

FIT FOR DUTY

TEACHER'S GUIDE

A. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE (FOR THE TEACHER)

“Fit for Duty” is a series of focused Bible studies designed as part of a church-wide emphasis on the foundational elements of our Christian faith:

1. Our Salvation and Baptism
2. Bible Study and Prayer
3. Being Faithful in a Local Church; Trusting Jesus to Guide our Lives
4. Sharing our Faith with Others

This journey will take us all through material that is fundamental to our faith—for some of us it is material that we have studied before, and a legitimate question for the mature believer or teacher is “Why study this again?” How do we benefit from a deeper study of this foundational material? Both Paul and Peter raised the idea of the need for frequent reinforcement of basic truths in their letters to the early Christian Church. According to these Apostles, periodic study of the biblical foundation—“The Basics”—is necessary to “safeguard our faith,” to help us “stand firm,” to “stimulate wholesome thinking” and “to refresh our memories.”

Philippians 3:1 Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. (NLT)

2 Peter 1:12-15 Therefore, I will always remind you about these things—even though you already know them and are standing firm in the truth you have been taught. And it is only right that I should keep on reminding you as long as I live. For our Lord Jesus Christ has shown me that I must soon leave this earthly life, so I will work hard to make sure you always remember these things after I am gone. (NLT)

2 Peter 3:1-2 This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory. I want you to remember what the holy prophets said long ago and what our Lord and Savior commanded through your apostles. (NLT)

B. THE OBJECTIVE: HOLINESS

When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior we embark on a lifelong journey in which we are called by God to become more and more like Christ. What this means and how we as mere men can possibly do that is central to what we are going to be studying. We are commanded to “be holy,” so our job is not to question the command, but to seek in the wisdom of the Word the spiritual power to move forward with the process.

The Bible is clear about our **objective**:

Leviticus 11:45 You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (NKJV)

Holiness means separation, separation from the sin of the world and of our own nature, to be continually becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. But this is not something we can “do” on our own by “good works” and lots of spiritual elbow-grease—it is a work that was begun and will be completed by the grace of God. Paul speaks of [Phil 1:6-7(NKJV)] “...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...”

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. (NKJV)

C. THE OUTCOME: TRANSFORMED LIVES

The Bible points **the way**:

Ephesians 4:21-24 ... *the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.* (NKJV)

Colossians 3:10-11 *Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.* (NLT)

Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (NKJV)

The key words here are “conformed,” “transformed” and “renewing.” All of us entered into the Christian life with some old bad habits (the church word for that is “sin”) by which we were “conformed” to the world’s standards and philosophy, but we have the Bible in which we learn the truth about God and the commands He has given for our good by which we are “transformed” into a new person.

Scripture tells us:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (NKJV)

We see in Scripture many good reasons to spend time in prayer and Bible study as an essential part of learning God’s will and finding the basis for the changes in habit (“renewal”) that Jesus requires of Christians who would truly want to follow Him.

But habits are not so easy to change, and simply knowing what the Bible says is not going to change them. Some of us have been Christians for a long time, and we still have some of the old bad habits. That doesn’t mean we are bad people, but simply that we have not attained to perfect “holiness,” and that what progress we make calls for a real and sustained effort. It requires commitment, prayer and Bible study, and application of the things we learn as we go forward. Above all it requires us to apply Scripture to life.

James 1:22-23 *But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves.* (NLT)

D. THE SCRIPTURAL MODEL

Scripture gives us a model to imitate: Christ Himself, the perfect man who was tested and tempted in all ways just exactly the way we are, yet was holy, and without sin. And Scripture also gives us Christ’s promise that when we have been saved, we will have the Holy Spirit within to guide and teach us and to give us spiritual power to understand and do that to which Jesus calls us.

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.* (NKJV)

If we will seek to live according to what Jesus taught, looking to Him as our teacher as well as our example, we will grow consistently and steadily in maturity as Christians.

John 8:12 [Jesus said,] *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."* (NKJV)

Paul said, [1 Cor 11:1] *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."* (NKJV)

WEEK 1—ENLISTING

A. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

We “enlist” in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ by accepting God’s offer of saving grace through faith. It’s a life-time commitment that we are making, promising us some amazing benefits and “perks”—and nothing we ever do will result in our losing that incredible gift.

1. LET’S LOOK AT WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT OUR SALVATION.

John 3:16 *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* (NKJV)

1 John 5:11-13 *And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.* (NKJV)

The Bible states in very clear and straightforward terms that when you have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, you have eternal life. To be our Savior, Christ had to live a sin-free life, and for that He had to be God’s Son, not simply another human being. That’s what it means when the Bible speaks of God’s only “begotten” Son. The Bible has long genealogies full of the “begats” that talk about human reproduction down through the generations, but only of Jesus Christ does the Bible say that He was “begotten” of God Himself.

2. OUR SALVATION IS BASED ON GOD’S PROMISES!

The Bible contains a record of many promises that God has made, and among these are convincing assurances of our salvation if we have faith in Christ and accept the grace that God offers us through that faith.

Romans 10:9-10 *[The Apostle, Paul, said] “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* (NKJV)

John 5:24 *[Jesus said,] “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.* (NKJV)

This is important. You are a Christian, saved for all eternity, if you believe that Jesus Christ is God, that He was raised from the dead in order that your sins might be forgiven, and if you confess with your mouth that you believe this to be true—in other words, tell somebody about your decision. If you hear and believe what Jesus said about salvation (remember John 3:16) and declare yourself to be Christ’s, then it’s a done deal. It’s done not just here on earth—you have become a Christian—but it is done in eternity, where you have an assured place as a “joint heir” with Jesus in God’s eternal Kingdom.

3. OUR SALVATION IS BASED ON THE NATURE (AND CHARACTER) OF GOD.

A promise is only as reliable as the person who makes it. We have all experienced the disappointment when someone we trusted made a promise and for whatever reason, failed to keep it. That won’t happen with God. God’s essential character is to be totally reliable, and so we can depend totally on His promises.

Theologians give us lists of the essential characteristics (attributes) of God. He is holy, sovereign, glorious, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, unchanging, having all wisdom. He is good, loving, just (this is where the “wrath of God” fits in) and gracious.

Let's see what the Bible says about the character of God in this area of our salvation:

1 Corinthians 1:9 *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (NKJV)*

1 Thessalonians 5:24 *He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. (NKJV)*

Hebrews 10:23 *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (NKJV)*

What is the single word that the Bible uses in each of these three verses to describe the character of God? Right! The word is “faithful” and the Bible teaches that God is faithful (reliable, trustworthy, unchanging). You can believe the promise because you know that the One who made the promise is totally reliable. Nothing will ever change His mind about His promise, or your salvation. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate you from the love of God. Remember what we just read in John 3:16, that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Our salvation in Jesus Christ is eternally secured!

Consider these beautiful promises:

Romans 8:1 *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (NKJV)*

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)*

4. ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IS GIVEN TO US BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD

One of the reasons God has given us the Holy Spirit is to provide us with daily, living proof that our salvation is the real deal. Just as an “official seal” is put on a document to indicate that it is authentic, so God has put an “official seal” on our hearts and lives as proof that our salvation has become an integral part of our lives. Jesus made this promise to his disciples before He was crucified, that though He would be returning to heaven, He would send them another like Him who would help them in their Christian lives.

John 14:26-27 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (NKJV)*

Ephesians 1:13-14 *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (NKJV)*

As a Christian, you have entered into a new life. It is really new—something miraculous happened when you accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and you have literally become a “**new creation**” [2 Corinthians 5:17]. Our job as Christians, whether we have been in the Lord for a day or most of our lives, is to seek continually to become more and more like Christ. We will explore this in much more detail as we go on, but it was summarized for us by the Apostle Paul, who said:

Romans 12:2 *Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (NLT)*

B. PUBLICLY DECLARING OUR FAITH

Just as a newly minted US Marine wants to come home on his first leave and proudly show everybody his brand new uniform, as a new Christian we should be eager to share with others the wonderful thing that has happened to us when we came to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. Christ Himself ordained the sacrament of Baptism as the most important way in which we are to publicly affirm our new faith.

1. JESUS WANTS NEW BELIEVERS TO PUBLICLY DECLARE THEIR FAITH IN HIM

Matthew 10:32-33 [Jesus said,] *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven."* (NKJV)

Have you ever heard of the carpenter's practice of clinching a nail? It means that when the nail has been driven through the wood, the back-side is bent down so that the nail cannot then be pulled from the board. Making public profession of Jesus Christ is like clinching the nail. Our faith and the assurance of our salvation are strengthened, and can't be "pulled away from us."

2. JESUS COMMANDED BAPTISM

Matthew 28:19-20 [Jesus said,] *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (NKJV)

Baptism is not a suggestion or a recommendation for His followers, but a command. If we do not allow ourselves to be baptized, we are being disobedient. Even though Jesus was God on earth and free of all sin, He allowed Himself to be baptized as an example for us to follow. Consider the account of Jesus' baptism, and God's dramatic approval:

Matthew 3:13-17 *Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptized by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. "I am the one who needs to be baptized by you," he said, "so why are you coming to me?"*

But Jesus said, "It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires." So John agreed to baptize him.

After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." (NLT)

3. IT WAS NORMAL PRACTICE FOR NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS TO BE BAPTIZED

Acts 2:37-38 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and **let every one of you be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.(NKJV)*

Acts 2:41 *Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (NKJV)*

4. BAPTISM EXPRESSES YOUR LOVE FOR JESUS AND OBEDIENCE TO HIS COMMANDS

John 14:21 [Jesus said,] *"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."* (NKJV)

5. BAPTISM IS A LIVING PICTURE OF OUR SALVATION

First, baptism is a picture of what Jesus did for us. He died for our sins, was buried, and came back to life. The Bible tells us:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, (NKJV)

Second, baptism is a vivid picture of what happens to us when we were baptized. We “died” to our old way of life, and have been “raised” to live a new life in Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (NKJV)

The Bible teaches that the method of Baptism used by the early church was immersion (completely placing a person under water and immediately bringing him or her back up). Immersion is the only form of baptism that fully and completely illustrates its meaning, and it is why Baptists perform baptism in this highly symbolic manner. The baptismal water itself has no “magic power”—it’s just tap water—but the decisions we have made to accept Christ and proclaim it through obedience by being baptized have beautiful eternal benefits. “Buried as Christ was buried, and raised into newness of life,” Scripture tells us. Amen to that!

WEEK II—BASIC TRAINING

A. STUDY YOUR BIBLE

The Bible, which we call “The Word of God,” reveals Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Jesus is at the center of our lives and the practice of our faith and important truths about Him are revealed in both the New and the Old Testaments. The Bible is the Living and Inspired Word of God. It is called living, in that it is God’s message to us, providing us with concrete moral values, practical advice about life and living, and spiritual nourishment for our souls. It is called inspired because it was given to men by the inspiration of Holy Spirit. The Bible contains the information we need about developing a personal relationship with God through Jesus.

Matthew 4:4 [Jesus said,] *‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’* (TLB)

The Words of Jesus—and all of Scripture—are essential spiritual food which we need.

John 6:35-36 *And Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.”* (NKJV)

The Bible is the most widely read book in all of history and has inspired countless people to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, then given practical advice on how to walk the walk to which Jesus points them. It is safe to say that no other book has had such a powerful and beneficial effect on so many people as the Bible. As Christians we believe that the Bible shows us the foundation (Jesus Christ) on which we build our faith and reveals for us in practical terms how we should practice that faith.

As believers we must accept the Bible as our authority, make a commitment to seek the truth contained in it, and allow its teaching to adjust our lives!

1 Thessalonians 2:13 *For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.* (NKJV)

1. GOD’S WORD WAS WRITTEN FOR A REASON!

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.* (NKJV)

Isaiah 55:10-11 *“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”* (NKJV)

GOD’S WORD IS USEFUL FOR DOCTRINE (TEACHING).

“Doctrine” is a church word that refers to Biblical teaching about truths that are important to us as Christians. Consider this very foundational passage.

Deuteronomy 6:4-8 *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (NKJV)

What truths does the Bible tell you about God and about Scripture in this brief passage from Deuteronomy?

GOD’S WORD IS USEFUL FOR REBUKING (TO POINT OUT A FAULT) AND CONVICTING OF SIN

Ephesians 4:26-31 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” (NKJV)

GOD’S WORD IS USEFUL FOR CORRECTION OF ERROR

Not only does the Bible show us where we may be going wrong, but it also corrects us. Psalm 119 talks at length about the Psalmist’s experiences with the Word of God. This Psalm teaches us that Scripture gives God’s directions for living.

Psalm 119:9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. (NIV)

As an example, Psalm 119:9 asks, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” Note the answer to this question in the space provided in your workbook? How could this advice be applied to someone who had slipped and was involved in sexual sin before he became a Christian? When we allow the Scriptures to become the guide for our hearts and minds, it will show us how to identify and correct our defects and faults.

GOD’S WORD IS USEFUL FOR TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart... (NKJV)

Bible study is our spiritual food. As our body absorbs the nutrients in our physical food, so our spiritual health is strengthened by the scriptural “vitamins” found in the Bible. It is said, “You are what you eat!” Jeremiah teaches us that if we eat the spiritual food of God’s word, we will become godly people. And we will find joy in doing so!

GOD’S WORD PROVIDES US WITH THE WEAPONS AND ARMOR OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Ephesians 6:10-13 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. (NKJV)

The devil will be angered by our decision to accept Christ and live according to the Word of God, and he will find ways to attack us. But God has provided us with impenetrable armor by which we can stand confidently no matter what!

2. STUDY YOUR BIBLE TO LEARN ABOUT GOD’S PURPOSES

There are many approaches to studying the Bible. Some of the basic elements include:

HEAR

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (NKJV)

How do we hear the word of God? Listen to your Pastor’s sermons, or the Bible teaching in your small group. Take notes on what you hear. In Jesus’ time most people did not have their own copies of Scripture, and so they learned by hearing it read in the local churches and synagogues.

READ

1 Timothy 4:13 *Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.* (NKJV)

Set a personal goal to read a certain amount from the Bible every day. There are Bible Reading Plans that will guide you through reading the Bible in a year, but even if you only have a brief time, make it a regular part of your day, and be consistent. Start with the Gospel of Mark, and read one chapter every day.

STUDY

2 Timothy 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (NKJV)

Studying the Bible can be as simple as reading it with a pencil and notebook at hand and making notes, jotting down verses that speak to you, and seeking what application(s) of the verse or passage might God be showing you.

Rick Warren provides this useful list of Bible applications in the form of an acrostic on the word “Applications.” Is there an...

ATTITUDE to adjust?
PPROMISE to claim?
PPRIORITY to change?
LESSON to learn?
ISSUE to resolve?
COMMAND to obey?
ACTIVITY to avoid or stop?
TRUTH to believe?
IDOL to tear down? (This is important!)
OFFENSE to forgive?
NEW DIRECTION to take?
SIN to confess?

Pathway Church offers a wide variety of Small Group experiences, all of which focus around the study and understanding of God’s Word. It will be very helpful to your growth as a Christian to be a regular part of small group Bible study.

MEMORIZE

Psalms 119:11 *Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.* (NKJV)

Memorizing gives you the opportunity to share those passages of Scripture that are especially meaningful to you; and having those passages “hidden in your heart” also makes them instantly available to you as guideposts for living. Don’t say you can’t memorize things. You know your phone number, address, e-mail address and countless other things that you use regularly. When you start repeating important Bible verses regularly, guess what? You’ll have them memorized before you even realize it.

One that is easy to memorize and important to our faith is this:

Proverbs 3:5-6 *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.* (NKJV)

MEDITATE

Joshua 1:8 *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.* (NKJV)

Meditation is chewing on a verse, turning it over and over in your mind, and thinking about it during the day as you drive, rest, and walk around. Meditation on a verse and considering its applications in your life makes the verse a part of your consciousness at a deeper level than simple memorization. Take advantage of it—you will be glad you took the time.

Make a commitment right now to regular Bible study. What time of day would be a good time for you to spend in reading the Bible? For Bible study? If your Christian walk is important to you, nothing will be more important than Bible study and Prayer. Don't let any excuses ("I don't have time!" etc.) cause you to defer this decision—if it is important to you, you will make the time! Make your prayer:

Psalms 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.* (NKJV)

B. LEARN TO PRAY

As Christians it is important that throughout our lifetimes we spend time getting to know God. The best way to get to know someone better is simply to talk with them on a regular basis. The relationship with God is more important than how we pray, the words we use, or how much time we spend. Prayer is a conversation, not a monologue—it involves both speaking to God and hearing from God. In this aspect, Prayer and Bible Study often go hand in hand, because God frequently uses the inspired words of Scripture to answer prayer. The Bible invites us to seek God and promises that if we seek Him, He will open our hearts to know Him.

1 Chronicles 28:9 promises: *"If you seek him, he will be found by you..."* (NIV)

Jeremiah 24:7 *Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord...* (NKJV)

We have the privilege of a pathway of prayer directly to God through Jesus Christ. By His own example, Jesus made prayer an important personal priority. In the prayers of Jesus and others in the Bible we have examples and models on which to build our own prayer patterns. People find praying difficult because they don't know how to pray, they don't know what to pray about or they just find it hard to establish the habit of praying regularly.

JESUS SET THE EXAMPLE FOR US

Mark 1:35 *Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.* (NKJV)

What does this passage teach us about Jesus prayer life? In considering your response consider Jesus' **priorities**, the **place** of prayer in his day (first thing) and the **privacy** of his prayers.

WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER?

Luke 18:1 *Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart...* (NKJV)

Why do you suppose that when we fail to pray regularly we can "lose heart"? Prayer provides us with a daily dose of spiritual power to deal with life's little (and sometimes big) problems.

WHAT DID JESUS' DISCIPLES ASK HIM TO TEACH THEM?

Luke 11:1 *Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray..."* (NKJV)

Who better to teach us about how to pray than God's own Son, who knew God more intimately than any human could know his earthly Father, yet still set aside time every day to go off to a quiet place and pray! Prayer is not a one-time thing, but an ongoing fellowship we can have with God.

WHY SHOULD WE PRAY CONTINUALLY?

1 Thessalonians 5:17 teaches us to *"pray without ceasing."* (NKJV)

John MacArthur says: "Without ceasing" means "constant" and defines prayer not as some perpetual activity of kneeling and interceding but as a way of life marked by a continual attitude of prayer."

When Jesus' Disciples asked Him how they should pray, His answer was to share with them what we have come to know as "The Lord's Prayer"—

Matthew 6:9-13 *"In this manner, therefore, pray:*

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (NKJV)

The Lord's Prayer is not necessarily intended to teach us the exact words that we pray each day, although some do so and are blessed by its simplicity and piety. Most Bible teachers believe that Jesus gave it to us as a model for our own prayers, and that each part of the Lord's prayer is an element of the framework on which we can build and expand our own prayers. Jesus didn't say "Pray this!" He said "Pray in this manner!"

Let's consider several ways in which we need God in our lives:

WE NEED OUR FATHER, GOD. The first line of the prayer is a humble confession that only through God can we be blessed. We need to spend prayer time in simply giving Him glory and praise, acknowledging His holiness.

Psalm 100:4 *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.* (NKJV)

WE NEED TO FOCUS ON SPREADING THE GOSPEL MESSAGE. "Your Kingdom come!" One of our major prayers should be for the establishment of God's Kingdom, His government, in our own hearts, in our cities, in our nation and in the world.

WE NEED TO SEEK TO BE OBEDIENT TO GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES. "Your will be done." This should be our prayer and our intention for our own lives. It is one thing to pray that God will do what He wants to do out there in the world. But it is another to pray that we will be open to the changes that He will want to make in us. Is our expectation, "May it be, Lord!" or is it "Let's talk about that."?

WE NEED TO PRAY FOR GOD'S PROVISION. "Give us this day..." Notice that this prayer doesn't ask for a year's supply or a lifetime guarantee, but for "...our daily bread," for that which we need right now to continue to do God's work. What do we need each day? We need food and shelter, certainly, but we also need a willing heart, a right spirit and the readiness to be led by the Holy Spirit.

WE NEED GOD'S FORGIVENESS EVERY DAY. "Forgive us..." We sin every day because we are creatures whose basic human nature is sinful. We may not sin willfully, but we do sin regularly. Jesus forgives every sin, every day, every time we but bring it to Him in confession. It should be part of our prayers.

Psalm 51:4 *Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.* (NKJV)

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (NKJV)

WE NEED POWER TO PROTECT US FROM SATAN. "...deliver us from the evil one." Our daily prayers should always reflect our assurance that God will protect us and our loved ones from Satan's attacks. God will put a spiritual hedge around us to protect us.

ANOTHER APPROACH TO PRAYER IS BASED ON THE ACRONYM “ACTS”—

1. ADORATION is praise focusing on who God is. (Our Father in heaven, hallowed be thy name...) The Psalms are a rich treasure house of “made-to-order” prayers that we can use to give God glory and honor.

*Psalms 145:3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness is unsearchable. (NKJV)*

Psalms 100 and 150 are also wonderful places to start your prayer time, giving worship and glory to God.

2. CONFESSION (And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors) is acknowledging our sins to God and asking Him for forgiveness. When you accepted Christ, your relationship with God was established that cannot ever be broken, but our fellowship with God can be hindered by unconfessed sin in our lives.

*Psalms 66:18-19 If I had not confessed the sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
But God did listen!
He paid attention to my prayer. (NLT)*

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NKJV)

So confess sin whenever you realize you’ve committed it, and believe His promise that when you’ve confessed, He has cleansed you from that sin. When you have Christ in your life, you can claim victory over temptation to sin. In your process of prayer and Bible study, God will show you the means to resist. It’s a promise:

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (NKJV)

3. THANKSGIVING is giving thanks to God for all that He has provided and done for us.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 ...in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (NKJV)

There are many areas of our lives in which God has given us blessings. Take time to consider all the things for which you can give thanks, and then take a minute sometime every day to thank Him for them.

4. SUPPLICATION is making requests and expressing desires to God. They may be in the form of personal petitions or intercessions.

Petition is asking God for your own needs (Give us this day our daily bread)

Philippians 4:6-7 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (NKJV)

Intercession is praying for the needs of others

Consider people whom you know with needs in their lives? Make a note of these and spend time today praying for them. Some people keep a “Prayer Notebook” and go back and make an annotation when prayer is answered. Making a note of prayer requests is a wonderful way to see God at work, because over time you will see prayer answered over and over again as you look back over your prayer lists.

As you make a daily habit of Bible Study and Prayer, you will find that you are developing a relationship with God by spending time with Him, and receiving His guidance for your life through truth revealed in the Bible.

WEEK III—DEPLOYMENT

A. BE FAITHFUL TO A LOCAL CHURCH

Psalms 122:1 [King David said,] *“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’”* (NKJV)

Have you ever heard somebody who claimed to be a Christian say something like, “I don’t need to belong to a church. I can pray privately and worship God in nature. All I need is my Bible.” But if that’s true, why did Jesus establish the church in the first place? And He did establish the church. Take note of who was speaking when the words, “I will build my church,” were uttered.

Matthew 16:17-18 *Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”* (NKJV)

The Greek word for church is “ekklesia” which means “ones who are called out”—because the church is made up of people who have been “called” out of the world to follow Jesus Christ. While the word “church” refers to all believers (what is sometimes called the “Universal Church”) it is more often used to denote a local group of believers.

In the Book of Acts there is a brief description of the “working” of the first century church that was founded at Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection and return to heaven. A local church is a group of baptized believers joining together voluntarily to share in instruction, prayer, worship, fellowship and service. The object is for all church members to become mature, fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ—to “be holy.”

Acts 2:42-47 *And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*

So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved. (NKJV)

WHY BE FAITHFUL TO A LOCAL CHURCH?

The basic reason rests in obedience. Jesus founded the church and the Bible tells us we need to be part of a local fellowship. Through the local church we receive many benefits and blessings, and through the church we are given opportunity to worship and serve in the community. Let’s look at four primary reasons why we all need to be connected to and active in a local church.

1. THROUGH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH YOU RECEIVE INSTRUCTION

Ephesians 4:11-14 *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.* (NKJV)

Jesus has provided spiritual leaders for the church. According to Ephesians 4:12-14 why has God given leaders to the church?

It is the responsibility of the leaders of the church to help each of us become mature, fully devoted followers of Christ, because then we too can aspire to become leaders in the church and help nurture a new generation of believers.

2. THROUGH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH YOU HAVE THE PRIVILEGE OF FELLOWSHIP

God has placed people in families to provide for their care, protection, fellowship and development. Do you see the parallel? We need the church to develop us spiritually for all the reasons we need our families to help develop us into maturity as people. Truth is, a family is most effective if it is part of a local church so that the process of growing and maturing includes the spiritual from the very beginning.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (NKJV)

According to Hebrews 10:24-25 why do we need the fellowship of a church? Some ideas might be:

- To stir up love
- To cause good works to be done
- To be sure we assemble together for worship
- Exhorting (urging) one another to be the best Christians we can be
- To consider the implications of Christ's Return

By associating with other Christians, and especially by seeking out those who have been mature believers for a while, we can have examples to follow, and can even “learn from other people’s mistakes” as we share our lives and experiences with other believers in small group fellowships. If you are not a member of a small group of believers who meet regularly for Bible study, prayer and fellowship, it’s one of the most valuable parts of local church membership and you should find out what groups are available and become a part of this important ministry of the church.

Proverbs 13:20 Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble. (NLT)

3. THROUGH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH YOU MEET TO WORSHIP

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (NKJV)

Worship involves actions motivated by an attitude that reveres, honors, or describes the worth of God. Worship is the reverent devotion and service we give to God, motivated by the work of salvation God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ. While we can certainly worship God privately in our own prayers and quiet time, we also find the Bible referring to worship as a time in which we “teach and admonish” one another. Some of the elements of “worship” suggested by Colossians 3:16 include:

- Hearing and contemplating the words of Christ (preaching)
- Hearing and contemplating the Psalms (or other Scripture)
- Singing Hymns
- Concentrating on the Lord

In worship we come before God, drawn to a place of worship by music, hearing the Word spoken, and even through other means of concentrating our thoughts on Him, such as drama, sharing of personal testimonies, celebrating the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the like. What we call a “Worship Service” is just that—it is our proper service of giving thanks and praise, through many different means, to the God who gave us life, breath and eternal salvation.

4. THROUGH YOUR LOCAL CHURCH YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

The church is the proper avenue through which we all have opportunities to serve God. God has given us all special gifts and abilities in order that we might find appropriate places of service. We refer to service in the local church as “Ministry” and there are opportunities for us all, whatever our talents and gifts, to serve.

Romans 12:6-8 *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. (NKJV)*

Here's the key: We have gifts for serving. Paul says, "Let's use them!"

The underlying reason for our service is the mission and principal responsibility of the church, and of us as individuals, to perform what we call "The Great Commission." Here it is in Jesus own words:

Matthew 28:19-20 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (NKJV)*

The Great Commission involves:

- Sharing eternal life with the world
- Baptizing new believers
- Teaching the Bible
- The joy of ministering in Jesus' name
- Giving of your money, time and talents

If you are studying this material and you have not made a commitment to a local church, make it a matter of high priority to find a church where you can learn, fellowship, worship and serve.

5. THROUGH THE LOCAL CHURCH YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF GIVING

There is a Biblical "standard" for giving called the tithe, defined simply as ten percent of our income. Why 10%? We don't know. God could have asked for 27% or 90%. But he didn't—He asks us to give 10% of our income for the work of the local church. The Bible says to "bring the tithe into the storehouse"—the "storehouse is the local church.

Malachi 3:10 *Bring all the tithes into the storehouse,
That there may be food in My house,
And try Me now in this,"
Says the Lord of hosts,
"If I will not open for you the windows of heaven
And pour out for you such blessing
That there will not be room enough to receive it. (NKJV)*

There is a promise of great spiritual blessing to those who are obedient in this area. And there is a warning to those who decide not to be obedient with regard to tithing, that they are bringing a curse down on themselves because they are "robbing God." To those who decide not to tithe, God says:

Malachi 3:8-9 *"Will a man rob God?"
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?'
In tithes and offerings.
You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me... (NKJV)*

The Bible also says that we are not to give under any kind of compulsion. Your giving is a matter of trusting God. Look in your heart and decide what to do based on your understanding of the Biblical teaching.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 *But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. (NKJV)*

God's promise is that if you give generously, he will always provide for your needs, and your giving will be rewarded both spiritually and in terms of the things you need in this world as well. Take some time to think about this. It's a hard subject to deal with, but it is a matter of God's commands and our obedience.

B. TRUST JESUS TO DIRECT YOUR LIFE

You could subtitle this part of the lesson, "Discerning the Will of God for Your Life." You have eternal life through faith in Christ and the grace of God. Jesus wants to provide you daily guidance for living out the spiritual adventure we sometimes in church language call "Sanctification"—meaning simply, getting to be more and more like Christ. Jesus is more than just a Savior—He wants to be the Lord of your life.

When we say "Jesus is Lord" we mean that we will trust Him to direct our lives.

*Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths. (NKJV)*

John 15:4 [Jesus said,] "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." (NKJV)

It's a bit like travelling in a car with another person. While you are driving you are in control of the vehicle, but if you realize that you don't know the right way to go and the person with you does, you will ask him for directions, and then you will follow those directions, taking the route he chooses. Trusting Jesus is like saying to Him, "You direct my life and I will go the way you tell me to." A life directed by Jesus will be spiritually fruitful and filled with joy.

We have decisions to make every day. Many of them are "routine" and take no special effort—but occasionally some of them will be difficult and will involve making ethical and moral judgments. There are lots of wrong ways to make moral and ethical decisions. (The "He loves me, he loves me not..." approach by plucking the petals off a daisy is hardly a good basis to choose a spouse, for instance.) Nor will it be fruitful to make decisions based only on feeling and emotions. "If it feels good, do it," may have been a mantra for the Hippies in the 1960's, but it has never been right for God's people. Right decisions should be made by discerning the will of God, and God reveals His will to those who sincerely wish to do it.

1. JESUS IS LORD—AND BY HIS SACRIFICE HAS EARNED THE RIGHT TO DIRECT YOUR LIFE!

John 13:13 [Jesus said,] "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am." (NKJV)

In his writings the Apostle Paul described Jesus' "lordship" in several ways.

*1 Corinthians 2:7-8 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified **the Lord of glory**. (NKJV)*

*2 Thessalonians 3:16 Now may **the Lord of peace** Himself give you peace always in every way. The Lord be with you all. (NKJV)*

*1 Timothy 6:14-15 ... keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the **blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords**. (NKJV)*

The Apostle Paul, writing in the Letter to the Philippians, shows us that he understood that Jesus was worthy to direct his life!

*Philippians 2:8-11 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has **highly exalted Him and given***

Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of **Jesus** every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)

In the following passage from the Letter to the Romans, what else did Paul challenge believers to do with their lives?

Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (NKJV)

What do you think makes us a “living sacrifice, acceptable to God?” What does it mean that we should be transformed “by the renewing of our minds”?

How does Jesus direct these transformations?

2. JESUS DESIRES TO DIRECT YOUR LIFE

JESUS' DIRECTION CAN BE EXPERIENCED EVERY DAY IF YOU WILL:

RECOGNIZE HIS RIGHT TO DIRECT YOUR LIFE.

Luke 9:23 *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."* (NKJV)

He gave it all on our behalf. He has earned the right to show us the way.

CONFESS YOUR SINS CONSISTENTLY AND ACCEPT HIS PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (NKJV)

It is important that we accept His forgiveness and not drag around the guilt and shame we might feel as a result of our sins. When we know we are free from all that past sin, we will also be free to move on with a new life in Christ.

TRUST HIM COMPLETELY AND ALLOW THE BIBLE TO GUIDE OUR LIVES IN ALL AREAS. THINK ABOUT YOUR:

(TIME) Ephesians 5:15-16 *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, 16 redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* (NKJV)

(MONEY) 1 Corinthians 16:2 *On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.* (NKJV)

(TALENTS AND ABILITIES) Colossians 3:17 *And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.* (NKJV)

(RELATIONSHIPS) Matthew 22:35-40 *Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"*

Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." (NKJV)

(MIND AND HEART) Romans 12:2 *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* (NKJV)

(AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES) Matthew 6:33 *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* (NKJV)

(MORALITY AND ETHICS) 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* (NKJV)

We all have areas of our lives that we need to allow Jesus to guide and direct. During the next few days think about the areas of your life that we've talked about, and if there are changes you need to make, attitudes you need to adjust, sins you need to confess, priorities you need to change in any of those areas, jot them down and pray daily about the list to God. He will help you move your life into His will.

DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL—SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

The Bible, and especially the words and teachings of Jesus Christ, is the surest source for each of us of discovering God's will for us. As we read and study the Bible, and pray about what God wants to show us, we will discover things that Jesus wants us to do. We must not only find delight in studying the Word, but we must find equal pleasure in doing what it says.

James 1:22 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.* (NKJV)

Psalms 40:8 *"I delight to do Your will, O my God,
And Your law is within my heart."* (NKJV)

Psalms 119 is all about the Word of God, about studying, meditating on, and doing it! You can use it as a prayer, and you can use it to establish principles in your mind and heart about how to approach your study of the Bible and your search for God's will.

Ps 119:5-6 *Oh, that my ways were directed
To keep Your statutes!
Then I would not be ashamed,
When I look into all Your commandments.* (NKJV)

Ps 119:9 *How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.* (NKJV)

Ps 119:18 *Open my eyes, that I may see
Wondrous things from Your law.* (NKJV)

Ps 119:27 *Make me understand the way of Your precepts;
So shall I meditate on Your wonderful works.* (NKJV)

The Apostle Paul teaches that we should *"work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure."* [Phil 2:12-13] Through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, God will enable us to discern His will from the Scriptures, and He will help us to apply what we learn in doing what the Bible teaches. In this obedience we will give God pleasure.

Many people ask, "Can we really ever know God's will for us?" The simple answer is, "Yes." The Apostle Paul, before he met Jesus Christ, had been an agent of the "Jewish Inquisition," seeking out and persecuting Christians and throwing them in prison. You'd hardly think that such a person would have been chosen by God to do His work, but here's what the Bible says, as a man named Ananias was sent to Paul by God to tell him what was to happen next. Key to it was that Paul would **know God's will!**

Acts 22:14 *Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.'* (NKJV)

GOD REVEALS HIS WORD PRIMARILY THROUGH:

THE WORD OF GOD, THE BIBLE

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.* (NKJV)

2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (NKJV)*

THE SPIRIT OF GOD (THE HOLY SPIRIT)

John 14:26 *But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (NKJV)*

No, God will not give us a “blueprint” for our lives with every detail worked out and every decision planned and previewed. But if we will study the Bible and pray regularly, developing a relationship with God, He will show us those things we need to believe are true, and those areas of life in which we need to establish Biblical boundaries for our behavior. When we have done that, and the time comes around to make those tough decisions, we will find that God has already helped us make them.

Make that search for truth and application a part of your daily routine, and you will be guided by Him all your life.

Isaiah 35:8 *A highway shall be there, and a road,
And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness.
The unclean shall not pass over it,
But it shall be for others.
Whoever walks the road, although a fool,
Shall not go astray. (NKJV)*

WEEK IV—RECRUITING

SHARE JESUS WITH OTHERS

It is natural for us to want to share good news with others. We share births and marriage. The more exciting the good news, the more eager we are to share it with those we know and care about. As Christians we have incredibly exciting news to share—life-changing news of eternal life and an inheritance in heaven with God. Think for a moment or two about the people whom God used to share their faith in Jesus with you. Somebody, a parent, a friend or a pastor, spoke to you about Jesus Christ. The Bible says that to believe we first have to be drawn toward Jesus when we hear about the Good News.

The “Good News” is also called “The Gospel” or “The Message” depending on which version of the Bible you are reading. The Greek word is “εὐαγγέλιον” (evangelion)

And from it we get our English word “evangelist” or one who preaches the Good News.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? (NKJV)

Romans 10:17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (NKJV)

So now God wants you to become part of helping others to hear about Jesus so they too can come to know Him personally as you have. (Note: For a Christian, witnessing is not an option. Jesus commanded his followers to witness to others.) We call the command for each of us to tell others about Christ “The Great Commission”—here is what Jesus said to His disciples before he returned to heaven:

Matthew 28:19-20 [Jesus commanded,] “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (NKJV)

Let’s go back a few years to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry here on earth. One of the first things that He did was to call men to become His disciples. And what was the very first reaction that some of those disciples had after they had come to Christ? They went out and told others all about it!

John 1:40-42 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (which is translated, “a Stone”). (NKJV)

From the passages we have already looked at, you can know that there are two aspects we ought to share with others: one is the truth about Jesus from “word of God,” the Bible, which is the source of what we know about Jesus and His mission on earth; and the other is our own personal “testimony” which recounts how we came to Jesus and the change He made in our lives.

YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY WILL DIRECTLY APPEAL TO OTHERS

To be honest with you, many people are either very nervous or shy about giving their own testimony, or else they are so excited that they talk on and on and on and lose their listener’s attention. Your personal testimony should be concise and straightforward.

YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY IS YOUR OWN ACCOUNT OF:

- a. Your life before receiving Jesus
- b. How you came to receive Jesus
- c. How Jesus has changed your life (made it more meaningful)

Let's read Acts 22:3-21, which is the personal testimony of the Apostle Paul. As you can see as we read, he briefly discusses his background, how he came to meet the Lord Jesus, and what happened to him when he was saved.

Acts 22:3-21 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

"And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" (NKJV)

Each of you should practice writing out and sharing your own personal testimony. You don't have to be an orator, and your testimony does not have to be "exciting" or "dramatic," because the Good News that you have been saved for all eternity is more exciting than any details of some seamy past life you might have been involved in. Some people have become believers after hearing the exciting testimony of someone who was saved from a life of crime, drugs or alcohol, and they are afraid that their own testimony is not interesting enough to appeal to others. Not so! Most of us were "ordinary people" before we met Christ, and the account of how somebody just like us met Christ is more meaningful to most people than a wham-bam account of guns, drugs, crime and police.

Write out your "story" and practice telling it to a Christian friend you know and trust. The more often you recount it, the more comfortable you'll be in sharing it with someone who is not a believer.

Consider this basic "Testimony" (that's a church way of saying "story") of an ordinary guy who met Jesus as the result of a job change and a stalled real-estate deal:

"God finally got through my defenses during our move to PA in the 1970's. I had moved into a cheap rooming house in PA to start work—the family stayed in SC. The sale of our home in SC dragged on for 6 months, and I became desperate and cried out for God's help. I was lonely, frustrated, and almost broke. With the help of a Gideon Bible, and knowledge I already had about Jesus from going to Sunday School as a kid, and from other Christians I had known over the years, I finally surrendered and gave my life to Him. After those long months of waiting, within a week of my accepting Christ the house was sold and we were able to relocate, find a new home and a church, and rebuild our lives. My attitude toward my family and others was dramatically changed by this experience. By it God showed me how to be a real father to my kids and how to love and cherish my wife."

SCRIPTURE IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT PART OF SHARING JESUS

There are many passages of Scripture that will help you explain to unbelievers the Good News of eternal life in Jesus Christ. The “Roman Road” uses passages from the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans to make the key points. Most churches have brief tracts available outlining these points, which you can give to those with whom you speak. It helps to spend some time with these passages of Scripture (underline or highlight them in your Bible, and keep a list of them somewhere in the Bible for quick reference).

Romans 3:23 *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (NKJV)*

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (NKJV)*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NKJV)*

Romans 10:9 *...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (NKJV)*

Romans 10:13 *For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (NKJV)*

Romans 2:4 *Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (NKJV)*

Romans 15:13 *Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)*

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (NKJV)*

The first five of these verses outline the condition of the unsaved person, the work God did to make it possible for us to be saved and the basic condition of faith and acceptance necessary to step from death (the “wages of sin”) into a new life of “hope, joy and peace in believing.” The end of the “Roman Road” is for the new believer to be ready to share his faith with others.

As you practice the “Art of Witnessing” you will become more and more confident, and when you become a “disciple” and see your efforts bearing fruit in others, it will be a highlight of your own Christian life. Discipleship is like planting seed—it begins with a small seed planted in fertile soil, and grows a harvest that not only provides food for those who plant and harvest it, but also provides more seed to be planted for the next season. It is a cycle of planting, life and growth that will continue until Christ returns to fulfill all His eternal promises.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Please encourage your group to do the daily devotionals for this series. You can read them daily at pathwayonline.com/series/Fit4Duty.html. You can also sign up to receive the devotionals in your email on this page. They will also be available weekly in printed format.



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