

Life Hope & Truth
Bible Study Course

LESSON 11

The Tools of Christian Growth



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**THE BIBLE
DESCRIBES
FOUR TOOLS
THAT CAN
HELP US GROW
CLOSER TO GOD
AND DEVELOP
HIS CHARACTER
IN OUR LIVES.**

Christian conversion is about turning our lives around toward God's ways and building a relationship with Him.

As we've already covered thoroughly in this Bible study course, God is building a family and wants you to be in that family. As our spiritual Father, He wants us to develop a close parent-child relationship with Him. That relationship is based on His love for us and His desire for us to live happily with Him forever.

In order to be in God's family, we must build and strengthen our relationship with Him and our Savior and Elder Brother, Jesus Christ, and develop His spiritual character in our life. As we covered in the previous lesson, that is called *conversion*.

We learned that conversion is initiated by God Himself, includes requirements that we must act on, and is a process (not just an event or an experience). We primarily focused on the beginning of that process—what we need to do and consider as we grapple with the topics of sin, repentance, forgiveness, water baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit. We concluded by exploring the necessity for growth. This is the part of the conversion process that extends from the moment we receive God's Spirit to the day our physical life ends.

God does not call us to stay just as we are. He calls us to grow—to develop, progress and mature toward the goal Jesus set in Matthew 5:48: "Be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

God's character is revealed in great detail throughout the pages of the Bible and is to be our personal standard. We learn about His character through His law, through the many scriptures that describe Him, and through the life of Jesus Christ Himself.

The goal isn't difficult to define and understand. The hard part is actually applying and living it. It requires replacing our old nature and habits with the perfect characteristics of God. That is something God wants us to diligently and consistently work at throughout our lives. Thankfully, God hasn't left us without help and guidance. In addition to His Holy Spirit, the Bible describes four tools—four basic disciplines—that can help us grow closer to God and develop His character in our lives. They will require effort and discipline on our part.

This lesson will examine the basic tools for Christian growth, the enemies of Christian growth and the primary area God wants us to grow in.

PART 1

The Four Tools of Christian Growth

**THOSE WHO
RESPOND TO
THE CALLING
OF GOD WILL
PRAY TO GOD
CONSISTENTLY,
IN GOOD TIMES
AND IN BAD.**



TERMINOLOGY

Supplication

Diligently petitioning God in prayer to provide something we need.

Tool 1: Prayer

Prayer is a tool that allows us to communicate directly with the Creator of the universe.

What is the purpose of prayer?

Philippians 4:6: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by _____ and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your _____ be made known to God.”

1 Peter 3:12: “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His _____ are open to their _____.”

Deeper insight

Simply put, prayer is how we communicate with God. He wants to hear from us! God is our spiritual *Father*. As a human father wants to know the needs and concerns of his children, our Heavenly Father wants to have us bring our requests and desires to Him. He not only promises to hear our prayers but also responds to them.

In order to build a closer, more intimate relationship with our Father, we must communicate with Him.

How often does God want to hear from us in prayer?

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18: “Pray without _____, in everything give thanks; for this is the _____ of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Ephesians 6:18: “Praying _____ with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all _____ and supplication for all the saints.”

Deeper insight

God wants to hear regularly from His children. Some only seek God when they have certain needs or are in a crisis, like a serious illness. But those who respond to the calling of God will pray to God consistently, in good times and in bad.

We should note that the statements “pray without ceasing” and “praying always” don’t mean we are expected to pray every minute of the day. (Not even Jesus did that.) It means we should make prayer a regular and consistent part of our lives. We don’t neglect it.

**PRAYER HELPS
US ORIENT
OUR MIND
TOWARD GOD
THROUGHOUT
THE DAY.**

Here are some other scriptures that emphasize the need for regular and consistent prayer:

- Luke described the purpose of one of Christ's parables as teaching the lesson that "men always ought to pray" (Luke 18:1).
- Paul wrote that we are to be "continuing steadfastly [consistently] in prayer" (Romans 12:12) and that we must "continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

So we are to be diligent to integrate prayer as a discipline into our daily life.

Does the Bible give us any examples for how we can make prayer a part of our daily life?

Psalm 55:17: "_____ and _____ and at _____, I will _____, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice."

Daniel 6:10: "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees _____ times that day, and _____ and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."

Deeper insight

We already learned that God wants us to pray regularly. But the New Testament doesn't define exactly how to apply that. We do, however, find these examples from King David and the prophet Daniel, two of God's greatest servants in Old Testament times.

We are also told that Daniel's habit was to pray three times a day. King David mentioned praying in the evening, in the morning and at noon. David also mentioned his practice of praying first thing in the morning in some of his psalms (Psalm 5:3).

These are examples of the principle that we should "pray without ceasing."

Prayer helps us orient our mind toward God throughout the day, maintain a right attitude and take our needs and requests (for ourselves and others) to God when they arise.

We will cover more about Jesus' instructions and example on prayer later in this lesson, but we should note that Jesus also had a personal custom of praying to His Father early in the morning (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42) and in the evening (Luke 6:12).

**KNEELING IS A
SIGN OF DEEP
REVERENCE,
RESPECT AND
DEFERENCE
TOWARD
GOD AS OUR
CREATOR, LORD
AND MASTER.**

What's the best physical position for prayer?

Daniel 6:10: "He [Daniel] _____ down on his _____ three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days."

Psalm 95:6: "Oh come, let us worship and _____ down, let us _____ before the LORD our Maker."

Luke 22:41: "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He _____ down and _____."

Romans 14:11: "For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, every _____ shall _____ to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.'"

Ephesians 3:14: "For this reason I _____ my _____ to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Deeper insight

One of the most prominent prayer positions we see in the Bible is kneeling on both knees before God. Kneeling is a sign of deep reverence, respect and deference toward God as our Creator, Lord and Master. This position reminds us of the importance of humility when approaching God. We approach Him as servants who have the humble honor of communicating with the God who made and is above all things. We also find many examples of people bowing their heads in prayer (Genesis 24:26; Exodus 34:8).

Since supporting all of our weight can be hard on our knees over an extended period of time, many people pray at their bedside (which allows some of our weight to be distributed on the bed). Placing a pillow, or something soft and padded, under our knees can help us pray more comfortably in this position over a longer period of time.

We shouldn't cut our prayers short because we become uncomfortable kneeling. But it's also important to note that kneeling isn't the only prayer position found in the Bible. We also find examples of people praying sitting down (2 Samuel 7:18; 1 Chronicles 17:16), laying prostrate (Joshua 5:14; Matthew 26:38-39) and standing (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13).

The majority of scriptures describing personal, private prayer seem to show God's servants praying to God kneeling on their knees with their heads bowed. But for those with physical conditions that make kneeling difficult or impossible, it is encouraging that the Bible shows other positions are appropriate as well.

Some pray while they're driving to work or washing the dishes. While this contact with God can be positive and meaningful, it should not take the place of formal prayer in which we pause from our own activities to kneel before God, concentrating on worshipping and honoring Him and seeking His will in our lives.

**JESUS TAUGHT
THAT WE
SHOULD PRAY
IN PRIVACY—
AWAY FROM
THE VIEW OF
OTHERS.**

What general principles did Jesus teach about prayer?

Matthew 6:5-6: “And when you _____, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be _____ by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you _____, go into your _____, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in _____ will reward you openly.”

Matthew 6:7: “And when you _____, do not use vain _____ as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.”

Deeper insight

These instructions about prayer were given in the middle of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, His most detailed sermon recorded in the Gospels. Let’s analyze these two principles.

1. Personal prayers should primarily be private.

Jesus critiqued the outwardly religious people of His day for their approach of praying in public. He called them “hypocrites,” which **means** “actor” or “pretender.” He was essentially saying they weren’t really genuinely praying to God at all—they were *acting* religious to impress people around them. Their prayers had little to do with communicating with God. Their reward was gaining other people’s admiration for their outward piety. (This shows us that not all prayers are equal. There are some forms of prayer that God honors, and others that He doesn’t.)

Instead, Jesus taught His disciples an entirely different approach. He taught that they should pray in privacy—away from the view of others. He wanted them to be motivated by a genuine desire to communicate with the Father.

The prophet Daniel set an excellent example of regularly praying to God in the privacy of his home (Daniel 6:10). This was also the example Jesus Himself set. Luke records that “He Himself [Jesus] often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” (Luke 5:16). When Jesus was out preaching and teaching, He didn’t always have access to a house with a private room, so He would often withdraw from others and go to a private area and pray to His Father.

We should note that there are times for public prayers, for instance, during a church service or before a meal. Public prayers in these contexts are appropriate, but they are not a substitute for regular private prayers to God.

2. Prayers shouldn’t be prewritten repetitions.

Next, Jesus warned His disciples not to pray using “vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.” In pagan religions, it was common for prayers to be long, prewritten recitations that the worshipper would chant over and over again. Jesus said this form of prayer was “vain” or useless. (An example of this is found in Acts 19:34, when Paul encountered pagan worshippers of the goddess Diana in Ephesus who chanted the same words to her for about two hours!)

OUR PRAYERS SHOULD BE HEARTFELT, SINCERE AND PERSONAL.

Sadly, reciting prewritten prayers to God is still practiced today by people who profess Christianity. Some large Christian denominations publish books filled with prewritten prayers that their adherents can recite in different circumstances. Even more tragically, the model prayer Jesus gave immediately after this warning is recited verbatim by millions of people each day (often called “the Lord’s Prayer”).

Although Psalms, such as Psalm 23, are often repeated in churches today, God wants us to learn from these prayers and songs expressed by His servants, not to repeat them mindlessly. We can study them to understand how His servants conversed in prayer and learn to interact with our Father.

Instead of just reciting memorized prayers that can easily become meaningless, Jesus taught that we are to have genuine communication with God. It is better to use our own words in our prayers. What we say should be heartfelt, sincere and personal. Just as no human father wants his children to speak to him only through memorized statements written by others, so God the Father doesn’t want it either.

So we should avoid the wrong approaches Jesus mentioned in Matthew 6:5-7. Instead we should do the opposite as described in James 5:16: “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” A fervent prayer is one that we deeply care about.

Did Jesus give us any guidance for the content of our prayers?

Matthew 6:9-13: “In this _____, therefore, pray: Our _____ in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your _____ come. Your _____ be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily _____. And _____ us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but _____ us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Deeper insight

Jesus gave this prayer as an outline of general topics to include in our prayers. It gives us a broad structure that we can personalize as we communicate with God.

We can look at Jesus’ model prayer as giving us eight broad prayer categories. At the end of this lesson, we’ve included a chart that elaborates on those prayer categories and gives some specific examples that might fall under those categories.

Of course, our prayers should not be limited to just these eight categories. They are meant to give us a general outline and provide a starting point for how to structure our prayers. Just as conversations between a parent and child shouldn’t be limited to eight conversation topics, so prayers to our Heavenly Father shouldn’t be limited to eight prayer topics.

One who has not prayed regularly may initially find it to be difficult and awkward. Prayer is a communication skill that we learn through practice. As your relationship with God develops, your prayers will grow in depth and scope.

**GOD PROMISES
TO HEAR OUR
PRAYERS—BUT
HE DOESN'T
PROMISE TO
ANSWER BY
GIVING US
EVERYTHING
EXACTLY AS WE
ASK.**

Intercessory Prayer

Prayer to God on behalf of someone else, asking Him to intercede, or intervene, in his or her life.

Does God promise to answer all of our prayers exactly as we ask?

1 John 5:14: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we _____ anything according to His _____, He hears us.”

Deeper insight

God promises to hear and answer our prayers—but He doesn't promise to answer by giving us everything exactly as we ask. He may have something better or different in mind for us. We should always ask God, “Your will be done.”

Does God only want us to pray about our own personal needs and desires?

Romans 1:9-10: “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make _____ of you always in my _____, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you.”

2 Thessalonians 3:1-2: “Finally, brethren, _____ for _____, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.”

1 Timothy 2:1-2: “Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, _____, and giving of thanks be made for all _____, for _____ and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.”

Deeper insight

Our prayers shouldn't be entirely focused on ourselves and our own needs, but should also include requests for others. Paul frequently mentioned his prayers for the brethren (Philippians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-5) and asked that they pray for him.

Jesus set a perfect example in this. In His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before He was arrested, Jesus prayed for us (John 17:9). Christianity is a way of outgoing love and concern for others, and that should be reflected in our prayers.

What does God look for in our prayers?

James 1:5-7: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in _____, with no doubting, for he who _____ is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord.”

**WE CAN'T LIVE
A LIFE OF OPEN
DEFIANCE
AGAINST GOD
AND EXPECT
HIM TO LISTEN
TO AND
ANSWER OUR
PRAYERS.**

Mark 11:24: "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, _____ that you receive them, and you will have them."

John 9:31: "But if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His _____, He _____ him."

1 John 3:22: "And whatever we _____ we receive from Him, because we keep His _____ and do those things that are _____ in His sight."

Deeper insight

The following points further reveal what God looks for in our prayers:

1. **Pray in faith.** Our prayers should be offered to God with a genuine confidence that God exists, that He does hear us and that He will answer our prayers according to His will.
2. **Live a life striving to obey and do the will of God.** This does not mean we have to be perfect for our prayers to be heard and answered, but God does require that we be trying to do His will in our lives. We can't live a life of open defiance against God and expect Him to listen to and answer our prayers. There are many scriptures that show God refuses to hear the prayers of those who are living in defiance of His ways.

Read each verse and identify the reason it reveals God doesn't hear certain prayers:

1. **Psalms 66:18:**

2. **Proverbs 1:28-29:**

3. **Proverbs 28:9:**

4. **Proverbs 21:13:**

5. **Isaiah 59:2:**

6. **John 9:31:**



A CLOSER LOOK

Prayers in the Bible

Here is a list of some prayers recorded for us in the Bible. Studying the prayers of faithful men and women in the Scriptures can help us improve the quality and substance of our prayers to God.

Read through each prayer and think about how the example can help your prayer life.

- Hannah's prayer of praise and thanksgiving to God for providing her a child (1 Samuel 2:1-10).
- David's prayer of repentance after his sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah (Psalm 51).
- Asaph's prayer asking for deliverance in his despair (Psalm 77).
- Solomon's prayer requesting wisdom from God (1 Kings 3:5-10).
- Hezekiah's prayer asking for Judah's deliverance from Assyria (2 Kings 19:15-19).
- Daniel's prayer of confession for his people's sins (Daniel 9:3-19).
- The tax collector's prayer (Luke 18:13).
- Paul's prayers for the Ephesian and Philippian brethren (Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11).

Tool 2: Bible Study

God communicates His will and instruction to us through our study of His written Word. Since Lesson 2 was dedicated entirely to Bible study, we will only briefly review this vital tool in this lesson.

Why did God preserve the Bible for us?

Psalm 119:105: "Your word is a _____ to my feet and a _____ to my path."

2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by _____ of God, and is _____ for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for _____ in righteousness."

Deeper insight

God teaches us through His Word. In the pages of the Bible we learn more about God's nature and His will not only for us, but for all of mankind. It is likened to a lamp—a tool to help guide us forward in a world of darkness.

It would be amazing if God spoke to us one-on-one as He did with some in times past. But that is not how He is communicating with people in present times. He has inspired the Bible—Old and New Testaments—to be recorded for us. He has chosen to communicate with us now through His Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). We essentially have the ability to hear Christ speak anytime of any day by simply opening up the Bible and reading it.

God has provided a way to have a real two-way conversation with Him. We talk to Him through our prayers, and He answers us through the pages of His Word, the Holy Bible.

**OUR
SPIRITUAL LIFE
DEPENDS ON
CONSUMING
THE WORD OF
GOD FOR OUR
SPIRITUAL
SUSTENANCE.**

Berea

A city in southern Macedonia where the people were receptive to Paul's preaching. They diligently studied the Hebrew Scriptures to prove whether or not the gospel message Paul preached was true or false.

Does God expect us to study His Word?

Acts 17:11: "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and _____ the Scriptures _____ to find out whether these things were so."

Romans 15:4: "For whatever things were written before were written for our _____, that we through the patience and comfort of the _____ might have hope."

2 Timothy 2:15: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a _____ who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the _____ of truth."

Deeper insight

Bible study is an essential part of a Christian's life. Just as the Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily," it is wise for a Christian to read and study the Bible every day. God wants us to be learning and growing, and His Word is designed to facilitate that.

There are many different approaches and methods we can use in our daily Bible study. We covered many of those strategies in Lesson 2.

Jesus emphasized the need for regular Bible study in His famous statement recorded in Matthew 4:4: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Just as our physical life depends on food, our spiritual life depends on consuming the Word of God for our spiritual sustenance.

Tool 3: Meditation

Meditation is a tool that helps us to focus our thoughts on the things that really matter.

When people think of meditation, they often think of Eastern religious ideas of relaxing the body and clearing the mind of distractions. But what does the Bible mean when it talks about meditation?

Psalm 119:15, 97, 99: "I will meditate on Your _____, and contemplate Your _____ . . . Oh, how I love Your _____! It is my _____ all the day . . . I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation."

Psalm 119:148: "My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may _____ on Your _____."

Malachi 3:16: "Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who _____ on His _____."

**GOD WANTS
US TO STOP,
CONTEMPLATE
AND DIGEST
WHAT WE READ
IN HIS WORD.**

Deeper insight

The above scriptures describe meditation as focused contemplation or thought. In the above scriptures, we read about meditating on:

- **God's precepts, or instructions.**
- **God's ways.**
- **God's law.**
- **God's name.**

All of the above subjects come straight from the Bible. We should meditate while we read and study the Bible. It's easy to quickly read scriptures—scanning the words and flipping the pages as we would a novel. But God wants us to read His Word with a more concentrated focus. He wants us to take the time to stop, contemplate and digest what we read in His Word.

A Bible student once asked a minister what his best advice for Bible study was. His answer was simple: "Read slowly." When we read slowly, carefully meditating on what we read, we will get more out of our Bible study.

Biblical meditation is not about clearing the mind—it is about *focusing* the mind. That is, concentrating on spiritual things, not physical.

Here are some ways we can meditate on God's Word:

- **God's laws.** King David often wrote about meditating on God's laws. Think about what they teach us about God's character and how we can apply the spirit (intent) of those laws in different aspects of our life.
- **Biblical stories.** Much of the Bible records stories. We shouldn't read those accounts as entertainment or even as dry history. We should read to learn lessons. When we read, we should read slowly and pause often to reflect on what God wants us to learn. What lesson is to be gleaned from this story? How can I apply this lesson to my life?
- **Spiritual principles.** The Bible also contains many deep spiritual principles (Philippians 4:8 lists eight of them). When we read about principles like love, truth and joy, we need to meditate on what those principles really mean and how we can apply them in our life.

What Else Can We Meditate On?

Look up the scriptures and describe what the author was meditating on.

Scripture	Object of Meditation
Joshua 1:8	
Psalms 63:6	
Psalms 77:12	

**MEDITATION
ON SPIRITUAL
THINGS HELPS
ORIENT OUR
THOUGHTS AND
ATTITUDES
AWAY FROM
EVIL AND
NEGATIVITY
AND TOWARD
GOD AND HIS
WAYS.**

Does meditation have spiritual benefits for us?

Psalm 104:34: “May my _____ be sweet to Him; I will be _____ in the LORD.”

Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are _____, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are _____, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any _____ and if there is anything praiseworthy—_____ on these things.”

Deeper insight

God doesn't want our minds to be consumed with negativity. He wants us to think positively and spiritually.

Meditation on God's Word and spiritual things helps orient our thoughts and attitudes away from evil and negativity and toward God and His ways. Though we've mostly focused on meditation as it relates to reading the Bible, that's not the only time we should meditate. In Psalm 4:4 King David writes about meditating “within your heart on your bed, and be still” (see also Psalm 63:6). We can meditate on spiritually positive things anytime we have free time to think.

This should make us ponder the other things we meditate on and what effects they have on us. Are the shows we watch, the music we listen to, and the other media we consume positive and uplifting? The things that enter our mind can take root. Evil thoughts will ultimately affect our behavior (Matthew 15:18-19).

The psalmist also wrote about meditating on his own ways (Psalm 119:59) to evaluate where his thoughts and actions were wrong and how they needed to be better aligned with God.

Godly meditation helps us to replace bad thoughts and attitudes with good and positive thoughts and attitudes. We should pray to God that our meditations, or thoughts, are “acceptable in [His] sight” (Psalm 19:14).

Is God really concerned about our thoughts?

Proverbs 12:5: “The _____ of the righteous are _____, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.”

Isaiah 55:7-9: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his _____; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”

2 Corinthians 10:5: “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the _____ of God, bringing every _____ into _____ to the obedience of Christ.”

**GOD WANTS
US TO ELEVATE
OUR THOUGHTS
TO A HIGHER
LEVEL—THE
LEVEL OF THE
VERY MIND OF
JESUS CHRIST.**

Deeper insight

God is very concerned about our thoughts. As we covered in Lesson 10, conversion is a total transformation—inside and out. God wants us to elevate our thoughts to a higher level—the level of the very mind of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5).

This requires us to work at purging our mind of unrighteous, evil thoughts. This can be a battle. Paul used military terms to describe a Christian's fight to rid his or her mind of wrong thoughts by "bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." When something is captive, it has strict limits placed on it. We are to put strict limits on our mind, striving to allow only thoughts that are acceptable to God to enter it.

Controlling our mind and filling it with spiritual and positive thoughts is a lifelong struggle every Christian has to fight.

Godly meditation, combined with prayer and Bible study, is a powerful tool we can use to fight that fight.

Tool 4: Fasting

Fasting is a tool that helps us humble ourselves and draw closer to God.

What is fasting?

Deuteronomy 9:9: "When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither _____ bread nor _____ water."

Esther 4:16: "Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and _____ for me; neither _____ nor _____ for three days, night or day. My maids and I will _____ likewise."

Isaiah 58:5: "Is it a _____ that I have chosen, a day for a man to _____ his soul?"

Deeper insight

The biblical definition of fasting is abstaining from food and water for a certain period of time—typically 24 hours. We briefly covered fasting in Lesson 9 when we examined the Day of Atonement.

What is the spiritual purpose of fasting?

Isaiah 58:6: "Is this not the _____ that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of _____, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"

**FASTING
REMINDS US OF
OUR PERSONAL
WEAKNESSES
AND THAT WE
ARE TOTALLY
DEPENDENT
ON GOD.**

Psalm 35:13: “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I _____ myself with _____.”

Ezra 8:21: “Then I proclaimed a _____ there at the river of Ahava, that we might _____ ourselves before our God, to _____ from Him the _____ for us and our little ones and all our possessions.”

Daniel 9:3: “Then I set my face _____ the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with _____, sackcloth, and ashes.”

Deeper insight

The biblical purpose for fasting isn't to build self-discipline or just make us suffer. The above scriptures show fasting has deeper spiritual purposes.

Here are four spiritual purposes of fasting:

1. **To recognize our dependence on God.** Fasting reminds us of our personal weaknesses and that we are totally dependent on God to even survive. It is a very powerful tool to remove our focus from ourselves and sharpen our focus on our personal need for God in every aspect of life. Fasting helped Daniel “set [his] face toward the Lord God.”
2. **To grow in humility.** The reminder of our total dependence on God should help us become more deeply humble. Humility is built by realizing our own personal weaknesses, sins and deficiencies—and our need to rely on God to help us. David said he “humbled [himself] with fasting.”
3. **To gain strength against sin.** When we are humble and recognize our dependence on God, we grow in spiritual strength against sin. Isaiah wrote that fasting can help us “loose the bonds of wickedness.” If we have a specific sin we are struggling with, setting aside time to fast about that problem can be a powerful tool to help us overcome it.
4. **Seeking God's will.** Fasting is helpful when we face a difficult trial or an important decision. Fasting helps sharpen our spiritual perception and wisdom. We should never fast thinking we can compel God to do our will. God wants fasting to draw us closer to Him so we can better understand His will for us and act upon the leading of His Holy Spirit working in us.

Based on the precedent of the Day of Atonement, a typical fast is for 24 hours, which is physically safe for most healthy people. There are a few biblical examples of people fasting for shorter periods of time, such as “until evening” (2 Samuel 1:11-12). And as noted earlier with the fast of Moses, there are other examples of fasting for longer periods of time. However, we recommend you be cautious about fasting longer than 24 hours.

When we dedicate a day to fasting, we have time to combine all four tools of growth into that day. It can be a day dedicated to extra prayer to make our needs known to God. We should study God's Word about whatever situation we are in and meditate on what we read. When we are fasting, we will not typically be occupied with our normal activities. So we can take that time to pray, study and meditate more.

**FASTING
SHOULD BE
A PRIVATE
MATTER
BETWEEN US
AND GOD, NOT
AN INSINCERE
PUBLIC
DISPLAY OF
PIETY.**

The humble mind-set that fasting puts us in is an effective way to draw closer to God. Our physically weaker bodies can be made spiritually stronger as we draw nearer to God (2 Corinthians 12:9-10; James 4:8-10). God says He will hear us when we humble ourselves (2 Chronicles 7:14).

What did Jesus teach about fasting?

Mark 2:18-20: “The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were _____. Then they came and said to Him [Jesus], ‘Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not _____?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they _____ in those days.’”

Matthew 6:16-18: “Moreover, when you _____, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they _____ their faces that they may appear to men to be _____. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you _____, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be _____, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Deeper insight

Jesus reinforced the importance of the tool of fasting. When asked why His disciples didn’t fast, He said that there was no need to fast while He was with them. Remember, fasting is to help us draw closer to God. Jesus was God in the flesh and was living right there in their midst. They had physical access to Him and thus could talk with Him and hear Him anytime they wanted. But He said they would fast after He was gone. That’s when they would need the tool of fasting the most.

Jesus also taught another important principle about fasting. He pointed out that some religious people in His day would make a big deal out of fasting, even changing their appearance to draw attention to what they were doing. He pointed out that their real motivation was to appear righteous to men—not to draw closer to God and humble themselves before Him. He instructed His disciples to approach fasting as He taught them to approach prayer—as a private matter between them and God, not as an insincere public display of piety.

To summarize, God has given us four major tools to help us grow spiritually: prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting. These tools all work together to spiritually strengthen us and help us build God’s character within us.

When Christians regularly put these tools to use, they will grow in their relationship with and commitment to God.

A Christian's Three Greatest Enemies

**WE AREN'T
BORN WITH A
SELFISH AND
REBELLIOUS
HUMAN
NATURE,
BUT WE ARE
SUSCEPTIBLE
TO IT.**

The four tools for Christian growth can not only strengthen our relationship with God, but also strengthen us against our spiritual enemies. To fight our spiritual enemies, we must know what they are.

Enemy 1: Our Human Nature

The first spiritual enemy Christians have to fight is—themselves.

Does the Bible describe our human nature as inherently good or bad?

Matthew 18:2-3: “Then Jesus called a little _____ to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are _____ and become as little _____, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’”

Ecclesiastes 7:29: “Truly, this only I have found: That God made man _____, but they have sought out many _____.”

Isaiah 55:8-9: “‘For My thoughts are not your _____, nor are your _____ My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is _____ above all things, and desperately _____; who can know it?”

Romans 8:7: “Because the _____ mind is _____ against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.”

Deeper insight

Some believe that for the most part human nature is good, not evil. Others believe the exact opposite, that human nature is essentially twisted and evil. But neither of these approaches represent the full teaching of the Bible on this subject.

The Bible shows that we are born with a clean moral slate—neither inherently righteous nor evil. If little children were born evil, Jesus wouldn't have used them as a spiritual example. When we're born we're like Adam and Eve at the beginning—neutral but with free choice.

We aren't born with a selfish and rebellious human nature, but we are susceptible to it. We develop it early in life—based on the influence of Satan and the world around us. We learn our selfish tendencies as we grow, and they become ingrained in the way we think and behave. The works produced by human nature are easy to discern (Galatians 5:19-21) and difficult to root out. But, with the help of God's Holy Spirit and the four basic tools of spiritual growth, this is what God expects us to do.

OVERCOMING THE PULLS OF OUR HUMAN NATURE IS A LIFELONG STRUGGLE.

As we read earlier, God's Spirit is one of power, and it is that power coupled with our effort that helps us replace the works of human nature with the fruit of God's nature (Galatians 5:22-24).

Did a great servant of God like the apostle Paul also have to struggle with human nature?

Romans 7:15-20: "For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I _____, that I _____. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but _____ that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) _____ good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the _____ I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me."

Deeper insight

Paul wrote these words to the Romans many years after his initial conversion. Even though he was committed to changing his behavior and submitting to God, he still struggled with his natural human tendency to sin. He still fought against himself.

Overcoming the pulls of our human nature is a lifelong struggle. But with God's help, our human nature can be changed and replaced with God's nature.

Does the Bible provide a list of some of the main tendencies of human nature?

Galatians 5:19-21: "Now the works of the _____ are evident, which are: _____, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of _____, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, _____, murders, drunkenness, _____, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Deeper insight

Galatians 5:19-21 provides a list of tendencies Paul dubbed "the works of the flesh." In other words, these are 17 characteristics of human nature that come out in life. Paul's list provides a basic starting point for examining the characteristics of human nature.

At the end of this lesson, we've provided an in-depth chart to help you learn about each work of the flesh and how to replace it with God's spiritual nature.

**AS TIME GOES
ON, SOCIETY
SEEMS TO BE
PRACTICING
EVIL MORE
AND MORE.**

Enemy 2: Society Around Us

The second spiritual enemy every Christian has to fight is the influence of the world around us.

How does the Bible describe the world we live in?

Galatians 1:4: “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might _____ us from this present _____ age, according to the will of our God and Father.”

1 John 2:16: “For all that is in the _____—the lust of the _____, the lust of the _____, and the _____ of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

John 17:25: “O righteous Father! The _____ has not _____ You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.”

Deeper insight

The above scriptures characterize the world we live in as being estranged from God. This estrangement began when Adam and Eve sinned (Genesis 3:23-24).

Instead of seeking guidance from God, our world has chosen the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Genesis 2:9). The consequence has been a world where people demonstrate both good and evil in their lives. Not everything about our world is evil. Sometimes humanity has chosen to do good things—things that don’t break God’s laws. But mixed with that good is a lot of evil. As time goes on, society seems to be practicing and accepting evil more and more.

John summed up the three motivations of the world around us as:

- **“The lust of the flesh”**—a drive to fulfill desires that please the body regardless of the laws of God.
- **“The lust of the eyes”**—a drive to pursue what’s salacious and visually tantalizing instead of what has value in the eyes of God.
- **“The pride of life”**—a drive to pridefully decide for ourselves what’s right and wrong as our way of life, rejecting our Creator’s authority over our lives.

Throughout the Bible, we see people constantly dealing with the negative influences of those around them.

How does God want His people to respond to the evils of the world around them?

John 15:19: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are _____ of the world, but I chose you _____ of the _____, therefore the world hates you.”

1 John 2:15: “Do not _____ the _____ or the _____ in the _____. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

**IT TAKES
EFFORT AND
COMMITMENT
TO RESIST AND
OVERCOME THE
INFLUENCES
OF THE WORLD
AROUND US.**

Romans 12:2: “And do not be _____ to this world, but be _____ by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Deeper insight

The above scriptures clearly show that God wants His people to be different from the world around them. There are many things that seem appealing but are in opposition to God’s ways. It takes effort and commitment to resist and overcome the influences of the world around us (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; James 4:4).

Sadly, quite often people will turn against someone who does not go along with them (1 Peter 4:3-4; John 15:18-20). Having family and friends turn against you because you choose to live God’s way can be a difficult challenge, and that is one of the battles we sometimes must fight (Matthew 10:37).

Yet, as we learned earlier, God has not called the majority of the world around us at this time. So our attitude toward those who oppose us for following God should be one of compassion and concern, understanding that in God’s time He will open their minds to the truth also (Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:20-21; 1 Peter 2:9-12). We covered that inspiring truth in detail in Lesson 9 when we discussed the meaning of the Eighth Day.

Does God want us to live in seclusion from the world so we aren’t influenced by it?

John 17:15: “I do not pray that You should take them _____ of the world, but that You should _____ them from the _____ one.”

1 Corinthians 5:9-10: “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go _____ of the _____.”

Deeper insight

Over the years, there have been individuals and religious groups that have tried to form isolated communities to avoid interaction and contact with the world around them. Instead of striving to be spiritually separate from the world, they’ve attempted to become physically separate from the world in all aspects of life.

The above scriptures make it clear that God does not want His people to physically remove themselves from this world in order to avoid its influence.

In John 17 Jesus was very specific that He was praying for His people to be strong against evil, but not physically remove themselves from the world.

Jesus isn’t contradicting His previous statement that He chose His disciples “out of the world” (John 15:19). Coming “out of the world” means avoiding the world’s bad

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influence and evil conduct—to be spiritually separate from the world. Because we do not live as most people do and do not agree with ungodly values, we will receive opposition from the world as Jesus did. This is the great challenge for Christians in all times: to live in the world, yet to not live *like* the world.

It's never been God's intention for His people to physically isolate themselves from all interaction with society around them.

Is there a reason God doesn't want us to isolate ourselves from the world?

Matthew 5:14-16. What metaphor did Jesus Christ use to describe how Christians should interact with the world around them? Briefly summarize how He explained the practical application of that metaphor and the impact it should have on others.

Read Philippians 2:14-15. Here Paul uses the same analogy Jesus used above. What examples of Christian character did Paul say we should demonstrate to the people we come into contact with?

Read 1 Peter 2:12. How does Peter describe how Christians should interact with the world around them?

So instead of being like everyone in the world around us, God wants us to be different. He wants us to fight the negative influence of the sinful ways of the world and instead reflect His ways and character. By practicing godliness in our daily lives among the people around us, we set a positive example that gives glory to God. In fact, sometimes others are called to God's way of life by seeing the positive example of a Christian. For example, Peter says husbands "may be won by the conduct of their wives" (1 Peter 3:1-2).



PERSONAL STUDY

Paul's Examples of Good Examples

In many places, God's Word emphasizes the importance and power of example. In Titus 2, the apostle Paul lists specific ways different demographic groups in the Church of God can set a positive example for others.

Read through Paul's examples for each group and give some thought to how you can set a better example in these areas. You may want to look up some of these words in a Bible reference resource if you don't know exactly what they mean. Most of these good examples can, and should, be displayed by people of all ages.

Older men (Titus 2:2)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Older women (Titus 2:3-4)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Young women (Titus 2:4-5)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Young men (Titus 2:6-8)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Bondservants* or employees (Titus 2:9-10)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

*Slavery was the unfortunate reality some Christians found themselves in during Paul's time, as it has existed throughout many time periods of history. Paul was instructing them how to conduct themselves in that condition, not condoning the institution. Paul's examples also apply to those who are employees.

**HUMANITY
HAS ACQUIRED
A DEGREE
OF SATAN'S
NATURE—A
STATE OF MIND
CONTRARY TO
GOD'S.**

Satan

The former archangel Lucifer, who rebelled against God. He became known as Satan, which means “adversary.”

Enemy 3: Satan the Devil

The third spiritual enemy every Christian has to fight is the influence of our principal adversary, Satan.

What kind of influence does Satan have on our world?

2 Corinthians 4:4: “Whose minds the _____ of this age has _____, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”

Ephesians 2:2: “In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the _____ of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of _____.”

1 John 5:19: “We know that we are of God, and the whole _____ lies under the _____ of the wicked one.”

Revelation 12:9: “So the great _____ was cast out, that serpent of old, called the _____ and Satan, who _____ the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

Deeper insight

Far too many people underestimate the power and influence Satan has. But these verses show he holds tremendous sway over our world. He is called “the god of this age,” meaning God has allowed him to have authority over our world at this present time. That is why he was able to offer Jesus “the kingdoms of the world” (Luke 4:5-7) when he tempted Jesus to worship him.

These verses reveal different ways Satan influences people as the “god of this age”:

- His attitudes of selfishness and disobedience permeate this world like the air.
- He keeps the entire world under his sway.
- He deceives the entire world.

Humanity has acquired Satan’s nature—a state of mind contrary to God’s. Romans 8:7 says, “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” While *carnal* simply means of the flesh, the point Paul was making was that when our human minds accept the influence of Satan, our minds become enmity toward—in opposition to—God. The English Standard Version captures this fuller explanation: “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot.”

So how does the human mind, which is not opposed to God at birth, become hostile toward God? Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said that he feared, “lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

**WE HAVE TO
FIGHT SATAN
AS IF WE ARE
BATTLING IN A
WAR AGAINST
HIM—BECAUSE
WE ARE.**

People's minds become corrupted by the undetected spiritual influence Satan exerts over them in the present, evil world (Ephesians 2:1-3; Revelation 12:9). This hostility toward God is something humans acquire from Satan.

It is absolutely essential for Christians to understand that Satan is evil and clever (Ephesians 6:11) and deceives by many methods, ranging from the obvious to the subtle and cunning. Even when we are converted and receive God's Holy Spirit, we can still be influenced by Satan. As such, we need to set our minds on God's instructions and values—not the ways of Satan and the world (Colossians 3:2).

How can we resist Satan's influence?

Matthew 6:13: "And do not lead us into temptation, but _____ us from the _____ one."

1 Peter 5:8-9: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the _____ walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. _____ him, _____ in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

Ephesians 4:27: "Nor give _____ to the devil."

Ephesians 6:11: "Put on the whole _____ of God, that you may be able to _____ against the wiles of the devil."

James 4:7: "Therefore submit to God. _____ the devil and he will _____ from you."

Deeper insight

These scriptures show us that Christians have to actively resist Satan in order to defeat his influence. We can't be passive against Satan or ignore him completely; we have to fight as if we are battling in a war against him—because we are.

These scriptures tell us we must:

- 1. Pray for help to resist him every day.** As we covered earlier in this lesson, one part of Jesus' model prayer was to pray for God's daily deliverance from "the evil one," Satan. Since Satan is a spirit being immensely more powerful than we are, we can only resist him with the help of a being far more powerful than Satan—the Creator God Himself.
- 2. Resist him.** The Greek word for resist is *anthistemi* and means "to set oneself against, to withstand, resist, oppose" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). It is an active resistance that requires us to be strong and resolute.
- 3. Don't give place to him; remain steadfast in the faith.** "Nor give place" is also translated as not giving the devil an "opportunity" (English Standard Version) or a "foothold" (New International Version). It is said that "nature abhors a vacuum"—any unfilled space will be filled by something. If Christians leave a vacuum in their minds and lives, Satan will try to fill it with temptation.

**THE MORE WE
YIELD TO GOD'S
INFLUENCE
IN OUR LIVES
THE STRONGER
WE WILL BE
AGAINST
SATAN.**

Christians who stay “steadfast in the faith” consistently fill their minds and lives with the words and ways of God (Psalm 1:1-2), so Satan can’t take advantage.

4. **Put on the battle armor God provides us.** The apostle Paul describes spiritual armor that we can use to battle Satan’s influence. At the end of this lesson, we’ve included a chart that takes a closer look at this spiritual armor.
5. **Submit to God.** The more we yield to God’s influence in our lives—as we practice the four tools for Christian growth covered earlier in this lesson—the stronger we will be against Satan.

The bottom line is that Satan can’t be defeated through passive resistance. We can’t just wait until he tempts us. The above scriptures show the necessity of countering him through active resistance—by waging spiritual warfare against him daily.

Did Jesus leave us an example for how to resist Satan?

Matthew 4:1: “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be _____ by the _____.”

Deeper insight

This is an example of how Jesus endured intense temptation from Satan. As our Savior, He faced Satan head on, yet resisted Him entirely and did not sin. This account is probably the most consequential battle that has ever taken place in history. The stakes were huge.

Examining how Jesus successfully resisted Satan can provide helpful insight into how we can resist him in our lives.

Read through Matthew 4:1-11 and answer the following questions.

1. What did Jesus do to prepare Himself for the encounter with Satan?

2. What were Satan’s three temptations?

**HAVING THE
BIBLE'S WORDS
FIRMLY SET IN
OUR HEART
AND MIND CAN
BE A POWERFUL
TOOL AGAINST
TEMPTATION.**

3. What is the common approach Jesus used to answer every temptation?

4. What did Satan do after Jesus rejected his third temptation?

Jesus successfully defeated Satan's attacks by taking time to fast in private. Though the account doesn't mention it explicitly, it's reasonable to assume He also spent much of this time praying and meditating.

He answered each of Satan's temptations with Scripture because His mind was grounded and saturated in God's Word. He perfectly applied the principle found in Psalm 119:11: "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."

Studying the Bible and having its words firmly set in our heart and mind can be a powerful tool against temptation when it comes.

Can we resist Satan just on our own strength, or do we need help?

Isaiah 11:2: "The _____ of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of _____ and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and _____, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."

John 14:16: "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another _____, that He [or it] may abide with you forever."

Luke 4:1-2: "Then Jesus, being _____ with the Holy _____, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil."

Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also _____ in our _____."

Galatians 5:16: "Walk in the _____, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Ephesians 3:16: "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be _____ with _____ through His _____ in the inner man."

Deeper insight

We have mentioned the need for strength and help from God's Holy Spirit throughout this course, but it deserves special emphasis here.

In this lesson we have examined many scriptures that tell us what we need to do to grow and resist our spiritual enemies. But we should never think that growth and spiritual victory come only through our efforts and strength.

**IT IS BY THE
STRENGTH AND
POWER OF
GOD'S SPIRIT
THAT WE CAN
GROW AND
RESIST OUR
SPIRITUAL
ENEMIES.**

An essential part of true Christian conversion is realizing our personal inability to grow and fight spiritual battles on our own.

That's why God provided us help—the power of His Holy Spirit.

We've examined many doctrinal elements of the Holy Spirit in previous lessons. We've learned that it is the power of God. One of the most important functions of His Spirit is to imbue us with spiritual help and strength. It is by the strength and power of His Spirit that we can grow and resist our spiritual enemies.

We are told to “stir up” the Spirit of God in our lives (2 Timothy 1:6). That means we keep it active and working. The tools of growth we covered in this lesson can help us do that.

So we must keep a balanced perspective of both the role of God's Spirit and our efforts to exercise the tools of growth. Both are necessary. We can't expect the Holy Spirit to do everything for us while we ourselves do nothing. And neither can we try to do everything ourselves and ignore the role of the Holy Spirit.

In order to grow in God's character, defeat our spiritual enemies and inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God, we need both the power of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of our own efforts working in harmony.

PART 3

Love as a Way of Life

**JESUS' LIFE
WAS A LIVING,
BREATHING
EXAMPLE OF
PERFECT LOVE
IN ACTION.**

Before we end this lesson, there's one more key to Christian growth we must cover. It is what Christianity is at its essence. In order to grow as a Christian, our lives must be characterized by one word: *love*.

What was the sign Jesus gave to identify a genuine disciple of His?

John 13:34-35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you _____ one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My _____, if you have _____ for one another."

Deeper insight

Jesus taught that love—concern for others modeled after His love for us—is one of the central identifying characteristics of a true disciple.

Many misinterpret this verse, thinking it means love was an entirely new concept that Jesus brought to counter the supposedly harsh, vengeful God of the Old Testament. But this idea is completely false. God taught the Israelites to love in the Old Testament (Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:19).

Love was nothing new. What was new was having a living, breathing example of perfect love in action. That's what Jesus' life was. We are to study His life and example to learn how to love one another as He loved us.

An essential aspect of Christianity is to practice and grow in love. This is one reason studying Christ's life and example in the four Gospels should be a regular part of our personal Bible study.

Can biblical knowledge and understanding alone make us a true Christian?

1 Corinthians 13:2: "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and _____ all mysteries and all _____, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not _____, I am _____."

Deeper insight

In Paul's famous discourse on love in 1 Corinthians 13 (often called "The Love Chapter"), he emphasizes love as the most critical component of a Christian's life. (We've included a chart on this chapter at the end of this lesson.) In this verse, he makes the point that a person can understand mysteries, have great knowledge and even have tremendous faith—but all those things are of no value if they aren't accompanied by love.

LOVE SUMS UP THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE TO BE.

In no way does Paul's statement devalue knowledge and faith—both are very important! But love is even more important because it is God's core characteristic (1 John 4:8). Knowledge and hope are important for Christians to *have*, but love sums up the kind of people we are to *be*.

The apostle John made the point in a slightly different way. He wrote that love for God Himself can be invalidated if we don't love other people (1 John 4:20-21).

The Pharisees of the Gospel accounts provide a perfect case study on this topic. They were religious leaders who were thoroughly educated in the Scriptures. They had lots of outward shows of piety. But many of them had a lack of love. They treated Jesus, and others, with contempt and cruelty. They enforced strict rules on the lives of others, yet often didn't apply those rules to themselves.

In Luke 11:42 Jesus identified their core problem: "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by [ignore] justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."

Jesus' point is that tithing is important and "ought to" be done—but without the love of God, it becomes meaningless in God's eyes.

We have emphasized biblical knowledge and understanding throughout this course, but it's essential to understand that without love, knowledge and understanding are useless.

The apostle John made the point crystal clear: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

How is love practically lived out in a Christian's life?

Matthew 20:26-28: "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your _____. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to _____, and to _____ His life for a ransom for many."

John 15:13: "Greater _____ has no one than this, than to lay down one's _____ for his friends."

Acts 20:35: "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must _____ the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to _____ than to receive.'"

Galatians 5:13-14: "Through love _____ one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

James 1:27: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to _____ orphans and widows in their _____, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

**WE SHOW
OUR LOVE
TO OTHERS
BY SERVING
THEM, TAKING
CARE OF THEIR
NEEDS.**

1 John 3:18: “My little children, let us not _____ in word or in tongue, but in _____ and in truth.”

Deeper insight

Throughout the Gospel accounts we can read about the compassion, the healings and the care Jesus showed to those around Him. Jesus told His disciples that He came to serve. He wants us to follow that example—to show our love to others by serving them, taking care of their needs.

The above scriptures all highlight this essential truth: God expects love to be shown by our actions. Love is active, outgoing concern toward others demonstrated by our deeds.

Satan has influenced people to be self-centered and to look out for just themselves. Human nature is, at its core, selfish. Satan’s way of life could be summarized in one word: *Get*.

But God wants us to learn to think selflessly instead of selfishly (Philippians 2:3-4). He wants us to serve and care for others.

The Christian way of life could also be summarized in one word: *Give*.

This was a theme of the preaching of the late Herbert W. Armstrong, who was our predecessor in this work. In his preaching and writing, he often explained that there are two basic approaches to life. Here’s how he described those two approaches:

“Actually, there exist, overall, only TWO BASIC WAYS of life—two divergent philosophies. They travel in opposite directions. I state them very simply: One is the way of GIVE—the other of GET.

“More specifically, the one is the way of humility, and of outgoing concern for others equal to self-concern. It is the way of cooperation, serving, helping, sharing; of consideration, patience and kindness. More important, it is also THE WAY of obedience to, reliance on, and worship solely toward God. It is the GOD-centered way, of LOVE toward God and LOVE toward neighbor.

“The opposite is the SELF-centered way of VANITY, lust and greed; of competition and strife; of envy, jealousy, and unconcern for the welfare of others.

“Few realize this vital FACT: The GIVE way is actually an invisible, yet inexorable, SPIRITUAL LAW in active motion. It is summarized, in principle, by the Ten Commandments” (*Why Were You Born?* 1972, p. 12).

But weren’t the 10 Commandments replaced by love?

John 14:15: “If you _____ Me [Jesus], keep My _____.”

1 John 5:2-3: “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His _____. For this is the love of God, that we _____ His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

**THE CHURCH
PROVIDES A
PLACE WHERE
CHRISTIANS
CAN LEARN
TO PRACTICE
GODLY LOVE.**

Deeper insight

The Scriptures clearly connect love and the keeping of the commandments. As we covered earlier in this course, the 10 Commandments define how to love God (the first four commandments) and how to love our fellow man (the last six commandments).

As the apostle Paul wrote, “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10). Each commandment is designed to show love—or the give way—toward God and other people. When we combine obedience to the commandments with the living example of Jesus Christ, we have a perfect guide for how to show love in all aspects of life.

Has God given us a place where we can grow in practicing love?

Galatians 6:10: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do _____ to all, especially to those who are of the _____ of faith.”

Romans 12:13: “_____ to the needs of the _____, given to hospitality.”

1 Thessalonians 3:12: “And may the Lord make you _____ and abound in _____ to one _____ and to all, just as we do to you.”

1 Thessalonians 4:9: “But concerning _____ love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to _____ one another; and indeed you do so toward all the _____ who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.”

2 Thessalonians 1:3-4: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the _____ of every one of you all abounds toward _____, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure.”

1 Peter 4:8: “And above all things have fervent _____ for one _____, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”

Deeper insight

All of these scriptures were written by the apostles Paul and Peter to congregations of the Church of God they served. They encourage us to fulfill Christ’s command in John 13:34 to “love one another; as I have loved you.” One of the reasons for the Church was to provide a place where Christians could learn to practice godly love.

We can’t do that if we isolate ourselves from other people. The Church is made up of people who are spiritually separate from the world, yet bound together in love and unity.

OUR LIFELONG GOAL SHOULD BE TO GROW IN THE GIVE WAY OF LIFE.

One of the primary ways love is practiced in the Church of God is through acts of service. That reminds us that true Christian love is expressed through our actions—“in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

What is particularly striking about these verses is how often the Church brethren are encouraged to grow in their love and service for one another. It should be a Christian’s lifelong goal to grow in the give way of life.

The 10 Commandments and the Give Way of Life

The following chart shows how each of the 10 Commandments teaches us the give way of life.

Commandment (Exodus 20)	How This Teaches Us to Give
“You shall have no other gods before Me.”	We <i>give</i> God sole sovereignty over our lives—and place nothing ahead of Him.
“You shall not make for yourself a carved image.”	We <i>give</i> God honor and respect by not making an image that limits Him and not worshipping an image of something He created.
“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.”	We <i>give</i> God honor and reverence with our words.
“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”	We <i>give</i> God our attention on the seventh day of every week, as we rest and focus on things that strengthen our relationship with Him.
“Honor your father and your mother.”	We <i>give</i> our parents, and families, the honor and respect God wants us to give them.
“You shall not murder.”	We <i>give</i> life, concern and love to others instead of <i>taking</i> life through murder, hatred and mistreatment.
“You shall not commit adultery.”	We <i>give</i> our spouse fidelity and faithfulness.
“You shall not steal.”	We <i>give</i> to others instead of taking what is not ours.
“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”	We <i>give</i> others respect by speaking the truth in all our communications.
“You shall not covet.”	We <i>give</i> to others and respect their blessings and possessions instead of desiring what we don’t have.

**THE CHRISTIAN
WAY OF LIFE CAN
BE DIFFICULT AT
TIMES, BUT GOD
WILL ALWAYS
BE WITH US—IN
GOOD TIMES
AND BAD—WHEN
WE FOLLOW HIM.**

**Life, Hope & Truth
Bible Study Course**

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Lesson Wrap-Up

The opportunity to be called by God and live His way of life today can be humbling, sobering, challenging and rewarding. Many share the feelings King David expressed in 1 Chronicles 17:16: “Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?”

He has called you to be a part of His family, to understand His plan, and to live as He lives. His way of life is a life of growth. We should be continually growing to be more like the Father and Jesus Christ.

The Christian way of life can be difficult at times, but we must remember that God will always be with us—in good times and bad—when we follow Him. If you are just embarking on the Christian way of life, these two passages can provide great encouragement:

- **Philippians 1:6:** “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.”
- **Hebrews 13:5-6:** “For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we may boldly say: ‘The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?’”

God is not a quitter. He will not give up on us. But we also can’t quit either. You can complete this incredible journey God has called you to. It’s not always going to be easy. Trials and suffering are an unavoidable part of the Christian life and serve an important purpose. In fact, we can consider them similar to lifting weights. We can’t build spiritual muscle without resistance. So trials are necessary to make us stronger.

Romans 8:18 is one of the most encouraging scriptures in the Bible for facing trials: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Glory.

That is what God wants to give you—and ultimately all of mankind. God wants all to come to repentance and enter His family, sharing His glorious life of joy and fulfillment (2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 3:1-2). That vision and hope should drive a Christian to stay faithful, grow and endure whatever life throws at him or her.

Supplemental Reading

Life, Hope & Truth offers additional resources that can help you better understand God’s inspired Word, the Holy Bible.

- [Change Your Life](#) >
- [God’s 10 Commandments: Still Relevant Today](#) >
- [How to Pray](#) >
- [Do You Pray the Way Jesus Taught?](#) >
- [How to Talk to God](#) >
- [Intercessory Prayer: How to Pray for Others](#) >
- [What Is Meditation?](#) >
- [What Is Fasting?](#) >
- [“The Fast That I Have Chosen”](#) >
- [What Is Human Nature?](#) >
- [How to Put on the Armor of God](#) >
- [Love of God](#) >
- [Fruit of the Spirit: Love](#) >
- [What Are Good Works?](#) >
- [Run With Endurance](#) >

**STUDYING
THE BIBLE
SHOULDN'T
END WHEN THIS
COURSE ENDS—
THERE IS SO
MUCH MORE
TO LEARN AND
STUDY.**

What Should I Do Now?

This is the final lesson of the Life, Hope & Truth Bible Study Course. We congratulate you on completing the course and hope you found it interesting, informative and inspiring. Our genuine hope is that you understand the Bible and its teachings better than when you began Lesson 1. Throughout this course, you've studied hundreds of Bible scriptures and some of the Bible's biggest themes. But the amazing thing about God's Word is that there's so much more to learn.

You may be asking: Now what should I do? Here are a few things we recommend:

1. **Keep studying God's Word!** We hope this course has helped you develop a deeper love for studying God's Word. Studying the Bible shouldn't end when this course ends—there is so much more to learn and study. You may want to go back and review the Bible study methods discussed in Lesson 2 and use those for personal studies. You may also find it helpful to go back over some of the "Personal Study" sections of the lessons and do deeper study on some of those topics.
2. **Check out our other Bible study resources on LifeHopeandTruth.com.** We have many resources at LifeHopeandTruth.com to assist you in your study of God's Word. Our [Learning Center](#) page includes many additional study materials you may find helpful, including booklets, study guides, Bible reading and writing plans, helpful infographics, audio books, and introductions to all 66 books of the Bible.
3. **Subscribe to our other content.** We also offer regular content you can have delivered straight to your inbox. We publish a free bimonthly magazine, *Discern*, which covers a wide array of topics from a biblical perspective. We also offer blogs, a Daily Bible Verse email, and a weekly newsletter. You can subscribe to any of these at our [Subscribe](#) page. You may also be interested in our free multiday Journeys designed to guide you through important aspects of God's plan and Christian living. You can learn more and sign up at our [Journeys](#) page.
4. **Reach out to us.** This Bible study course is sponsored by the Church of God, a Worldwide Association. We have congregations around the world that meet on the weekly and annual Sabbaths. If you would like to contact a pastor in your area, check out our [Congregations](#) page. You can also email us at info@cogwa.org.

Christ's Model Prayer

In Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus gave us an outline of general prayer categories. This chart provides some practical examples to help you integrate these categories into your daily prayers to God.

Christ's Words	General Category	Examples
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name."	Worship and praise God the Father.	Praise God for His goodness and character. Praise God for His plan. Tip: Study how David praised God in the Psalms.
"Your kingdom come."	Pray for Christ to return and set up His Kingdom on earth.	Pray about suffering that exists and ask God to end it through His Kingdom. Pray about different aspects of the Kingdom you learn about in the Bible and why this world needs the Kingdom.
"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."	Pray for God's will in the world and in your life.	For any request we ask of God, we should ask that His will be done, not ours. Pray for God's will to be done in the world, in your life and in the lives of others.
"Give us this day our daily bread."	Pray for God to provide for our daily needs.	Pray for God to meet your physical and spiritual needs and the needs of others. Pray for God's overall guidance, help and protection.
"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."	Pray for forgiveness of our sins (and for help to forgive others).	Confess your individual sins to God and ask for His mercy and forgiveness. Ask for God's help to overcome your ongoing sins. Pray for God's help to forgive others who mistreat you.
"And do not lead us into temptation . . ."	Pray for God's help to deal with trials and recognize, avoid and fight off temptations to sin.	Pray for God to protect you from and give you the strength to resist situations that can tempt you to sin. Pray for God's wisdom to help you avoid situations that might tempt you to sin.
". . . but deliver us from the evil one."	Pray for deliverance from Satan's influence.	Pray that God will keep you from being influenced by Satan's attitudes and ideas. Pray for God to help you put on His armor for protection against Satan (Ephesians 6).
"For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."	Glorify and honor God for His power and plan.	Give Him thanks for hearing your prayer and for His work in your life.

A Closer Look at the “Works of the Flesh”

Below we’ve listed the 17 “works of the flesh,” with scriptural insight on each. The two columns on the right identify the core spiritual issue of each “work of the flesh” and the spiritual nature that should replace or prevent it.

Work of the Flesh	Scripture(s)	Core Spiritual Problem	Spiritual Nature Replacement
Adultery	Exodus 20:14; Matthew 5:28	Lust and unfaithfulness to the covenant of marriage.	Fidelity to the marriage covenant made with one’s spouse.
Fornication	1 Corinthians 6:18-19; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5	Desiring to have sex with someone prior to marriage.	Remaining sexually pure before marriage.
Uncleanness	Romans 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:7	Having a corrupt and impure inner character.	Maintaining pure thoughts in our mind.
Lewdness	Ephesians 4:19; 1 Peter 4:3	Having no self-control over wrong forms of expression.	Maintaining self-control over our impulses.
Idolatry	Exodus 20:3-6; 1 Corinthians 10:14	Diverting worship and attention from God to something else.	Worshipping God alone in the way He tells us to worship Him.
Sorcery	Leviticus 19:31	Relying on the occult for guidance instead of God.	Faithfully relying on God alone for guidance and direction.
Hatred	Proverbs 10:12; Matthew 5:44; 1 John 2:11	Allowing ourselves to harbor hostility toward others.	Showing love by practicing forgiveness and not hating.
Contentions	Proverbs 17:14; 13:10	Having an elevated view of our own ideas and opinions.	Forgiving others and striving to be at peace with all people.
Jealousies	Exodus 20:17; 1 Corinthians 3:3	Developing anger due to our desires for what others have.	Being content with what we have and rejoicing for others’ blessings.
Outbursts of wrath	Proverbs 15:18; Romans 12:19	A lack of self-control combined with inner anger and hostility.	Leaving vengeance to God for those who hurt us or others.
Selfish ambitions	Philippians 2:3; James 3:16-17	Being driven by a desire to promote our own selfish interests.	Being guided by humility and a desire to serve others.
Dissensions	1 Corinthians 1:10; Titus 3:9-11	Allowing our personal views and opinions to divide us from others.	Not allowing our own views to divide us from others.
Heresies	1 John 4:1; 1 Peter 2:1	Believing or teaching something contrary to God’s Word.	Staying faithful to the truths found in God’s Word, the Bible.
Envy	1 Corinthians 13:4; James 3:16	Resentful awareness and desire for what others are or have.	Being content with what we have and happy for others’ blessings.
Murders	Exodus 20:13; 1 John 3:15	Harboring inner hatred and a desire to hurt others.	Striving to maintain thoughts and acts of love toward all people.
Drunkenness	Proverbs 23:21; Hosea 4:11	Allowing lack of self-control and substances to control us.	Exercising self-control and avoiding substance abuse.
Revelries	Romans 13:13-14; 1 Peter 4:3-4	Indulging in uncontrolled and destructive pleasure-seeking.	Exercising self-control by not engaging in inappropriate pleasure-seeking.

A Closer Look at the Love Chapter

Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians is commonly known as the Bible’s “Love Chapter.” You may find the following chart a helpful resource to better understand, and apply, the deep truths found in this important section of Scripture.

Love . . .	Deeper Insight	Scriptures for Personal Study
Suffers long.	Love helps us to be patient and longsuffering.	Colossians 3:12-13; Ephesians 4:1-3
Is kind.	Love is demonstrated through a gentle spirit and showing goodwill toward others.	Luke 6:35; Ephesians 4:32; Galatians 6:10
Does not envy.	Love is being content with what you and others have—not envying others for what they have.	Galatians 5:26; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26
Does not parade itself.	Love is having a humble approach toward life, not boasting or bragging about ourselves.	Proverbs 29:23; Matthew 23:12; James 4:6
Is not puffed up.	Love is having a balanced, realistic view of ourselves—not seeing ourselves and our abilities as superior to others.	Proverbs 13:10; Matthew 18:4; Romans 12:3
Does not behave rudely.	Love is having a civil, respectful and self-controlled manner of life—not behaving in a discourteous and crude manner.	1 Peter 2:17; 3:8; James 3:2-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:7; Ephesians 4:29
Does not seek its own.	Love is putting the needs of others above our own needs.	1 Corinthians 10:24; Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10
Is not provoked.	Love is being self-controlled—not being prone to violent outbursts of anger.	Proverbs 16:32; Ecclesiastes 7:9; 2 Timothy 1:7
Thinks no evil.	Love is having a pure mind focused on good—not concentrating our thoughts on evil.	Matthew 5:28; Philippians 4:8; 2 Corinthians 10:5
Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.	Love is making the truth of God the center of our lives.	Romans 1:32; Ephesians 4:15; 3 John 1:3; John 17:17
Bears all things.	Love is having the stamina and perseverance to endure hardships and have patience with the weaknesses of others.	Romans 15:1; Galatians 6:2; Philippians 4:11
Believes all things.	Love is staying faithful to all the truths found in God’s Word.	Romans 12:2, 9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21
Hopes all things.	Love is maintaining our hope in God’s promises despite any circumstance.	Psalms 119:166; Romans 8:25; Titus 2:13
Endures all things.	Love is enduring all trials and tests and remaining faithful until the day we die.	Matthew 24:13; Romans 12:12; James 1:2-4, 12

Since Jesus Christ was the perfect representation of love, He perfectly demonstrated all of the above characteristics. An excellent study and meditation topic would be how Christ demonstrated each of the above characteristics in His life, and how you can grow by integrating them into your life.

Putting on the Armor of God

Ephesians 6:14-17 lists six pieces of spiritual armor Christians have available to defend themselves and fight their spiritual battles. Paul used Roman military gear as an analogy to show how we can stand against Satan (verse 11)—as a soldier would use his physical gear to face an enemy. See the Life, Hope & Truth article **“How to Put on the Armor of God”** for a more detailed study.

Armor Piece	Description	Why We Need This Armor
Belt of truth	Truth is a collective term for the teachings of God revealed in the Bible.	A strong understanding of God’s truth is essential to combat Satan’s lies and deception.
Breastplate of righteousness	Righteousness is living our life in alignment with God’s laws and ways.	Living a righteous life helps us stay strong against Satan’s influence to live contrary to the laws of God.
Shoes of the gospel of peace	The gospel is the message of a peaceful world to come under Christ’s rule.	Staying focused on believing and helping to spread the true gospel will keep us from being distracted by Satan’s false gospels and other distractions.
Shield of faith	Faith is living our life with an unwavering belief in God and His promises.	By keeping our faith in God strong, we won’t fall for Satan’s efforts to cause us to doubt God or put our faith in other things.
Helmet of salvation	Salvation is the goal of being saved from our sins and death by receiving eternal life.	By keeping the goal of salvation our focus, we will be strong against his attempts to cause us to get distracted and lose focus.
Sword of the spirit, the word of God	The Word of God refers to God’s words and His will preserved in the Holy Bible. In order to understand it, we need God’s Holy Spirit.	By being strong in God’s Word and the Holy Spirit, we won’t fall for any of Satan’s alternative ways of life or belief systems.

Paul concluded his “armor of God” list with this reminder: “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (verse 18). This should remind us not only of the necessity of regular prayer, but also of the need to pray for God to strengthen these pieces of spiritual armor in our lives!

LESSON 11

Quiz

True or false

Write or type in T if the statement is true and F if the statement is false.

1. _____ Christians are to be content with themselves and not seek to grow.
 2. _____ A Christian should strive to build God's perfect character.
 3. _____ Prayer is how God wants us to communicate with Him.
 4. _____ God wants us to pray only when urgent needs arise that require His help.
 5. _____ Jesus taught that prayers should primarily be made in public as a witness.
-

Multiple choice

Select the correct answer to each question.

6. How often did King David and the prophet Daniel pray every day?
 - a. They prayed every hour of the day.
 - b. They prayed once a day.
 - c. They prayed three times a day.
 - d. They prayed when urgent needs arose.

7. Which statement most accurately reflects the Bible's teaching about the physical position we should pray in?
 - a. Prayer should always be done standing up looking toward heaven.
 - b. The only permissible prayer position is kneeling on both knees.
 - c. The Bible gives no insight on what position we should pray in.
 - d. Kneeling is a prominent prayer position, but not the only one described in the Bible.

8. Which statement is *not* an accurate description of Jesus' teaching about prayer in the Sermon on the Mount?
 - a. Jesus taught that we should recite prewritten prayers to God.
 - b. Jesus taught that our prayers should primarily be done in a private place.
 - c. Jesus provided a general outline of topics that should be a part of our prayers.
 - d. Jesus taught that our prayers should be directed to God the Father.

9. Which of the following would *not* be appropriate to ask God in prayer?

- a. "If it is Your will, please allow me to be offered this job I'm applying for."
- b. "Please cause this person to want to marry me."
- c. "Please send your Kingdom soon to end all the suffering in our world."
- d. "Please heal my friend John from the health issue he is suffering from."

10. How does God communicate to us today?

- a. He communicates with us through the signs of the zodiac.
- b. He communicates with us through Transcendental Meditation.
- c. He communicates with us through modern-day oracles and seers.
- d. He communicates with us through the Bible.

11. What is the best description of Christian meditation?

- a. Clearing our mind of all thoughts and worries.
- b. Silently waiting to hear God's voice speak to us.
- c. Focusing our thoughts on spiritual topics.
- d. Reading the Bible.

12. Which is *not* a spiritual reason for fasting?

- a. Abstaining from food to punish our bodies for a sin we committed.
- b. Abstaining from food to draw closer to God.
- c. Abstaining from food to humble ourselves before God.
- d. Abstaining from food to seek direction from God on a big decision.

13. Which is an example of an appropriate approach to spiritual fasting?

- a. Posting on social media that we are fasting today.
- b. Abstaining from food, but drinking water.
- c. Fasting on a day when we can do extra prayer and Bible study.
- d. Fasting to feel more spiritual than others.

14. Which statement best describes the Bible's teaching on human nature?

- a. We are born inherently sinful and selfish.
- b. We are born sinless, but absorb sinful thoughts and habits over time.
- c. We are born spiritually perfect and righteous, but eventually fall into sin.
- d. We are born spiritually good and maintain that goodness all our lives.

15. How does God want Christians to interact with the world around them?

- a. He wants us to strive not to adopt the sinful ways of the world into our lives.
- b. He wants us to completely seclude ourselves from people in the world.
- c. He wants us to be examples of His way of life to the people around us.
- d. a and c

16. Which is *not* a way Christians should resist Satan?

- a. Regularly pray for God to help us be strong against Satan's temptations.
- b. Fill our lives and minds with spiritual things.
- c. Go to sinful environments so we can see how spiritually strong we are.
- d. When we are tempted, think of a scripture that addresses that temptation.

17. According to the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, what is the most important characteristic for a Christian to have?

- a. faith
- b. hope
- c. love
- d. perseverance

18. Why is the answer to question 17 the most important character trait we can have?

- a. Because it defines God's core character.
- b. Because the other three virtues are unimportant.
- c. Because it's impossible to know God without it.
- d. a and c

19. Which statement best describes true godly love?

- a. Outgoing concern toward others demonstrated through our actions.
- b. Feelings of affection toward others.
- c. Doing random acts of kindness.
- d. Simply abstaining from doing harm to others.

20. What is the connection between love and the 10 Commandments?

- a. The 10 Commandments were abolished and replaced by love.
- b. There is no connection between the two.
- c. Some of the 10 Commandments help us understand love.
- d. The 10 Commandments help us define what love is.

CHECK YOURSELF

Lesson 11 Quiz

- | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| 1. F | 6. c | 11.c | 16.c |
| 2. T | 7. d | 12.a | 17.c |
| 3. T | 8. a | 13.c | 18.d |
| 4. F | 9. b | 14.b | 19.a |
| 5. F | 10.d | 15.d | 20.d |