage meets our deepest needs. Your husband or wife should be your closest friend. With God at the center of our marriage we are strong.

COMMUNICATION

EPHESIANS 4:29

» Build up with your words, do not tear each other down! (Proverbs 12:18, 18:21)

JAMES 1:9

» Be quick to listen. (Proverbs 18:13)

COLOSSIANS 3:13, EPHESIANS 4:26

» Deal with resentments or bitterness / Do not bury them.

PROVERBS 15:22

» Plans fail for lack of counsel—Be partners in planning. Set up a regular planning time to work together on scheduling, finances, household needs, etc.

GODLY ROLES

COLOSSIANS 3:19, 1 PETER 3:7

» Know what GOD expects! Husbands should NEVER be harsh! Husbands must serve their wives, being considerate. Husbands should do their share of the housework, cleaning, taking care of the children...

1 PETER 3:5-6

» Know what GOD expects! Wives must learn submission. Wives should never nag or be bossy. (Proverbs 21:19, 25:24, 27:15)

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

» The husband has been called by God to be the spiritual leader of his family.

MARRIAGE DISCIPLING/COUNSELING

» The scriptures teach us many things about marriage: our roles, responsibilities, our need for unity, how we should speak to one another, and treat one another, etc. We need to be "taught to obey" these scriptures just like we are taught how to have a deeper relationship with God, to love and serve others, and to serve the poor. Sometimes our marriage is the last place we practice our Christianity, when in truth, it should be the first place!

ACTS 5:1-11

» Do not "protect" each other when there is lukewarmness, sin or compromise.

PROVERBS 15:22

» Take advice.

Q: Is either one of you closed to input? (In any particular area of life?)

» Every marriage needs counseling; no one is above it. Marriages need discipling. "Four-way openness": husbands and wives having permission from each other to speak to the other's discipler if there are unresolved problems. This is a powerful safe guard and a good test of sincerity.

SPIRITUALITY

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

» Talk about spiritual things when you are together. Pray with your spouse daily. Considering studying a spiritual book together.

ROMANCE

1 CORINTHIANS 7:5

» Do not deprive one another.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

» Do not forget to love like the Bible describes (this is the best recipe for romance!) Remember the special touches: cards, flowers, presents, surprises, etc.

The Spiritual Exercise: Do something this month to build up your marriage spiritually. (Examples: pray together, seek out discipleship time together, share your faith together, start reading a marriage book together, etc.)

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY: PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Introduction: The Christ-centered family is a breath of fresh air and a ray of hope in our society today. The family following God's word is a happy, communicative, warm, loving, committed and fruitful family. Family is the forum God has chosen for character development in his most precious gift to parents: their children.

FATHERS

EPHESIANS 6:4

- » Fathers should lead their families spiritually (Ephesians 5:23) and are commanded to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. You cannot leave this up to others, including your wife (though, of course, she is responsible too).

1 SAMUEL 3:12-14

- » We see when a father is not leading his family spiritually, God held Eli accountable. God rebuked Eli, not the church, the teen ministry, schools or the government or even just Eli's wife. Parents must accept the goal of raising their children properly and must diligently work toward that goal. They must not leave this to others.

MOTHERS

TITUS 2:3-5

- » Young women should be taught to love their children. Love requires caring for them. This is something that can and must be learned. Women who do not learn it will cause God's word to be disrespected and dishonored.

PROVERBS 29:15

- » A child "left to himself" without spiritual training and discipline, is a disgrace to his mother. Mothers cannot ignore the Bible's teaching on firm discipline and correction for her children, nor can she leave it solely to the father.

LOVE, TIME, AND AFFECTION

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7

- » Loving our children means dealing with them in a kind, patient, respectful way. We should not deal with them out of frustration, we should not be easily angered with them, and we should keep no records of wrongs. Our children need our love, time and affection to grow up to be secure and healthy. We must prioritize our schedules to make sure we are able to provide our children this kind of relationship with us.

DISCIPLINE

PROVERBS 23:13-14

- » It is unloving not to give it. Discipline is training.

COLOSSIANS 3:21

- » Encouragement and consistency is necessary.

PROVERBS 22:15, 29:15, 17, 19, 21

- » God commands discipline.

PROVERBS 22:6

- » Areas of training: respect toward authority, speech and openness, affection, manners, tidiness, moodiness, etc.

PARENTING PRACTICALS:

- Wife and husband should agree on the "rules," lest the children pick and choose whom to obey!
- Create a simple system of allowances and incentives for the children.
- Pray with the children before they go to bed.
- Have a weekly family time.
- If you have preteen/teen children, partner with their ministry. Embrace feedback. Do not be defensive.
- Ask Christians you respect for advice or to recommend helpful books.

The Spiritual Exercise: *Have a fun-filled, spiritually focused, family devotional.*