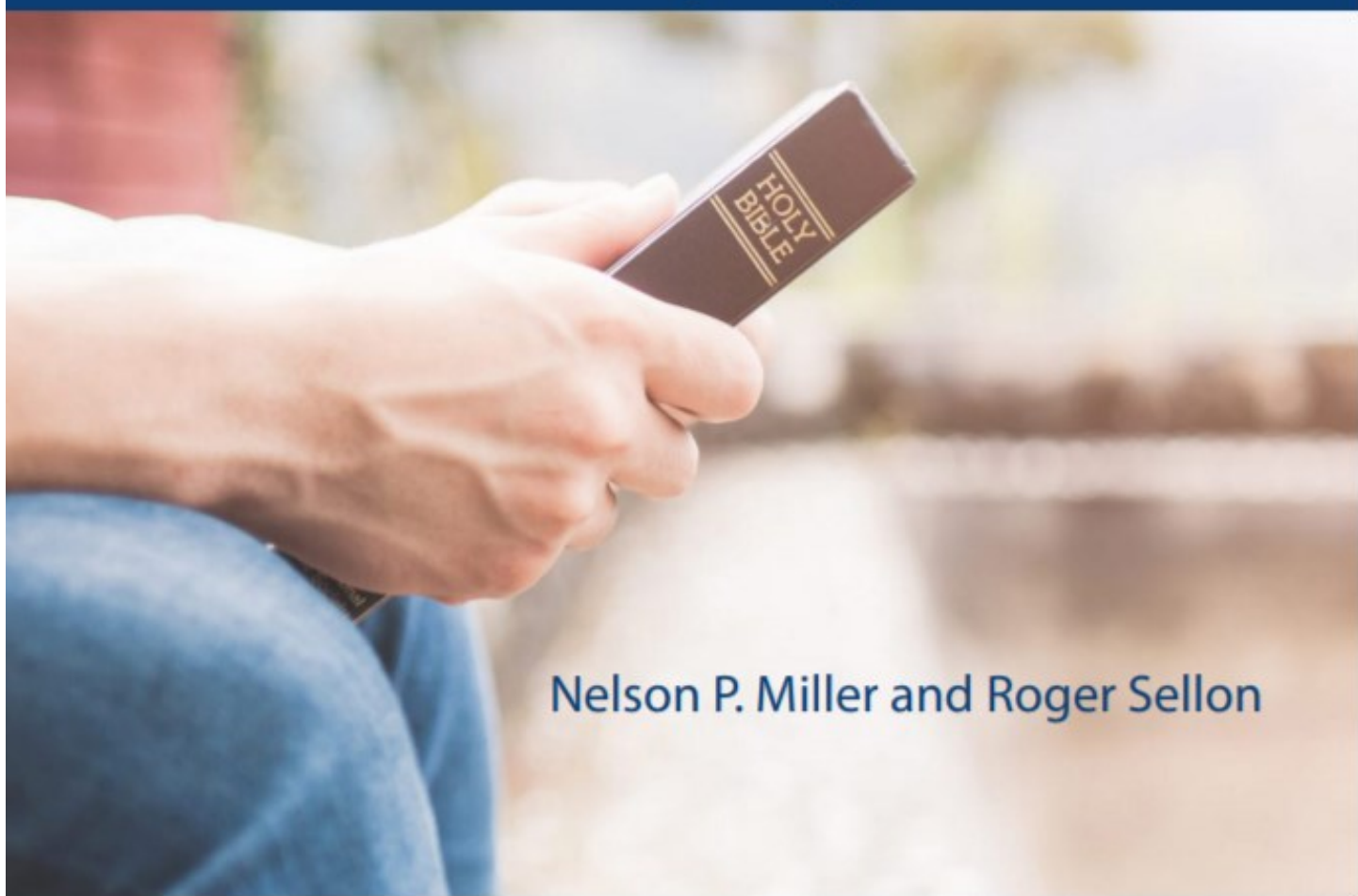




APPLYING THE BIBLE

# Discipleship Exercises for Everyday Life



Nelson P. Miller and Roger Sellon

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Nelson P. Miller and Roger Sellon

Applying the Bible: discipleship exercises for everyday life.

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# Introduction

Many are the Bible studies that present information. Fewer are the studies that encourage interaction with the presented text. Rare indeed are the studies that require the reader to apply principles drawn from Bible verses. This book presents quite a bit of information, quoting many Bible verses, each organized around an important topic. Yet to help make disciples of its readers, this book presents no information without expecting the reader to promptly apply it. The Bible shows that just knowing something is not enough. Instead, behavior demonstrates heart, commitment, and character. Tell me about your faith, yes, but prove your faith by your works. Jesus sent out disciples to practice, test, and prove their faith in its application. When they returned, rejoicing at the miracles their faith had fostered, Jesus welcomed them back, while adjusting their perspective to the God who authors faith. This book's exercises help readers connect works to Word, wonders to the God who authors them.

This book's exercises first require recognizing examples and nonexamples of biblical behavior. To know a concept means to be able to identify it in different forms, distinguishing the concept's critical attributes from non-critical variables. One must also be able to recognize the absence of a critical attribute. Hence, the need to recognize at least two examples and one near non-example. Other exercises involve sorting examples of one biblical principle from examples of another biblical principle. Recognizing righteous conduct is good, but recognizing why conduct is righteous, meaning what biblical principle supports it, is better. Other exercises in this book present scenarios, asking that the reader identify the biblical principle that they demonstrate. Each exercise involves applying biblical principles in common settings.

The book organizes these exercises into three parts. Part I's exercises help the reader pursue God's attributes. We are to become Christlike in character, Philippians 3:10 tells us, to be like good soldiers of Jesus Christ, 2 Timothy 2:3 adds. How, though, can we be so without knowing what he is like? Part I's exercises explore God's character as he works in us and through us in our circumstances. Part II's exercises, on the other hand, help the reader recognize and reject human fallenness. Sound Bible study includes recognizing sin and committing to eschew it, for as 1 John 3:6 tells us, no one who continues in sin sees or knows God. Part III's exercises focus the reader on spiritual processes, from conviction and confession, through salvation and sanctification, to redemption and resurrection. These processes, too, are important to living a Christian witness.

Philippians 2:12 says to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Romans 12:2 says to test and approve God's will. In Philippians 1:9, Paul prays that the believers' love will grow more and more with knowledge and discernment. Second Peter 3:18 says to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Matthew 28:19 says to make disciples of all nations. May these exercises help you do each of these things, drawing closer to Christ in small and large ways.



# Part I

## Pursuing God's Attributes

The Bible suggests in typically profound manner that God may *be* the attributes that followers of Christ pursue and desire to possess, to reflect the light of Christ. First John 4:8 tells us that God *is* love, not simply that God loves. Similarly, John 14:6 records Jesus saying that he *is* the truth, not simply that he speaks truth. Yet whether these attributes are *him* or instead *his*, we do desire to possess them, to be like Christ, to shine Christ's light in a dark world. This Part I chooses ten godly attributes to study, apply, and practice. These ten are characteristics, commitments, and commands that Christ embodied.

The first attribute, love, contains all others, and so must be the leading part of our study. The second attribute, forgiveness, goes hand in hand with the first, for as John 3:16 tells us, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him will not die in sin but receive God's gracious forgiveness, to live eternally. Generosity and encouragement seem like related primary attributes to study, apply, and practice, ones that our family, friends, and acquaintances would most welcome from us.

Of the harder attributes, patience and perseverance seem like two to include, certainly ones that take practice. Joy and hope in affliction would be another two to include for their attraction to those who do not know our Lord. Because Christ tells us that he is the truth, that attribute, too, must be one to include. And mercy must be above all these attributes, for we give God no reason to share them without first acknowledging and receiving his mercy. Study all ten or choose the most meaningful to you. May God bless your study of his attributes.

# Love

God's love appears throughout the Bible, so much so that 1 John 4:8 states that *God is love*. For many, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's love chapter, is a favorite memory chapter, a sure foundation on which to build one's life. Likewise, the Bible's book Song of Songs shares the intimacy of a deep love affair. Of course, Matthew 22:37 records Jesus saying that the greatest commandment is to *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*, and then to *love your neighbor as yourself*. And finally, the Bible's best-known verse, John 3:16, states that *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son*. In love, Christians find their North Star, their guiding light, indeed their very God.

Yet what love looks like in practice is only sometimes obvious, while many other times not so obvious. The challenge with Bible verses and principles, with God's commands and Jesus's teachings, is to apply them in the varied situations that we face day to day. We love to read the Bible, and we love to hear good preaching and teaching from it. But can we apply what we read and hear? Application is the question, the great challenge that we face. Hearing the word is good. Applying the word is better. And hearing the word alone does not in any sense guarantee its application. We instead need practice, practice, and more practice. Applying the broad command to *love* is perhaps our greatest challenge. What could to love God and one another possibly mean in so many different situations? See if the following exercises stimulate your thought to turn thought into appropriate action.

# Remembering Love

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## John 3:16

**For God so loved the world**

**that he gave his one and only Son**

**that whoever believes in him**

**shall not perish**

**but have eternal life.**

# God's Love

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Zephaniah 3:17: "The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. ***He will take great delight in you***; in his love he will no longer rebuke you but will ***rejoice over you with singing***."

\_\_\_\_ Though beaten down by her unending chores, the homemaker sensed God flooding her with richest love.  
\_\_\_\_ After so many failures, the relapsed alcoholic felt God could never love someone as dissolute as him.  
\_\_\_\_ After the boss unfairly berated him, the unappreciated worker walked away assured God still loved him.  
\_\_\_\_ As depressed as she'd been, barely able to get out of bed, she felt like God was frowning down on her.  
\_\_\_\_ Although her coworker once again got undue credit for her work, she knew that God was smiling at her.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. John 3:16: "For ***God so loved the world*** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

\_\_\_\_ As much as her boyfriend loved her, she sensed that God knew her far better and loved her far more.  
\_\_\_\_ He wasn't sure that anyone other than God really knew or cared what he'd been through in the military.  
\_\_\_\_ Watching the news' carnage, the atheist wondered again how people could believe in a loving God.  
\_\_\_\_ The abused and neglected child was so fearful of everyone that psychologists said he may never recover.  
\_\_\_\_ The exquisite morning following the night of awful storms reminded her of the coming redemption.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Romans 8:38-39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the ***love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord***."

\_\_\_\_ He just knew it was over. Once exposed, he was sure that he stood no chance of ever being loved again.  
\_\_\_\_ She thanked God for Jesus as she slowly realized just how bad she'd been to her parents growing up.  
\_\_\_\_ He trusted God's presence even though he felt so distant from the loving God whom he'd once known.  
\_\_\_\_ As he looked back across his life, he despaired of God, for the wasteland that he'd clearly left behind.  
\_\_\_\_ She lacked any hope or strength to continue, but somehow, she knew that God would pull her through.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Jonah 4:2: "'I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and ***abounding in love***, a God who relents from sending calamity.'"

\_\_\_\_ The series of disasters, one after another, left him with the nagging thought that God had it in for him.  
\_\_\_\_ Her friend said God was punishing her, but she figured instead that God loved her as much as ever.  
\_\_\_\_ Ever since the new year, he'd had a sense of awful foreboding, as if God was about to strike him down.  
\_\_\_\_ She kept thinking because God loved her, he would soon find her a new job among Christian friends.  
\_\_\_\_ Despite the struggles, she remained sure that God wouldn't leave her alone but would walk with her.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Loving Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Matthew 22:37-39: “Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “***Love your neighbor as yourself.***””:

\_\_\_\_ Though tired, he nonetheless dragged his elderly neighbor’s garbage cans from the curb to her garage.  
\_\_\_\_ She saw the rising tide lift the little boat from the beach to drift it away but ignored its oblivious owner.  
\_\_\_\_ She listened patiently, nodding and commiserating, as her co-worker told yet another story of woe.  
\_\_\_\_ He had enough of the server’s sullenness and so wrote a sarcastic note on the bill instead of leaving a tip.  
\_\_\_\_ He wanted the last donut but, seeing a new member, carried the serving plate over to offer it to him.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Romans 13:8: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to ***love one another***, for ***whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.***”:

\_\_\_\_ Just then, she recalled that her friend had lent her \$20, and so she pulled a \$20 bill out and paid it back.  
\_\_\_\_ She wasn’t a natural writer, but she pulled out another card to begin writing her old friend once again.  
\_\_\_\_ He didn’t bother thanking the skilled guide because he figured he’d paid for the adventure anyway.  
\_\_\_\_ Although guilty, she wasn’t going to give her just accuser the satisfaction of being right at her expense.  
\_\_\_\_ The speaker was about to launch into a diatribe against the organizer but stopped, thinking better to wait.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. John 13:34-35: “A new command I give you: ***Love one another***. As I have loved you, so ***you must love one another***. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you ***love one another***.”:

\_\_\_\_ The email from her own aunt stunned her for its harsh judgment, when she hadn’t even asked for advice.  
\_\_\_\_ He had never seen anyone listen so thoughtfully and willingly, simply to understand rather than to speak.  
\_\_\_\_ She tended to mind her own business, but she nonetheless stopped to console the child over his loss.  
\_\_\_\_ He promptly forwarded his coworker’s indiscrete email, knowing he would be in line for promotion.  
\_\_\_\_ The indigent customer had misheard, but the clerk quietly pulled \$5 from his pocket for the meal’s cost.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 1 Thessalonians 4:9: “Now about your ***love for one another*** we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to ***love each other***.”:

\_\_\_\_ The teacher agreed with the clique that the awkwardly shy new student wasn’t worth their attention.  
\_\_\_\_ She wanted to cut him down to size as he bragged, but instead she figured he needed a friend’s attention.  
\_\_\_\_ He didn’t like being told what to do, and so when his supervisor wasn’t looking, he tossed out the item.  
\_\_\_\_ The host didn’t believe the guest but could understand his reluctance to disclose and so let it pass.  
\_\_\_\_ They’d wanted to do something for the family, didn’t realize their need, but went ahead helping anyway.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles of Love

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She was ready to give up. He met her every good turn with harsh words, her every good service with another demand. She wondered whether her effort was even worth it, if anyone even noticed. Surely, he didn't appreciate anything she did. What difference did it make if she even tried anymore? With no one paying attention, no one noticing her diligent service, she may as well just give up.

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2. He'd had just about enough of these Saturday distractions doing things for others, like building handicap ramps and bunk beds, taking his mentored child to the church picnic, and raking an old neighbor's lawn. Why couldn't he just have his peace watching college football, eating brats, and drinking beer like his buddies? After all, God made things for people to enjoy them. He loved Jesus, but he loved even more talking with his buddies about sports.

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3. She was torn whether to do as God was clearly leading her to do, which was to move her children to another, safer, more-orderly school, or to give in to her children's demands that they remain with their friends. She wanted her children to like her, but she had good reasons to move her kids, quickly. God had opened every door, even providing scholarships and donations, and his word specifically encouraged her. She just wasn't sure that she had the stomach to put up with her kids' fits and whining. She wanted her kids to know that she loved them.

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4. His dilemma was clear. His competitor had clearly cheated but in a way that he could not prove. The cheating had helped his competitor at his own expense. The competitor knew it but did not care, even mocking him for playing by the rules. He had no way of getting even, of getting back. All that he could do was to cheat, too, to level the playing field, rather than being somebody else's whipping boy, somebody else's sucker. But something was holding him back.

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# Example Principles of Love

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She was ready to give up. He met her every good turn with harsh words, her every good service with another demand. She wondered whether her effort was even worth it, if anyone even noticed. Surely, he didn't appreciate anything she did. What difference did it make if she even tried anymore? With no one paying attention, no one noticing her diligent service, she may as well just give up. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Hosea 10:12: "Sow righteousness for yourselves, **reap the fruit of unfailing love**, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you."* The principle is that staying in right relationship with God while showing others love in fresh ways fills one's own life with joy and love.
2. He'd had just about enough of these Saturday distractions doing things for others, like building handicap ramps and bunk beds, taking his Kids Hope child to the church picnic, and raking an old neighbor's lawn. Why couldn't he just have his peace watching college football, eating brats, and drinking beer like his buddies? After all, God made things for people to enjoy them. He loved Jesus, but he loved even more talking with his buddies about sports. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 John 2:15: "**Do not love the world or anything in the world.** If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them."* The principle is that while God blesses us with material enjoyments, devoting oneself unduly to those material enjoyments distracts one from loving God and others.
3. She was torn whether to do as God was clearly leading her to do, which was to move her children to another, safer, more-orderly school, or to give in to her children's demands that they remain with their friends. She wanted her children to like her, but she had good reasons to move her kids, quickly. God had opened every door, even providing scholarships and donations, and his word specifically encouraged her. She just wasn't sure that she had the stomach to put up with her kids' fits and whining. She wanted her kids to know that she loved them. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 John 5:2: "This is how we know that we love the children of God: **by loving God and carrying out his commands.**"* The principle is that gladly doing as God instructs, having a heart for obedience to his commands, also shows that we love others.
4. His dilemma was clear. His competitor had clearly cheated but in a way that he could not prove. The cheating had helped his competitor at his own expense. The competitor knew it but did not care, even mocking him for playing by the rules. He had no way of getting even, of getting back. All that he could do was to cheat, too, to level the playing field, rather than being somebody else's whipping boy, somebody else's sucker. But something was holding him back. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Luke 6:35: "**But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.**"* The principle is to love, rather than hate and oppose, enemies because that is what God did.

# Evidence of Love

Sort the examples of God's love (G) from the examples of loving others (O) or lack of love (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ Surprisingly, her ordeal left her unscathed but with a strong sense of God's presence throughout.
2. \_\_\_\_ Just as his anger started to rise, his own stupidity came to mind, and so he just smiled at her.
3. \_\_\_\_ No way was he going to waste his time showing the new co-worker how to finish her own work.
4. \_\_\_\_ Hearing her son crying inside, she paused, knocked on his door, and entered quietly at his assent.
5. \_\_\_\_ Looking back across his life, he could see one constant, that God had never left him.
6. \_\_\_\_ She shouted profanities back at her antagonist, hoping to shame her deeply in front of the crowd.
7. \_\_\_\_ The driver fumed at the innocent officer, even though the driver knew that he was wrong.
8. \_\_\_\_ She had stuck to God's word all the way through the dispute and come out smelling like a rose.
9. \_\_\_\_ He bit his tongue just when he wanted to gossip about and destroy his old, fallen, former friend.
10. \_\_\_\_ Before he'd barely begun to pray, warmth flooded his heart, and he began to weep with joy.
11. \_\_\_\_ She barked at the solicitor never to call again, threw her cell phone on the sofa, and stormed out.
12. \_\_\_\_ Writing the check was tough, but she knew that the family needed the funds more than she did.
13. \_\_\_\_ When no one would speak to her, God's word had encouraged her, until she was back on her feet.
14. \_\_\_\_ Every time he faced a decision, God had brought the right path to light, until he was back at work.
15. \_\_\_\_ When he saw the old couple looking confused, he stopped to ask if he could help direct them.
16. \_\_\_\_ Her favorite part of her work was also the hardest, helping the residents out of bed in the morning.
17. \_\_\_\_ The other woman had hurt her so badly that all she could think of doing was to pray for her.
18. \_\_\_\_ Everyone told him to kick his son out, but he knew that addiction could kill his son at any moment.
19. \_\_\_\_ She realized after many prayers that God had removed her formerly desperate need for a cigarette.
20. \_\_\_\_ The child was obviously scared, but the coach just figured he was no good at soccer anyway.
21. \_\_\_\_ The dentist's fingers ached at day's end, but when he saw the indigent, he smiled and waved her in.
22. \_\_\_\_ Serving up the cold dinner, she started to fume at her husband, until noticing how tired he was.
23. \_\_\_\_ He could feel God smiling as he did the last load of laundry, after a long day's work, kids in bed.
24. \_\_\_\_ He didn't know why all the drivers waited in line when they could just cut ahead like he did.
25. \_\_\_\_ Suddenly, the verse came to her, and for the first time, she felt as if she knew her answer.

1G 2O 3L 4O 5G 6L 7L 8G 9O 10G 11L 12O 13G 14G 15O 16O 17L 18O 19G 20L 21O 22O 23G 24L 25G



# Counsel in Love

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's love? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's love? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord?*

The email had stumped her. So rather than reply promptly, she first gave it some reflection, then in prayer asked God for discernment. Her sister's email had expressed long-felt anger toward their parents, especially their mother. In the email, the causes hadn't seemed important to her sister. They sounded like the sorts of things that any child would experience with parents, especially a mother, although clearly accentuated, maybe even exaggerated unduly, in her sister's mind. Her sister blamed her mother for some of her sister's current relational and emotional issues. Her sister's email had also indirectly blamed her for not being more vocal with mom and protective of her sister, who was three years younger than her. Her sister disclosed that she'd been in counseling trying to deal with it, she was glad to learn. But her sister was expressing that the counseling hadn't really worked, or whether it was working or not, her sister still needed her to give her some help, share some insight. After all, the email concluded, "You're in God's word all the time. Something in that book must be able to help me." Her sister's parting words had hurt because her sister had once been in God's word, too. Maybe this email was another opportunity to help her sister, not just to deal with her feelings toward their mother but also to turn back to the Lord.

*Reflect on these additional questions as you consider how to respond. By what mode (text, email, letter, telephone, video chat, in person) should you respond? How soon? What would most express your love for the sister? What would most express your love for the Lord? What would most express the Lord's love for the sister? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would share, for: **"The word of God is quick, and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."** Hebrews 4:12.*

# Forgiveness

While to love is God's greatest commandment, forgiveness is the gospel message's heart. Jesus took our punishment upon him in order that his Father could justly forgive us for our sins. *Look at them, Father*, Jesus as much as says, *those who in me are utterly without sin*. God imputes Jesus's righteousness to us. In God's eyes, those who follow his Son are as pure as his Son is. As John 3:17 says, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it but to save it through him. A perfect God cannot embrace sinful persons, and so he instead embraces perfect persons purified under the blood of his glorious Son. The one creator God is not a hard God, a judging God, but instead a God of mercy, a God of grace. Colossians 3:13 thus says that as God forgives us, we must forgive others. As Matthew 6:14 records Jesus saying, if we forgive others when they sin against us, then God will likewise forgive us.

Forgiveness, though, is neither as obvious nor as easy as it sounds. Really, what does it mean for someone to sin against us? Offenses, large and small, and hurtful in varying degrees, come in endless forms. We probably don't even recognize many of them, instead just embedding in our souls their pain, nursing grudges while hardly recognizing them. And what does God forgiving us mean? How often do we truly see, feel, and embrace our forgiveness need? Receiving God's forgiveness while also forgiving others are both learned behaviors, acquired attributes. Gushing in grace, God yet demands one thing of us, which is that we see and confess our need of his grace gift, the one he perfected in his triumphant Son, that we might also forgive. We should indeed rehearse, embed, and exhibit this practice of accepting forgiveness while lavishing forgiveness on others. See if the following exercises help you do so.

# Remembering Forgiveness

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Matthew 6:15

**But if you do not forgive**

**others their sins**

**your Father will not forgive**

**your sins.**

# God's Forgiveness

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Micah 7:18: "Who is a God like you, who ***pardons sin and forgives*** the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance?"

\_\_\_\_\_ After he'd paid every debt, apologized, and reformed, he felt as if God had lifted a weight off his back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her slip-up meant that she'd ruined everything. She'd never get her peace back now. She'd lost all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her old self condemned her severely, but she held to the knowledge that Christ had made her new.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He took another deep drink from the bottle, trying to ease the pain of recalling his awful wrong.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Until his embarrassment and firing, he'd not known why people followed Jesus, but now he believed.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 1 John 1:9: "***If we confess*** our sins, ***he*** is faithful and just and ***will forgive*** us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

\_\_\_\_\_ She let the Spirit gently search her heart until she knew where her pride had gotten the better of her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The member paused only a moment before telling the appreciative pastor where the member had erred.  
\_\_\_\_\_ God just didn't seem to want to hear him, as much as he asked and asked, when he knew he was right.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She'd never done anything wrong, she was sure. Why, then, couldn't she shake her oppressing guilt?  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teller went straight to the comptroller to report her own error. Surprisingly, she slept well that night.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Matthew 26:28: "This is my ***blood*** of the covenant, which is ***poured out*** for many ***for the forgiveness of sins***."

\_\_\_\_\_ He knew that nothing could restore him, given what he'd done, so he just hid it, where it festered.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She marveled that one so exquisite as Christ could care so utterly for her in her broken condition.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every time that guilt attacked him, dragging him down, he looked once again to Christ on the cross.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew now that she'd lost all and had no way back, so she just kept going down the wrong path.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She still remembered with relief the moment that she realized what Christ's crucifixion meant to her.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Acts 2:38: "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ ***for the forgiveness of your sins***.'"

\_\_\_\_\_ He wasn't much interested in church, especially rituals like baptism. If religion was ritual, what good?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every time that her former friends attacked her as righteous, she remembered the relief of her baptism.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She always liked Jesus's teaching, but she just didn't get the washing-of-sins thing. She wasn't that bad!  
\_\_\_\_\_ Each day, the Spirit gently showed him more to confess, and with each confession, cleansed his spirit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teacher urged the guilty students, each of whom had apologized, to turn their guilt over to Christ.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E N E N E 2E N N E 3N E E N E 4N E N E E

# Forgiving Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Colossians 3:13: “Bear with each other and ***forgive one another*** if any of you has a grievance against someone. ***Forgive as the Lord forgave you.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ She didn’t know if she could take his offenses anymore, but then she remembered her own offenses.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The contractor caught the owner in a lie, and now he was going to make her pay every cent.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The judge was about to throw the book at her when he remembered being young and foolish himself.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The player yelled profanities at the referee, embarrassing him badly for making such a stupid mistake.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The employee wanted to quit over the employer’s gaffe until the employee remembered his own gaffes.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Matthew 18:21-22: “Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’ Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but ***seventy-seven times.***’”

\_\_\_\_\_ They’d been together 20 years, yet he still hadn’t learned. Well, she thought, she wasn’t perfect either.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was tempted to let her stubborn habit become a pet peeve of his, but he instead decided to ignore it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The meeting was the last straw. She’d had entirely enough of her supervisor’s sarcasm. He’d now pay.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The clerk was so slow that he felt his blood pressure rising. Finally, he’d had enough and blew up.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was tired of the endless phone solicitations, but he just said “No, thank you,” cheerily one more time.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Mark 11:25: ““And when you stand praying, ***if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them***, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.””

\_\_\_\_\_ In his anger, he turned to prayer, asking that God bring burning coals down on their guilty heads.  
\_\_\_\_\_ In her anger, she turned to prayer, asking sweetly that God forgive them for all that they’d done to her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He realized in prayer that he hadn’t let go of the grudge against his father and so asked God for help.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She couldn’t understand why God hadn’t granted her prayer to frustrate her antagonists in their mission.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When the coach apologized profusely, he told the coach to forget the issue. He wanted peace in prayer.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Matthew 6:15: ““But ***if you do not forgive others*** their sins, ***your Father will not forgive*** your sins.””

\_\_\_\_\_ She later laughed at how seriously she had taken the small matter, realizing that she’d better let it go.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was sure that he had done just as God commanded--and just as sure that his awful neighbor had not.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ever since her salvation, she had felt no need to judge others. She left judging to her God and Father.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The bank waived his fees and interest. Now, if he could get his deadbeat tenant to pay the late penalty.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The grocer knew that his longtime supplier had messed up the order, and he was going to let him have it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles of Forgiveness

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She knew that her lapse was an offense, and she knew what to do about it. Confession was a good thing, and so she went straight to God in prayer, asking that he forgive her, restore her, and strengthen her against another lapse. She knew that she had to overcome her guilt and have the assurance of God's forgiveness, if she were to stand any chance of resisting the next temptation. Yet as she tried to pray, she kept thinking of how deeply her husband had offended her. She just couldn't get his rude conduct off her mind.

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2. He could hardly believe that his long-lost big sister was now asking for his help, after she'd treated him so badly when he had long ago needed her help. She had ridiculed him when he was a stuttering child growing up. She had turned her back on him when he needed study help in high school. And she had mocked him for getting engaged to his sweetheart, refusing to attend their wedding or speak to him for years afterward. But now she wanted him to help keep her out of jail.

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3. Wow, were they in way over their heads. When they first started the sordid practice, they'd thought it to be a harmless diversion, a convenience, something with which they could dabble while putting aside at any time. Now they could see that their practice was rank sin, undermining everything that they'd been working toward. The question was whether they had any way to turn back, any way that they could save their whole venture. Everything was now at stake, indeed more than everything for which they had worked. Their futures were at stake, too.

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4. "I just don't get how one man--okay, even Jesus, your God--can just go ahead and forgive sin, like waving a magic wand or something," her friend was telling her. Her friend continued, "I know that I've done plenty of wrong. I'll never get into heaven on anyone's standard. But even if I could, I just don't see what Jesus did, that could get me there with him. I sure wish I knew."

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# Example Principles of Forgiveness

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She knew that her lapse was an offense, and she knew what to do about it. Confession was a good thing, and so she went straight to God in prayer, asking that he forgive her, restore her, and strengthen her against another lapse. She knew that she had to overcome her guilt and have the assurance of God's forgiveness, if she were to stand any chance of resisting the next temptation. Yet as she tried to pray, she kept thinking of how deeply her husband had offended her. She just couldn't get his rude conduct off her mind. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Matthew 6:12: "‘And forgive us our debts, **as we also have forgiven our debtors.**’"* The principle is that when we forgive those who owe us something but refuse to supply it, God forgives us what we owe God.
2. He could hardly believe that his long-lost big sister was now asking for his help, after she'd treated him so badly when he had long ago needed her help. She had ridiculed him when he was a stuttering child growing up. She had turned her back on him when he needed study help in high school. And she had mocked him for getting engaged to his sweetheart, refusing to attend their wedding or speak to him for years afterward. But now she wanted him to help keep her out of jail. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Genesis 50:18-20: "His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. ‘We are your slaves,’ they said. But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? **You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good** to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.’"* The principle is that God turns others' harm to good, helping us to forgive others.
3. Wow, were they in way over their heads. When they first started the sordid practice, they'd thought it to be a harmless diversion, a convenience, something with which they could dabble while putting aside at any time. Now they could see that their practice was rank sin, undermining everything that they'd been working toward. The question was whether they had any way to turn back, any way that they could save their whole venture. Everything was now at stake, indeed more than everything for which they had worked. Their futures were at stake, too. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Chronicles 7:14: "[I]f my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and **turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven, and **I will forgive their sin** and will heal their land.’"* The principle is that repentance leads to forgiveness and healing, even to blessing once again.
4. "I just don't get how one man--okay, even Jesus, your God--can just go ahead and forgive sin, like waving a magic wand or something," her friend was telling her. Her friend continued, "I know that I've done plenty of wrong. I'll never get into heaven on anyone's standard. But even if I could, I just don't see what Jesus did, that could get me there with him. I sure wish I knew." EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Matthew 26:28: "‘This is **my blood** of the covenant, which **is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**’"* The principle is that Jesus paid for our sins with his life, suffering extremely, in our place, as we should have suffered.

# Evidence of Forgiveness

Sort the examples of God's forgiveness (G) from the examples of forgiving others (O) or lacking forgiveness (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ She had never thought that she could be good enough for God to love her, but he plainly did.
2. \_\_\_\_ The man knew that he'd been a lousy father, which made his son's great kindness inexplicable.
3. \_\_\_\_ The schoolgirl wasn't about to let her friend--well, her *ex*-friend--forget missing her birthday party.
4. \_\_\_\_ The coach put the player back on the field next game, after the player's gaffe gave the game away.
5. \_\_\_\_ As he wept asking the Father to take him back after so many years away, God's peace flooded him.
6. \_\_\_\_ Although the employee's work was competent, the supervisor fired her for denting the owner's car.
7. \_\_\_\_ He hid his sister's backpack after she once again took half an hour in the bathroom they shared.
8. \_\_\_\_ Her ailing mother's anxiety worsened until the daughter assured her God held nothing against her.
9. \_\_\_\_ The doctor wanted to snap at the nervous new nurse, but she instead smiled at him patiently.
10. \_\_\_\_ He rarely prayed kneeling, but his confession seemed to warrant it, and God indeed answered.
11. \_\_\_\_ The server swore at the cook as she slid the unhappy diner's cold plate back to him to microwave.
12. \_\_\_\_ The student wanted to protest the teacher's unfair charge but held his peace. Truth would come out.
13. \_\_\_\_ He knew he deserved everything that the court threw at him, even as he held tight to Jesus.
14. \_\_\_\_ She kept playing over her horrible acts until she heard a quiet inner voice tell her to turn to God.
15. \_\_\_\_ "Consider accepting his apology," she said before adding, "even if you don't attend with him."
16. \_\_\_\_ He'd been uneasy about his own standing, until he extended his hand to his apologetic friend.
17. \_\_\_\_ She turned on her heels and marched away with her nose in the air, leaving him flummoxed.
18. \_\_\_\_ After thirty years passed without a word between them, he made the first call, though not his turn.
19. \_\_\_\_ She'd expected to feel condemnation, but instead all she felt was God's steady, loving presence.
20. \_\_\_\_ No way was he going to settle for their last offer. He'd have his justice, if it cost him his last cent.
21. \_\_\_\_ She could tell her friend had forgotten that she'd promised to pay her back but decided to let it go.
22. \_\_\_\_ He didn't know why his classmate irritated him, but he knew he'd better turn the other cheek.
23. \_\_\_\_ Well, she'd done it again, after promising she wouldn't. But she turned sheepishly to God again.
24. \_\_\_\_ He could hear Satan's voice running him down, saying that he'd never amounted to anything.
25. \_\_\_\_ She'd never known peace like that night, when she'd finally stopped running from her wrongs.

1G 2O 3L 4O 5G 6L 7L 8G 9O 10G 11L 12O 13G 14G 15O 16O 17L 18O 19G 20L 21O 22O 23G 24L 25G



# Counsel in Forgiveness

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's forgiveness? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's forgiveness? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord?*

The discovery had at first surprised him but then later hurt. His co-worker, whom he considered a good friend, had done something at work that he would have never done to his co-worker or anyone else. His co-worker's action, which the emails, new titles, and new workstations all confirmed, was great for his co-worker, no doubt, but very difficult for him in ways that his co-worker would have known well in advance. Indeed, the unmistakable evidence showed that his co-worker had tried to cover up his involvement, clearly to keep him from finding out. But it was also clear now that his co-worker knew of his inevitable discovery of his co-worker's involvement, without which this new arrangement, entirely to his co-worker's benefit and entirely at his own expense, would never have come about. His mind started conjuring words like *backstabbing* and *double-crossing*, attributing to his co-worker characteristics that he'd never associated with him even remotely before. Had their friendship all been a setup? As he grew angrier, he knew that he had first to get a handle on his emotions. Then he knew he'd have to deal in some way with his co-worker.

*Reflect on these additional questions as you consider how to respond. What should he do before deciding what to do? In other words, what process should he follow to discern a sound course? Who or what should he consult? Where, when, and how does forgiveness fit in? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for: **"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"** 2 Corinthians 13:5.*

# Generosity

God is generous and expects generosity. God's greatest, most undeserving gift was of his own Son. Imagine how incomparably rich a gift God gave in the glorious life of his own Son. If we properly measure a gift by its cost to the giver, then incredibly, incomprehensibly, God gave his all, his everything. God could have been no more generous than to give of himself unto death, as he verily did. God is the extravagant giver, the lavish provider, indeed the one who freely offers eternal paradise. And he offers that otherwise-unattainable gift to everyone, right down to the most desperate of criminals, the most depraved of souls. God is not stingy, not begrudging. He does not parse out meager provision only to those who earn it. He instead gives without any condition other than recognizing the gift. God gives his gift to those who accept it, which is not truly a condition to the gift but instead its definition. The recipient must accept the gift to consummate it.

God expects us to be generous, too. Generosity at first seems simple, like caring for one's own family, especially one's spouse and children, and then maybe sharing with one's neighbor and friend, perhaps also donating to charity. Yet God may well expect more from us, to care deeply for the lost, orphan, widow, and poor, like the good Samaritan going to great ends to aid the beaten stranger. We are to put to work the gifts that God gives us so that we produce and share more. God condemns those who do the opposite, hiding and hoarding his gifts while believing God ungenerous, mean, and hard. Generosity, though, is not always easy to execute. Its opportunities can seem to hide. And how could we possibly reflect God's generosity, even though he does expect it? See if the following exercises help hone the capacity to appreciate God's generosity while extending it to others.

# Remembering Generosity

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Proverbs 11:25

**A generous person**

**will prosper;**

**whoever refreshes others**

**will be refreshed.**

# God's Generosity

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Psalm 31:19: "***How abundant are the good things that you have stored up*** for those who fear you, that you bestow in the sight of all on those who take refuge in you."

\_\_\_\_\_ In all her difficulties, she was still sure of one thing: God had blessed her beyond her imagination.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Despite their success, the manager could imagine sales falling and so held onto every penny he could.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn't exactly see his way through, but he trusted that God had already provided for his success.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She looked at her life in disgust, wondering why God hadn't done for her as she had demanded.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had no idea how to pay the rent at the end of the month but knew that God had provided before.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. James 1:5: "If any of you lack wisdom, you should ***ask God, who gives generously to all*** without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

\_\_\_\_\_ Circumstances had burned him before, so he knew what to do: turn to God for the insight he needed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every time that she turned to scripture, she felt as though she was drinking from a mountain stream.  
\_\_\_\_\_ This one he was going to handle by himself. After all, he had street smarts, knowing his own way.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Once more, he cried out for God's meager supply, asking where God had been when he needed him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew he'd been slow in his studies, but he still trusted God to give him the word that he needed.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Psalm 23:5: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; ***my cup overflows.***"

\_\_\_\_\_ Golly, he thought: when would it ever be *his* turn, *his* time? When would he ever catch a little break?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Things had been hard, for sure, but she could see how God had poured out his blessing and protection.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had hoped to get just a little lift, but instead God had done miracle after miracle for him and family.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She looked back at her life as a series of sure steps downward, nothing but lack and want at every step.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She couldn't explain how she'd found strength, such security through it all--except that God was there.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Titus 3:5-7: "***He saved us*** through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us ***generously through Jesus Christ our Savior***, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

\_\_\_\_\_ She wasn't sure her salvation meant much to her, as if she had all that much from which to be saved.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The realization struck him like a thunderbolt: God had let his Son die an awful death to rescue him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Watching people stream out of the church, the passing motorist thought how strange it all was.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The more she meditated on salvation, the more she realized that God could have done nothing harder.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The pastor must have mentioned grace a hundred times before the member finally realized the gift.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Generosity Toward Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Proverbs 11:25: “***A generous person will prosper***; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.”  
\_\_\_\_ Tithing at first had seemed strange, even hard, but their finances were somehow better than ever.  
\_\_\_\_ *Not on your life*, he thought, as he listened to the ministry’s solicitation, even as his sour stomach turned.  
\_\_\_\_ She’d thought writing the check for the ministry would leave her depressed, but the opposite was true.  
\_\_\_\_ The young man waved and shouted *hello* to the professional who last year had helped him out for free.  
\_\_\_\_ As he looked at his year-end record, all the giving they’d done that year, he felt a great weight lift.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
2. 1 Timothy 6:18: “Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to ***be generous and willing to share***.”  
\_\_\_\_ She looked at the delicious cookies she’d just baked, gathering them all up to walk them next door.  
\_\_\_\_ The boy had saved all week to buy the candy, but looking at his little brother, he gave him a big scoop.  
\_\_\_\_ *Why was everyone always on the take?* he thought as he rushed by the bell ringer at the door.  
\_\_\_\_ Boundaries, boundaries, she kept telling herself, as she ignored her sister’s umpteenth plea for help.  
\_\_\_\_ He’d just gotten the new pickup truck, but without hesitating, he said *sure*, he’d lend it to his neighbor.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Psalm 37:26: “They are ***always generous*** and lend freely; their children will be a blessing.”  
\_\_\_\_ He looked at his son clutching the toy, thinking *good, he’s holding tight to what his uncle bought him*.  
\_\_\_\_ Tears came as she saw her little girl sharing her ice cream with her friend. Where’d she learned that?  
\_\_\_\_ Only briefly did he wonder how many more office solicitations he’d see this year, as he wrote the check.  
\_\_\_\_ No way, she thought. She wasn’t lending her new mower to her neighbor whose mower was broken.  
\_\_\_\_ The parents shouldn’t have been so stunned their daughter had won the college’s recognition for her gift.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Luke 11:41: “But now as for what is inside you—***be generous to the poor***, and everything will be clean for you.”  
\_\_\_\_ He raised the vehicle’s window tight as he approached the homeless beggar at the intersection.  
\_\_\_\_ She’d expected the soup-kitchen work to be hard, dirty, but she’d never felt cleaner when she was done.  
\_\_\_\_ *Someone else can help this time*, she said to herself, just as she had said last time and the time before.  
\_\_\_\_ He hadn’t been sure that he could take work time off for volunteer service, but his employer loved it.  
\_\_\_\_ She hadn’t thought of herself as capable of generosity--until she met Christ her Lord, the ultimate Giver.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles of Generosity

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She wanted to take the time to help the church's clothes-closet ministry that helped so many poor families. She even knew that she had the organizing, cleaning, and stitching skills, and probably just enough time to work it in. Yet somehow, her heart was telling her that the whole idea was a slippery slope, that once she started in ministry, her own life would fall apart, and she'd lose everything for which she had worked so long and hard. What was she to do? She just didn't know if she had it in her.

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2. Initially, he was proud that he could make such a big donation, indeed, the donation that put the whole fundraising drive over the top. He was glad that the fundraising team knew that he had been the one to finish the drive. He expected that people would be even more appreciative of him, his character, and his success. Then, something struck him. Something wasn't right. Was it that he was wrong to give? No, it was something else, something about his attitude. If only he knew the Bible principle and verse.

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3. They'd finally made it, saved their business, saved their home, and even prospered, buying a second home and taking lavish vacations. Oh, sure, they'd left a few friends and lenders behind, maybe cut a few corners when it came to honesty and loyalty. But what's the world, anyway, other than competition, everyone for himself or herself. Dog eat dog, as their folks used to say. Better to look forward than to look back. If they owed anyone anything, which they knew that they did, then those whom they owed would eventually come looking for it, anyway. Better to let sleeping dogs lie than to renew old debts.

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4. He'd always wanted to do things the right way and had always tried his best. When others took shortcuts, he went the long way around--the right way. And he'd always tried to help others along the way as he went. And now, he could see how it was all coming back.

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# Example Principles of Generosity

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She wanted to take the time to help the church's clothes-closet ministry that helped so many poor families. She even knew that she had the organizing, cleaning, and stitching skills, and probably just enough time to work it in. Yet somehow, her heart was telling her that the whole idea was a slippery slope, that once she started in ministry, her own life would fall apart, and she'd lose everything for which she had worked so long and hard. What was she to do? She just didn't know if she had it in her. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Deuteronomy 15:10: "Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to."* The principle is simply that generous giving gets God's attention to bless you back.
2. Initially, he was proud that he could make such a big donation, indeed, the donation that put the whole fundraising over the top. He was glad that the fundraising team knew that he had been the one to finish the fundraising drive. He expected that people would be even more appreciative of him, his character, and his success. Then, something struck him. Something wasn't right. Was it that he was wrong to give? No, it was something else, something about his attitude. If only he knew the Bible principle and verse. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Chronicles 29:14: "'But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.'"* The principle is that the things that we give are not truly our own but are instead God's things that he has chosen to give us--as we should generously give. Hesitate to claim credit for giving. God gave first, and it's all his to give.
3. They'd finally made it, saved their business, saved their home, and even prospered, buying a second home and taking lavish vacations. Oh, sure, they'd left a few friends and lenders behind, maybe cut a few corners when it came to honesty and loyalty. But what's the world, anyway, other than competition, everyone for himself or herself. Dog eat dog, as their folks used to say. Better to look forward than to look back. If they owed anyone anything, which they knew that they did, then those whom they owed would eventually come looking for it, anyway. Better to let sleeping dogs lie than to renew old debts. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Psalms 37:21: "The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously[.]"* The principle is that Satan is a taker, not a giver, and evil takes rather than gives, while the righteous who have the life of Christ give generously, as Christ gave most generously.
4. He'd always wanted to do things the right way and had always tried his best. When others took shortcuts, he went the long way around--the right way. And he'd always tried to help others along the way as he went. And now, he could see how it was all coming back. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Psalms 112:5: "Good will come to those who are generous and lend freely, who conduct their affairs with justice."* The principle is that what goes around, comes around. When one is just, one receives justice. We each get our reward, whether for good or evil, whether here on earth or later in heaven.

# Evidence of Generosity

Sort the examples of God's generosity (G) from the examples of generosity toward others (O) or lack of generosity (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ Once again, more often than he could count, a check had come in just when he needed it the most.
2. \_\_\_\_ She had no idea why her mother-in-law, whom she once rudely called *church lady*, treated her so well.
3. \_\_\_\_ Why, she kept thinking, did that deadbeat of a father not do more for her to help? She'd show him.
4. \_\_\_\_ The ministry leader was relieved to see the volunteer appear--always the same one, just in time.
5. \_\_\_\_ Though she'd utterly wasted yesterday, been a complete ruin, the morning sun shone as if new.
6. \_\_\_\_ He tried not to cross paths with his elderly neighbor who, he felt, was always asking for help.
7. \_\_\_\_ She looked again at their budget. Sure enough, they didn't have the money for an offering this week.
8. \_\_\_\_ He couldn't understand why anyone, no less his own Maker, would tolerate him, no less die for him.
9. \_\_\_\_ She'd had the older, widowed woman on her heart all week and so finally drove over with a cake.
10. \_\_\_\_ She could attribute her survival, indeed how she prospered through the mess, only to one source: God.
11. \_\_\_\_ He knew he had a twenty-dollar bill in his wallet he could have given, but he wanted to go out tonight.
12. \_\_\_\_ He figured he could listen to his friend's problems one more time--his therapist, his friend called him.
13. \_\_\_\_ Healing, he knew, was God's own miracle. He had no other idea how he'd survived his dire straits.
14. \_\_\_\_ Somehow, everyone and everything had been in just the right place and time for her to succeed.
15. \_\_\_\_ She didn't have the budget for it, but she figured God would provide for her gifts to the orphanage.
16. \_\_\_\_ He wasn't sure why he always arrived early to set up, when no one else did, but hey, he liked serving.
17. \_\_\_\_ The students didn't really need his help, he figured. They'd get it soon enough. Besides, he was tired.
18. \_\_\_\_ She learned from her Lord to keep an ear and eye open for need, as her Lord had surely done for her.
19. \_\_\_\_ The weather suddenly broke into blue skies and light breezes just in time for the special event.
20. \_\_\_\_ He walked past the trash, knowing others would kick it all over the floor. Not his job to pick it up.
21. \_\_\_\_ The coach liked spending his own money on extra bats and balls--without the parents knowing it.
22. \_\_\_\_ Yes, the garbage had to go out, the laundry to be folded, and the sink cleaned up. But the game was on!
23. \_\_\_\_ She realized after that, when everyone had abandoned her, God had stuck with her, right at her side.
24. \_\_\_\_ He looked at his brother limping across the room after his book, without his crutches. He'd find it.
25. \_\_\_\_ He kept looking at his bank statement in awe because the more he'd given away, the more he'd had.

1G 2O 3L 4O 5G 6L 7L 8G 9O 10G 11L 12O 13G 14G 15O 16O 17L 18O 19G 20L 21O 22O 23G 24L 25G



# Counsel in Generosity

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's generosity? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's generosity? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord?*

You are meeting with the youth whom you have been mentoring for the past two months in your church's process of confirming the youth's commitment to faith. You have always liked the youth whose energy, joy, and creativity are infectious, not just for you but for everyone else, especially his peers. You also have no doubt of the youth's knowledge of God's word and his heart's commitment to faith. Yet you've just discovered something about the youth's character or disposition that you should have seen all along but only now realized, with very little time left in your mentor role to address it. The youth is self-centered, and not just as many youths are in their development, but more so than you've seen in any of the other youths you've taught, cared for, and coached through this intriguing stage of life. You sense that the youth needs to hear something urgent about his need to be more generous, giving, thoughtful, and considerate of others, that this moment is not just time for another teaching, another reminder to be good and do good, but instead a fork in the youth's road, a true turning point... or not, all depending on you. You hadn't expected this challenge, and you're not sure at all that you welcome it. But then you think back to a seminal moment or two in your own life when your mentors found gentle or not-so-gentle ways to call your attention to your character, and how their counsel might have been the signal moment in your own life. You meet with the youth later this week. What are you going to say or do?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for: **"if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment"** 1 Corinthians 11:31.*

# Encouragement

God is an encourager, the ultimate encourager. No one, not your mother nor your best friend, comes anywhere close to encouraging you as much as God encourages you. God repeatedly tells his followers to accept his encouragement, to be strong and courageous. Acts 23:11 records Jesus telling Paul to *take courage*, to be fearless, just as Matthew 14:21 records Jesus telling the disciples when fearing his water-walking approach, as if he were a ghost, and buffeted by wind and waves. Yet God's encouragement is not just that we be bold, strong, tough. God also offers us the encouragement of friendship, comfort, even intimacy in this world and then the greater encouragement of an endless future in his paradise. God offers us the one encouragement that no other solace can offer, which is that in him we overcome the greatest enemy, which lies is death.

As in the cases of love and forgiveness, God expects us to turn his encouragement into our encouragement of others. Once again, encouragement is the gospel message, just as love is the gospel and forgiveness is the gospel. We are to proclaim Christ's salvation, God's gracious gift to all humankind. What can be more encouraging? Our challenge is not in understanding the encouragement that God offers or the encouragement that he expects us to give. Rather, our challenge is recognizing situations in which each apply. We find it one thing to know God's encouragement but another thing to show it during hardships, challenges, and trials. The time, place, and manner of encouragement can all be difficult to discern. See if the following exercises help you do so.

# Remembering Encouragement

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 Chronicles 28:20

**Do not be afraid**

**or discouraged,**

**for the Lord God,**

**my God,**

**is with you.**

# God's Encouragement

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; *you encourage them*, and you listen to their cry....” Psalm 10:17.

\_\_\_\_ Every treatment weakened his body further, but his spirit instead grew stronger as the Lord led him on.  
\_\_\_\_ She hadn't expected any help, didn't ask for any, and sure enough, didn't get any, not from anyone.  
\_\_\_\_ She had cried out to God in tearful prayer, and now, she felt the weight of her illness disappear like fog.  
\_\_\_\_ He had always been independent, self-sufficient, and he sure wasn't going to turn to any gods now.  
\_\_\_\_ He could sense the Spirit exhorting him on through each desperate challenge until victory was in hand.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and *encouraged by the Holy Spirit*, it increased in numbers.” Acts 9:31.

\_\_\_\_ Guests who entered the church felt God's presence there, encouraged to smile and release their burdens.  
\_\_\_\_ They had hardly noticed, but in years, the church had tripled in size, united around its gospel mission.  
\_\_\_\_ The issue divided the members again into predictable sides, no one having any answer to their problem.  
\_\_\_\_ Everything was a battle, and every battle weakened the resolve of the leadership, which had no vision.  
\_\_\_\_ Every obstacle the elders had faced had seemed to melt away in the Spirit's power, as they stood in faith.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, ‘*Take courage!* As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.’” Acts 23:11.

\_\_\_\_ One thing was clear: he was done with trying to share his faith. Never again would he be so bold.  
\_\_\_\_ Public speaking wasn't her cup of tea, but she felt the Spirit nudging her to accept, and so she did.  
\_\_\_\_ Just when he thought his witnessing to his co-workers was over, his employer sent him to a new unit.  
\_\_\_\_ As he listened to the sermon on courage in witness, he thought only that he'd never minister or preach.  
\_\_\_\_ She had found youth ministry both hard and rewarding but was surprised the mission team recruited her.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “‘*Be strong and courageous*, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. *Be strong and very courageous.*’” Joshua 1:6-7.

\_\_\_\_ No way, she thought, no way. They'd made a mistake asking her, and she wasn't going to accept.  
\_\_\_\_ Although the promotion had initially frightened him, he could now see the chance to influence others.  
\_\_\_\_ She stared at the application on her computer, wondering why she'd thought of it, then turned away.  
\_\_\_\_ She'd never done anything like it before and didn't know why they'd asked her, but she was ready to try.  
\_\_\_\_ As he looked at the courses, knowing he had a career choice to make, something told him to go for it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Encouraging Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11.

\_\_\_\_\_ “You are always so helpful!” the staffer said, even as she gently corrected the volunteer in the task.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He thought of thanking the technician but figured that she’d only done her job and so let it pass.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor noticed that the worker was down and so called him in to tell him how much he meant.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Look at him*, the wife thought, watching her husband head off to work, *he’ll never amount to anything*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The husband hugged his wife, thanking her for all the large and small things she did for their home.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “But commission Joshua, and **encourage and strengthen him**, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.” Deuteronomy 3:28.

\_\_\_\_\_ The members voted unanimously to support the associate pastor’s elevation, while giving many kudos.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The parent could see the young coach’s nervousness but walked up and gave him a big clap on the back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had no idea who could pull this organization out of its tailspin, but it sure wasn’t the one they chose.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As soon as she heard who they’d chosen, she began getting ready to give him a piece of her mind.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The unit’s senior member congratulated heartily the college grad whom the company made supervisor.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “But the Israelites **encouraged one another** and again took up their positions where they had stationed themselves the first day.” Judges 20:22.

\_\_\_\_\_ She hated going in the teachers’ lounge because all she heard was complaints about everyone not there.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The team was down three goals, but between periods they all pulled together to give it their best shot.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The unit had lost money again in the last quarter, but the managers just redoubled their efforts to profit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When the clerk asked how he was, he started to groan and complain but instead smiled and asked back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The ministry hadn’t seen any growth, nor any conversions or confessions, but the volunteers stuck it out.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “Now **go out and encourage your men**. I swear by the Lord that if you don’t go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall.” 2 Samuel 19:7.

\_\_\_\_\_ *Where were her volunteers?* she thought, as she got ready to scold them once again.  
\_\_\_\_\_ They’d failed to close the deal yet again, the third in a row, but she insisted they were her best team.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He loved that the neighbor usually cleared his snow, too, but would never have thanked him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The mother looked at her sodden children, in from the rain, but instead of scolding, she dried them off.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He brought donuts in, knowing that the morning’s work was going to be more challenging than ever.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Encouragement

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She was in a real pickle now, and she knew it. She'd been trying as hard as she could, but all her efforts hadn't made much, if any, difference. In fact, that's the way things had been going lately for her in a lot of areas in her life: the harder she tried, the harder she seemed to fail, like taking one step forward but ending up two steps backward. Now, she was getting gun shy, losing her panache, losing her vigor. As her fear of disappointment and failure grew, she felt as if she was just waiting for the next bad thing to happen. Where had her sense of excitement gone? Why wasn't she expressing the hope and joy that she had once expressed?

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2. He looked again at the email, once again feeling that mix of possibility with trepidation. Things hadn't gone so well the last time, and here he was, getting asked to do it again, indeed to do more than last time. He couldn't even really figure out why they'd asked him. Sure, he knew what to do, and he and everyone else knew that he would go ahead and do it the right way, as he always did. But everyone also knew what happened the last time. Should he really try again? Maybe he'd better just stand down this time.

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3. They had now finally taken over for the prior group, which had done so well. Every one of them had the sense that they had no chance of living up to expectations, of reaching the very high bar that the prior group had set. Downfall seemed inevitable, so much so that they thought seriously of just not doing the work or maybe of doing it only halfway so that they could have the excuse of not having really tried. Who, after all, likes to fail after giving it your best? That, at least, was the group's sense, and no one seemed too anxious to say anything else.

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# Example Principles of Encouragement

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She was in a real pickle now, and she knew it. She'd been trying as hard as she could, but all her efforts hadn't made much, if any, difference. In fact, that's the way things had been going lately for her in a lot of areas in her life: the harder she tried, the harder she seemed to fail, like taking one step forward but ending up two steps backward. Now, she was getting gun shy, losing her panache, losing her vigor. As her fear of disappointment and failure grew, she felt as if she was just waiting for the next bad thing to happen. Where had her sense of excitement gone? Why wasn't she expressing the hope and joy that she had once expressed? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Matthew 14:27: "But Jesus immediately said to them: '**Take courage!** It is I. Don't be afraid.'*" The principle is that the Lord shows up at just the right time, ready to do just as you need. What he most wants you to do is to rely on him, rather than fear others or fear situations and try to rely on oneself.
2. He looked again at the email, once again feeling that mix of possibility with trepidation. Things hadn't gone so well the last time, and here he was, getting asked to do it again, indeed to do more than last time. He couldn't even really figure out why they'd asked him. Sure, he knew what to do, and he and everyone else knew that he would go ahead and do it the right way, as he always did. But everyone also knew what happened the last time. Should he really try again? Maybe he'd better just stand down this time. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Chronicles 19:11: "'**Act with courage,** and may the Lord be with those who do well.'*" The principle is to go ahead and venture, take responsible risks, and take up challenges, while praying and trusting in the Lord that he will reward and protect those who do. Do not stop venturing, but instead continue to cast your bread upon the waters, believing that good things will return to those who do.
3. They had now finally taken over for the prior group, which had done so well. Every last one of them had the sense that they had no chance of living up to expectations, of reaching the very high bar that the prior group had set. Downfall seemed inevitable, so much so that they thought seriously of just not doing the work or maybe of doing it only halfway so that they could have the excuse of not having really tried. Who, after all, likes to fail after giving it your best? That, at least, was the group's sense, and no one seemed too anxious to say anything else. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Chronicles 28:20: "David also said to Solomon his son, '**Be strong and courageous,** and do the work. **Do not be afraid or discouraged,** for the Lord God, my God, is with you.'*" The principle is to do what is at hand with the full vigor of the Lord, who gives you the work and then gives you the strength to do it.

# Evidence of Encouragement

Sort the examples of God's encouragement (G) from the examples of encouraging others (O) or lack of encouragement (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ He felt a welling-up of energy after prayer, just as he asked, reminding him that God answers prayer.
2. \_\_\_\_ Well, it was all over now, she knew, so she figured she'd cut her losses and invest no more energy.
3. \_\_\_\_ She was down but knew the best way to get back up was to reach out to someone else who needed it.
4. \_\_\_\_ Things had never been this bad before, and so having none of it, he told everyone just what he thought.
5. \_\_\_\_ He loved to see the confidence in his young charges grow as he egged them on, mistakes or not.
6. \_\_\_\_ As she turned the Bible's pages, a verse caught her eye, then her heart, and she knew she could do it.
7. \_\_\_\_ She didn't watch much television preaching, but this message seemed to come straight from the Spirit.
8. \_\_\_\_ *Glass half empty*, was his motto; no sense in getting your hopes up or giving anyone else false hope.
9. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor made sure to greet the service workers heartily, even though they had to be there.
10. \_\_\_\_ She felt her cashier's job wasn't just work but ministry as she lifted the spirits of all passing through.
11. \_\_\_\_ *Empathy is for losers*, the flag man thought as he angrily waved another waiting car through.
12. \_\_\_\_ She woke unable to remember her dream but sensed that it came from God, and it sure picked her up.
13. \_\_\_\_ He'd found small ways to break the bad news to patients in ways that gave them the most hope.
14. \_\_\_\_ She grew frustrated with others assuming she'd handle it, until everyone was surprised when she quit.
15. \_\_\_\_ Her clients were all in crisis, but she always treated them like everything was going to be alright.
16. \_\_\_\_ Then the thought occurred to him that he needn't carry the load; God was already doing so for him.
17. \_\_\_\_ She remembered over and over what Jesus told the woman, and as she did so, her depression eased.
18. \_\_\_\_ The youth had so little recognition from his family that he grew up sullen, hopeless, and withdrawn.
19. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer made a point of doing something extra for the kids every time that he served.
20. \_\_\_\_ Things hadn't let up for weeks, and so as the team tired, the leader made sure to pat each on the back.
21. \_\_\_\_ The parable began to speak to him in a way that he hadn't seen before, and as it did so, he perked up.
22. \_\_\_\_ The arrogant leader who was so quick to take credit soon found that he had few followers.
23. \_\_\_\_ No sense moaning, she thought, and so she put on her best face to greet every other loser with a smile.
24. \_\_\_\_ The spiritual song was familiar, but this time, it seemed to lift his spirit, just when he needed it most.
25. \_\_\_\_ *Team?* she thought. *Team?! This effort didn't involve a team!* she stewed. *The idea was all mine!*

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Encouragement

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You have worked a long time and closely with a business owner and manager whose strengths and weaknesses you know well. The owner knows and respects that you follow Christ, even though the owner does not, at least not explicitly. While the owner has always valued your work, the owner has not consulted you about the business's direction... until now. In a meeting that the owner made clear involved something unusual, something important and special, the owner told you what you already knew: the owner could not keep good help around, not trusted family members who might someday have taken over the business, not skilled professionals who needed the work, and not hard workers who although unskilled nonetheless knew what to do. The business had thrice the turnover in both labor and management that any ordinary business like this one would have had. The owner muses aloud to you that he knows he pays enough and that the work conditions are safe and clean. And yet, he gripes, he's seen employees leave to take less pay working for someone else, at dirtier and more-dangerous places. He finally asks you what his problem is and what he should do about it, specifically referring to your "solid Christian sensibility." You know the answer: more encouragement, more valuing of others, more respect. Trouble is, you know the owner's philosophy, one that he has professed often and loudly down through the years in pet sayings, always repeated with a growl: *Just do your job! Stop whining! I'm not going to thank someone who just did what they ought! Everyone wants a pat on the back! Let your paycheck be your pat on the back! Get back to work!*

*On what biblical principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's encouragement? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's encouragement? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, being like those who "received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11.*

# Patience

God is incredibly patient, as 2 Peter 3:9 states, because he does not desire to lose so few as one of us. As 1 Timothy 2:4 echoes, God wants all saved. Patience seems God's cardinal virtue because only his patience has given us, given you and me, salvation's chance. Imagine, if God were not patient, that we might lose sons and daughters, grandchildren, neighbors, and friends. We need God's patience to recognize, reach, and embrace God's grace. We also need God's patience to proclaim his word to the lost, to love others to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Love is not only kind but patient. It waits for truth to congeal into the substance that is faith within human souls. And so, God waits for us, even as he pursues us through his love.

God also expects us to be patient with others. Our patience with others shows God's love and grace. If we are not patient with those whom we believe should be different than they are, who should know and obey the truth, then we are not loving. Patience gives the explorer a chance and the reprobate a second and third chance. Patience is the handmaiden of discipline, and of trials and challenges and hardships. Patience is also a necessary ingredient to preaching, proclaiming, loving, and serving. Only with patience can those other things that God commands ripen into salvation, sanctification, and victory. See how the following exercises illustrate the value and role of patience.

# Remembering Patience

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 Corinthians 13:4

**Love is patient, love is kind.**

**It does not envy,**

**it does not boast,**

**it is not proud,**

**it is not rude,**

**it is not easily angered.**

# God's Patience

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, *slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness* and truth.’ Exodus 34:6.

\_\_\_\_\_ She could hardly count how many times she ignored her commitment to God but knew he still loved her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ At first, he tried to hide his awful act and then to explain it away, to justify it, knowing God condemned.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He expected the sky to fall, earth to shake, or some other cataclysm when he did it again, but nothing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ “You’d better be on your knees begging forgiveness,” the teacher scolded, “or God will strike you dead.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ She could barely lift her voice in prayer, knowing she had offended God, but all she sensed was grace.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “You who know, O Lord, remember me, take notice of me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors, but do not, *in view of your patience*, take me away.” Jeremiah 15:15.

\_\_\_\_\_ The nursing-home resident felt her faith growing daily, trusting that the Lord would give her more time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The single man, long a doubter, had slowly grown to believe that God hadn’t given up on him at all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew that he wasn’t good enough for God, whom he knew must have given up on him long ago.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had blown her only chance with God years ago when she left church and knew she couldn’t return.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *How often had he gone back with the same confession?* he thought, glad to know God was still there.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some count slowness, but is *patient toward you*, not wishing for any to perish but all to come to repentance.” 2 Peter 3:9.

\_\_\_\_\_ *What was left*, he thought, *but to die condemned?* No god could love him any longer, so he didn’t try.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She kept up her prayers even as her mother lay dying, knowing that God still beseeched her mother.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The mentor just took in stride the youth’s latest rebellion. God never gave up, and so wouldn’t he.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She just had always had this sense that God was waiting to catch her, point his finger at her, reject her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The empty bottle lay at his feet, condemning him again, but something told him God did not condemn.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “[Y]ou bore with them for many years, and admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear.” Nehemiah 9:30.

\_\_\_\_\_ *No use opening the scriptures this morning*, he moaned to himself after a night of reckless abandon.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Here he was again, back where he’d been so many times before, and yet all he felt was God’s love.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Through the fog of drugs and alcohol, he somehow still heard the Spirit’s gentle, longing voice.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She still heard God’s imploring voice, when she felt he should have given up on her a long time ago.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He opened the Bible once again, and though his guilt crushed him, the words still jumped off the page.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Patience with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “Be still before the Lord and ***wait patiently*** for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37:7.

\_\_\_\_\_ He knew the no-good his competitors were up to, but he trusted in the Lord’s will too much to worry.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *There they go again*, he thought as he watched the office politics unfold, *I might as well just quit*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Watching her co-worker take credit for her own work, she decided to stay silent while the Lord worked.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The boy grew bitter watching his playmates enter the flowerbed against his warning, having all the fun.  
\_\_\_\_\_ This time, he wasn’t going to let his antagonist rile him but instead watch for the Lord to handle it.  
\_ E \_

2. “***Whoever is patient has great understanding***, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.” Proverbs 14:29.

\_\_\_\_\_ How many times had she put up with her brother’s stupidity. Yet something still held her back gently.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teacher smiled as she explained the instructions yet again to the child who hadn’t been listening.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He jumped into the conversation, chopping with his hands and biting off his words to express his anger.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d not let them get away with this nonsense again, she thought, as she raised her voice to shouting.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor picked up the tools and walked them to the shed, giving a nod to the chagrined worker.  
\_ E \_

3. “Be joyful in hope, ***patient in affliction***, faithful in prayer.” Romans 12:12.

\_\_\_\_\_ The foster parents had never faced such issues, and so they figured they’d better cut and run.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Wow*, she thought, *he’s done it again*. Yet as many times as he’d stumbled, she just reached deeper in.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His vain and insolent co-worker made a point of mocking his faith, but he just smiled in silent prayer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The officer had worked too long and hard to take this guff from the brat whom he’d pulled over.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The car’s driver must have known that he had splashed mud on her new suit, but she just shrugged it off.  
\_ E \_

4. “Love is ***patient***, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud, it is not rude, it is not easily angered.” 1 Corinthians 13:4.

\_\_\_\_\_ He snapped back with profanity at her sarcasm, not noticing or caring how depressed she had become.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had such love for the rebellious little foster child she couldn’t imagine any response but to hug her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He looked with rising anger at the man’s fancy watch and fancier sports car, deciding not to pay the bill.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The coach wanted to yell at the aimless boy but instead waved, smiled, and pointed him toward the goal.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Smiling once again, the assistant told the physician for the third time that his patient was still waiting.  
\_ E \_

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Patience

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had gradually tired of her walks with her long-time friend in this season of her friend's severe discontent. Her friend had suffered setbacks that would have shaken and challenged anyone, for sure. And she had stood steadfastly with her friend for months, even years, during that hard season. She had listened patiently for walk after walk, up to an hour at a time of nothing but hearing of her friend's troubles, without so much as a moment's question or concern coming back. Her own life hadn't been a piece of cake, and yet she just listened and listened to her friend. Was she doing the right thing? Or maybe she was becoming an enabler and needed to set healthy boundaries, as she heard her non-Christian acquaintances, those who had dropped her troubled friend like a hot potato, often say.

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2. He wanted to shout into the telephone at the officious solicitor but instead said a gentle no-thank-you and goodbye. He wanted to blare his car horn at the pushy, obnoxious driver but instead just let him into the long traffic-jam line. He wanted to growl back at the fast-food worker who handed him the wrong order at the window but instead smiled while handing it gently back. He most wanted to shut the door on the political canvasser who assumed wrongly that he supported her oddball cause but instead showed polite concern as he listened to her crazy spiel and took her vague literature. Day after day seemed to go by with everyone but him exhibiting every entitlement, insensitivity, and rudeness, while he held his tongue and tried his best to just smile back. Was he missing something? Did he lack a backbone gene?

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3. They made a point to never complain about one another's foibles and idiosyncrasies, as maddening as they were to one another. They had learned early in their marriage that those things weren't likely to change. Complaints only made them harder, while bearing up made them endearing... or some of them, at least.

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# Example Principles of Patience

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She had gradually tired of her walks with her long-time friend in this season of her friend's severe discontent. Her friend had suffered setbacks that would have shaken and challenged nearly anyone, for sure. And she had stood steadfastly with her friend for months, even years, during that hard season. She had listened patiently for walk after walk, up to an hour at a time of nothing but hearing of her friend's troubles, without so much as a moment's question or concern coming back. Her own life hadn't been a piece of cake, and yet she just listened and listened to her friend. Was she doing the right thing? Or maybe she was becoming an enabler and needed to set healthy boundaries, as she heard her non-Christian acquaintances, those who had dropped her troubled friend like a hot potato, often say. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Ephesians 4:2: "Be completely humble and gentle; **be patient**, bearing with one another in love."* The principle is that we should bear up under the stresses that others bring to us, as we regard them in love.

2. He wanted to shout into the telephone at the officious solicitor but instead said a gentle no-thank-you and goodbye. He wanted to blare his car horn at the pushy, obnoxious driver but instead just let him into the long traffic-jam line. He wanted to growl back at the fast-food worker who handed him the wrong order at the window but instead smiled while handing it gently back. He most wanted to shut the door on the political canvasser who assumed wrongly that he supported her oddball cause but instead showed polite concern as he listened to her crazy spiel and took her vague literature. Day after day seemed to go by with everyone but him exhibiting every entitlement, insensitivity, and rudeness, while he held his tongue and tried his best to just smile back. Was he missing something? he sometimes wondered. Did he lack a backbone gene? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Thessalonians 5:14: "And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, **be patient with everyone**."* The principle is that patience is not just for some, perhaps for family members, friends, or others whom you favor, but for everyone.

3. They made a point to never complain about one another's foibles and idiosyncrasies, as maddening as they were to one another. They had learned early in their marriage that those things weren't likely to change. Complaints only made them harder, while bearing up made them endearing... or some of them, at least. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *James 5:8-9: "You too, **be patient** and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged."* The principle is that the Lord's soon return augurs patience for the shortcomings of others because we have our shortcomings, too.

# Evidence of Patience

Sort the examples of God's patience (G) from the examples of patience with others (O) or lack of patience (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ How long had he been in this wilderness, he wondered? And yet he felt no more distant from God.
2. \_\_\_\_ *Gosh, that felt good*, he thought, as he drove away from the window having given a piece of his mind.
3. \_\_\_\_ He just tried to keep an even keel as his feelings for her went from irritation to enthrallment and back.
4. \_\_\_\_ She rushed on ahead while others waited in line, and then at the last minute she cut rudely in.
5. \_\_\_\_ The babysitter hadn't dealt with such little brats in a long time, but she just resolved to be extra calm.
6. \_\_\_\_ All these years, and she felt no better, no less corrupt, than she used to feel, but God was just as close.
7. \_\_\_\_ She was her own cause of her demise, and yet she was surprised to hear Jesus's gentle voice still.
8. \_\_\_\_ The little sign on her desk with the big hand up and the word "NO!" perfectly expressed her attitude.
9. \_\_\_\_ He had no idea how to respond to yet another open insult other than to do as he had before: ignore it.
10. \_\_\_\_ The child was like few others in her ability to proceed with poise through situations that ruffled others.
11. \_\_\_\_ He hadn't realized that the custodian had just lost her mom, but she still deserved his stinging rebuke.
12. \_\_\_\_ She often wondered why God even put up with her at all, and yet he had blessed her repeatedly.
13. \_\_\_\_ Years at sea, speaking with God, taught him equanimity that he couldn't have imagined when young.
14. \_\_\_\_ She ended her angry email with a string of exclamation points, hit send, and slammed her laptop shut.
15. \_\_\_\_ The crew muffed the tack at the mark and then let the sails luff badly, but the yachtsman just laughed.
16. \_\_\_\_ He had never felt closer to God than when in prison, which he should have expected from Jesus.
17. \_\_\_\_ Years later, her ex-husband's words still echoed in her soul, that God was still with her just as him.
18. \_\_\_\_ She wasn't about to let her sister's rudeness pass unnoticed, so she let her have it right there.
19. \_\_\_\_ They all knew that they'd badly disappointed the professor, wondering how he'd react. He just smiled.
20. \_\_\_\_ The young cashier couldn't get the change straight, but the customer just kept returning the extra cash.
21. \_\_\_\_ He couldn't understand why he knew so little of the Bible, but from God he felt only enduring grace.
22. \_\_\_\_ You set the temperature you want, watch what television you want, everything! It's all about you!
23. \_\_\_\_ The other driver saw that she was about to back into the space, but she just shrugged and drove away.
24. \_\_\_\_ The disciples' response to the parable always made her marvel at how Jesus had put up with them.
25. \_\_\_\_ The business partners would just close the door and yell at one another for what seemed like hours.

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Patience

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You've heard it all before from your friend, although this time it sounds more serious than ever before. Your friend has long been a leader in a charitable organization the mission of which you know that your friend holds very dear. Nothing has changed in your friend's commitment to the organization's cause, a commitment that you respect if not also share. Yet for years now, your friend has expressed growing frustration with the organization's board and staff. To you, your friend's complaints sound like the sort of things that go on in every organization, with every board and staff. Nothing too serious. But your friend has gradually grown angrier about the little things about which he complains. You had noticed that his anger was no longer about the things, the events or actions, but now more about the people themselves. You know some of those people, and they are not bad people, although you understand your friend's complaints about the little things that can and do go on in any organization, within any group of people. Your friend, though, has lost that equanimity. Indeed, your friend seems to have lost all perspective. At the end of this worst rant, your friend finally turns to you for advice with a reference to your faith. Door's open. Any advice?

*On what biblical principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's patience? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's patience? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, being like those who "received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." Acts 17:11.*

# Perseverance

God perseveres with us. Not only is God patient with us, giving us time to come to our spiritual senses and embrace his glorious gift of himself through his Son, but God also continues to pursue us, admonish us, guide us, comfort us, provide for us, and do dozens of other necessary things to bring us to repentance. God does so in the face of our ignorance, rebelliousness, laziness, insolence, and other corruption, sheer backwardness that would make any lesser god utterly give up on his creation. God doesn't give up. He instead persists, continues in his steadfast love, and pushes forward through offense, insult, ingratitude, and further offense, as 2 Chronicles 36:15 states, out of compassion for his people. Through his perseverance, God turns our worst into his best, our disaster into his glory, our catastrophe into his victory. God does not quit. Only we quit, and even then, God pursues.

God expects us to do likewise, to persevere in faith, and not only toward him but with others. We must persevere in our families, persevere in our neighborhoods, persevere in our schools, and persevere in our workplaces. Most of all, we must persevere in our churches, in his faith, in the knowledge and embrace of God's Son Jesus Christ. God refines that faith through trials and challenges, the very things that make us want to relinquish faith, give up hope, and consider it all loss rather than knowing all things are gain. God commands perseverance, just as he perseveres with us. As Hebrews 12:1-3 urges, we look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, for that perseverance. When we have no strength, his strength is ours, as 2 Corinthians 12:9 states, made perfect in our weakness. See if the following exercises help you recognize how God persists and how we should also persist.

# Remembering Perseverance

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Romans 2:3-4

**We also glory in our sufferings,**

**because we know**

**that suffering**

**produces perseverance,**

**perseverance, character,**

**and character, hope.**

# God's Perseverance

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. "May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's *perseverance*." 2 Thessalonians 3:5.  
\_\_\_\_ Every Passion Week, she marveled at and drew strength from Jesus's resolute pursuit of her salvation.  
\_\_\_\_ She was pretty sure that if Jesus knew her at all, he'd not have gone to any great lengths to save her.  
\_\_\_\_ Only then, thinking of Christ praying in the garden, did he begin to realize what his own salvation took.  
\_\_\_\_ He'd heard of people feeling as if God pursued them, but he never felt as if God cared that much.  
\_\_\_\_ She most loved her Christ for doing everything for her, enduring, rather than demanding she do for him.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
2. "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; *his love endures forever*." 1 Chronicles 16:34.  
\_\_\_\_ The bedridden, terminally ill man suddenly realized Jesus's wonder and confessed, dying two days later.  
\_\_\_\_ She had learned not to worry whether her parents, spouse, children, or friends loved her. Jesus loved her.  
\_\_\_\_ She was sick of striving for love, of trying to make square corners out of everything and always failing.  
\_\_\_\_ He kept having the same nightmare that God had turned his back on him, indeed, that he was invisible.  
\_\_\_\_ Twenty years of reading God's word, when the truth finally struck him: God was never letting him go.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
3. "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion *endures* through all generations." Psalm 145:13.  
\_\_\_\_ The news convinced him: the world was going to hell in a handbasket and all was forever hopeless, lost.  
\_\_\_\_ Her faith throughout the ordeal had surprised her. She had known throughout that God was in control.  
\_\_\_\_ As good as things were going, he knew not to trust in worldly things. Better to dwell in God's kingdom.  
\_\_\_\_ She'd long ago lost her childhood confidence in God, now knowing all was doomed to destruction.  
\_\_\_\_ She looked in awe at her ancestors' names in her family's old Bible, seeing faith passed through them.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
4. "[F]or about forty years he *endured* their conduct in the wilderness." Acts 13:18.  
\_\_\_\_ He was sure that his getting fired was God's punishment for his dishonesty, that little slip he'd made.  
\_\_\_\_ Sitting in church years later, listening to the music and preaching, he marveled how God still promised.  
\_\_\_\_ *No use even trying to get right again*, she thought, as her conscience haunted her with her many lapses.  
\_\_\_\_ As he looked at his sleeping wife, he realized how God had pulled them through thick and thin together.  
\_\_\_\_ She'd heard the studies that the elderly don't come to Jesus, but after all her years, she'd done just that.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Persevering with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “[W]e also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces **perseverance**; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” Romans 2:3-4.

\_\_\_\_\_ She sure hadn’t expected her injury, but as she struggled mightily through it, she sensed a strange hope.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Now *this wasn’t part of the job*, the assistant moaned silently, deciding to turn in her resignation that day.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The parents felt all one would expect, seeing their son hospitalized, yet found strength they didn’t know.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d lost weight, feared, and aged through the divorce but somehow felt stronger rather than weaker.  
\_\_\_\_\_ They knew they might succumb but were determined to put on the best face, which in the end worked.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your **perseverance** and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.” 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

\_\_\_\_\_ The board met yet again over the advocacy group’s lawsuit against the church, finding a quiet resolve.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The ministry leaders each had to reduce their program plans but still knew that God was fully at work.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Members quit in droves, even though the dispute had nothing directly to do with the tenets of their faith.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The leader just wasn’t going to endure another insult from the volunteers and so resigned on the spot.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The skies opened and rain poured down on the campers, but they sang as they huddled in their tents.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “[Y]ou know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. **Let perseverance finish its work** so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” James 1:3-4.

\_\_\_\_\_ With her retirement date just around the corner, she decided to walk away rather than complete the year.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Odd as her attitude seemed, she welcomed the committee’s arrogant condemnation of her moral stance.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew that the proceedings were nearly over, and so rather than give up, he decided to see it through.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was sick of his roommate’s shenanigans and so moved in with a friend for the last week of the term.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She considered withdrawing her application, but something told her that win or lose, she’d best not quit.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “And let us **run with perseverance** the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.” Hebrews 12:1-2.

\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor remained unstable, unable to get a grip on things, despite his subordinate’s testimony.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew that her third year of college was going to be the hardest, but she was ready to knuckle down.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She finally grew sick of reading her self-help books, which didn’t seem to know or show her the way.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every time he looked at his situation, he felt precarious, but every time he looked to Jesus, he kept on.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She kept returning to that verse every time that she felt like she had no more to give, and it worked.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles of Perseverance

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She realized that ever since college, she had floundered, trying to find something solid on which to stand, something to help her press forward through the challenges of life. When she looked at her neighbor, ten years older than her, she saw her neighbor shrugging off one challenge after another, always moving forward as if she expected good in the end. She, on the contrary, didn't see any good coming in the end. And because she couldn't see any good, she really didn't have any reason to press on. Yet she'd heard her neighbor talk of the Bible. Maybe she'd go ask her neighbor what her neighbor meant.

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2. He had a way of proceeding through the hardest times, even when the hard times were many. For years, when others were giving up or only doing things half-way, he'd just put his head down and forge ahead. For a long time, he didn't fully understand why he was able to keep on during such discouragements, when more-talented, stronger, brighter others were giving up. But gradually, he came to see that while those more-talented others were relying on themselves, looking forward to their own unsure success, he was instead relying on something else, or maybe on *someone* else, as if his work was already complete, and he had only to press on for the reward. One thing was sure: he didn't feel strong or enduring but somehow just kept on, knowing that he'd find a very, very good end.

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3. Their labors had been long. They had begun as a small body, sometimes just a handful. While everyone else seemed to be pursuing fad after fad, they had instead decided to look back, way back, to an ancient path, to an ancient word. In that word, they had found guidance and wisdom, unlike the world's counsel, indeed often its opposite. Yet they had trusted that word more than they trusted the world. Initially, they'd had no evidence that what they were hearing and doing would lead to anything that they could see as good. Yet they kept digging deeper into that word to do just as it said. And after a long while, they could see the good that the word was producing drawing on their labors, on their faith. That good was not just a passing thing but something deeper, richer, everlasting. They could see it feeding not only themselves but generations, changing not only their growing body but the community in which it now flourished. Everywhere they turned, they now saw its glorious evidence.

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# Example Principles of Perseverance

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She realized that ever since college, she had floundered, trying to find something solid on which to stand, something to help her press forward through the challenges of life. When she looked at her neighbor, ten years older than her, she saw her neighbor shrugging off one challenge after another, always moving forward as if she expected good in the end. She, on the contrary, didn't see any good coming in the end. And because she couldn't see any good, she really didn't have any reason to press on. Yet she'd heard her neighbor talk of the Bible. Maybe she'd go ask her neighbor what her neighbor meant. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Romans 15:4: "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through **the endurance taught in the Scriptures** and the encouragement they provide we might have hope."* The principle is that God's word teaches endurance, which fosters hope. We endure because we read the Bible and learn the endurance that it advocates and fosters. The scenario invites an offer of that scripture and encouragement to endure for the hope it produces.
2. He had a way of proceeding through the hardest times, even when the hard times were many. For years, when others were giving up or only doing things half-way, he'd just put his head down and forge ahead. For a long time, he didn't fully understand why he was able to keep on during such discouragements, when more-talented, stronger, brighter others were giving up. But gradually, he came to see that while those more-talented others were relying on themselves, looking forward to their own unsure success, he was instead relying on something else, or maybe on someone else, as if his work was already complete, and he had only to press on for the reward. One was sure: he didn't feel strong or enduring but somehow just kept on, knowing that he'd find a very, very good end. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Philippians 3:13-14: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **I press on toward the goal** to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."* The principle is that the great heavenly goal to which we aspire gives us reason to forge ahead when worldly things do not give us such hope. So, we look forward, not backward, with our hope in Jesus.
3. Their labors had been long. They had begun as a small body, sometimes just a handful. While everyone else seemed to be pursuing fad after fad, they had instead decided to look back, way back, to an ancient path, to an ancient word. In that word, they had found guidance and wisdom, unlike the world's counsel, indeed often its opposite. Yet they had trusted that word more than they trusted the world. Initially, they'd had no evidence that what they were hearing and doing would lead to anything that they could see as good. Yet they kept digging deeper into that word to do just as it said. And after a long while, they could see the good that the word was producing drawing on their labors, on their faith. That good was not just a passing thing but something deeper, richer, everlasting. They could see it feeding not only themselves but generations, changing not only their growing body but the community in which it now flourished. Everywhere they turned, they now saw its glorious evidence. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Luke 8:15: "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and **by persevering produce a crop**."* The principle is that continuing in the word, under the Lord's command, will eventually produce the good things of God, if one pushes ahead.

# Evidence of Perseverance

Sort the examples of God's perseverance (G) from the examples of persevering with others (O) or lack of perseverance (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ The aging alcoholic had no idea why he could still feel God's love after so many failures, but he did.
2. \_\_\_\_ They'd married in the church a few years ago but weren't sure of the new pastor and so left.
3. \_\_\_\_ How many times had father or mother bailed out their profligate son? And yet they still loved him.
4. \_\_\_\_ The father was so proud of his older son's success that he never really tried with his younger son.
5. \_\_\_\_ Although his corruption hurt her deeply, she never wavered in standing behind him, pressing on.
6. \_\_\_\_ Every turn seemed to dig her deeper into her awful hole, and yet she found Jesus still speaking to her.
7. \_\_\_\_ As she looked back at her career, she saw that although she had ignored God, he had walked with her.
8. \_\_\_\_ He learned from his father to only watch out for himself and so quit at the employer's first challenge.
9. \_\_\_\_ He had witnessed a dozen times to his colleague, to no apparent avail, but cheerfully did it again.
10. \_\_\_\_ The homemaker didn't like her longtime neighbor's barbs, but she kept delivering meal after meal.
11. \_\_\_\_ Whenever he picked up the instrument, his frustration not making progress grew until he had enough.
12. \_\_\_\_ They sat by the fire reminiscing how through all their foolish immaturity, God had protected them.
13. \_\_\_\_ The teenager couldn't read at first-grade level, and yet the mentor kept helping her sound out words.
14. \_\_\_\_ She scrubbed it once, and it didn't look much better, so she just left it alone, looking ugly as ever.
15. \_\_\_\_ He knew that his employer probably didn't deserve his loyalty, but faith kept him diligently at work.
16. \_\_\_\_ Until then, imagining the torture, he hadn't thought of the resolve that Jesus showed to do as he did.
17. \_\_\_\_ The panorama of God's word from Genesis to Revelation struck her how God executed his grand plan.
18. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer wasn't going to take any fooling around and so kicked out the youth at the first chance.
19. \_\_\_\_ His acquaintance was painfully awkward, even uncouth, but he continued to show him every kindness.
20. \_\_\_\_ Another bucket of balls, and her student hadn't done better, but she just put another ball on the tee.
21. \_\_\_\_ Through her debilitating disease, she could see how close God had held her, ever guarding her faith.
22. \_\_\_\_ Her mother had incredible faith, but she just didn't feel it, and so she just didn't try. It was not for her.
23. \_\_\_\_ The young pastor's preaching had deepened, rewarding the elders' resolve to give him every chance.
24. \_\_\_\_ He'd been a rebel, a rascal, making most improbable that God would nonetheless call him.
25. \_\_\_\_ Her heart felt a little tug at the preacher's invitation, but she wasn't going to embarrass herself.

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Perseverance

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You have a friend who has long wrestled, and wrestled mightily, with a physical condition that seems years ago to have mostly resolved. Your friend, though, over the years developed compensating attitudes and behaviors that, while serving her well when her physical condition most disabled her, now seem to you to do the opposite, keeping her from enjoying her recovery and her increasing good health. You have been more patient than Job with her, listening to her concerns, watching her limit herself, while knowing what she readily admits: her physicians all say that she is physically fine. At this point, your friend's reluctance to press on, to embrace her restored life, is clearly the thing that most discourages your friend. You see her situation as one that, with some firm counsel, your friend just might significantly improve, and not only for herself but for her family and friends. You have also reached the point in your own feelings for your friend that you are not ready to go on listening to her complaints without sharing your own perspective. Yet, you are not sure that your friend is ready for your perspective because she hasn't asked.

*What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's persevering? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's persevering? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as John 8:32 states, if you hold to Jesus's teaching, "[t]hen you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

# Joy

Joy must be one of God's most-surprising attributes. Joy probably isn't the first characteristic about which people think when thinking of God—maybe awesome, fearsome, or loving, but not necessarily joyful. Yet God unquestionably delights in his people. Indeed, 2 Samuel 22:20 suggests that God rescues us because he delights in us. The Bible fills us with stories and verses of God's pleasure in those who seek him, know him, follow him, and revere him. The book Song of Songs leaves an unmistakable impression of the delight that God finds in our reverence of him. And as weighty as his mission was, Jesus seemed to delight in people far and wide, from the little children who flocked to him to the wee chief tax collector Zacchaeus. Why would God not delight in the pinnacle of his creation after his own image?

God also desires that we delight in him while sharing his delight in others. God wants us joyful, not sad, hopeful, not despairing. God did not sacrifice his Son to make us cringe in obedience but to give us the boundless hope of a paradise future. If one cannot take joy in the coming heaven, then what have we to celebrate? Joy is an essential attribute not only of our great God but also of our sanctified and resurrected life. Not a tear will fall in heaven, where all will instead be glorious joy. Joy may be a difficult concept for some committed followers of Christ, those who fast, pray, and study long hours to discern the deep things of God, but it shouldn't be so. The gospel is glad tidings, and the committed believer should be communicating that gladness. See if the following exercises help illustrate the nature of God's joy.

# Remembering Joy

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Galatians 5:22

**But the fruit of the Spirit**

**is love, joy,**

**peace, patience,**

**kindness, goodness,**

**faithfulness, gentleness,**

**and self-control.**

# God's Joy

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “He brought me out into a spacious place. He rescued me because he *delighted* in me.” 2 Samuel 22:20.  
\_\_\_\_ She expected at her confession to feel awe, fear, but instead felt nothing but God’s pure pleasure in her.  
\_\_\_\_ He knew that religion wasn’t for him because he didn’t need a God who hated and condemned him.  
\_\_\_\_ Until he started volunteering at church, he hadn’t fully realized how light-hearted salvation made him.  
\_\_\_\_ Although she’d never read the whole Bible, she imagined that God was indeed a fire-breathing deity.  
\_\_\_\_ The realization that God saved him because God took pleasure in him stunned him, cementing his faith.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Galatians 5:22.

\_\_\_\_ Every time that she turned her heart and mind to God, all she felt was his joy, his plain delight in her.  
\_\_\_\_ He laughed at the thought, but the song was true: whenever the Spirit moved him, he wanted to *dance*.  
\_\_\_\_ She didn’t believe in the spiritual, only the material, what she could see and hold, in her dejected state.  
\_\_\_\_ He believed that God loved him because he kept every command, and yet he felt nothing but weight.  
\_\_\_\_ She had never felt such a pure rush of shattering pleasure as when she received the Holy Spirit.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but *rejoicing comes in the morning*.” Psalm 30:5.

\_\_\_\_ That was it. It was all over. His conviction meant the end of everything that he’d ever wanted, hoped for.  
\_\_\_\_ True, he’d fallen fast and far, but having confessed, he now felt nothing but joy, as if walking in light.  
\_\_\_\_ They’d never been through anything so severe, and yet now that the ordeal was over, they felt lifted.  
\_\_\_\_ She knew that God’s anger would smolder against her for the rest of her life for what she had done.  
\_\_\_\_ Just then, when she thought she could bear no more, she heard a faint voice and saw a dawning light.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “These things I have spoken to you, that *my joy may be in you*, and that your joy may be complete.” John 15:11.

\_\_\_\_ He’d never understood the awful image of the cross, a man who claimed to be God, dead for all to see.  
\_\_\_\_ She had always had the sense that God’s love was joyful, not heavy. He made her want to sing and skip.  
\_\_\_\_ She’d never believed the resurrection and wasn’t going to start now, she muttered angrily to herself.  
\_\_\_\_ Everywhere he turned, he saw frustration and loss, except when he turned to Jesus, when he felt happy.  
\_\_\_\_ He’d found pleasure in many things, satisfaction in a few, but complete fulfillment only in Christ.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Sharing Joy with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “I ***delight greatly*** in the Lord; my soul ***rejoices*** in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness....” Isaiah 61:10.

\_\_\_\_\_ Her teacher’s bright smile always attracted her, even more so knowing its source in her Lord Jesus.  
\_\_\_\_\_ All she could think about was how she had ruined her reputation, something she’d never get back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His probation work was difficult and often sad but a ministry whenever he shared his joy in the Lord.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He felt nothing but embarrassment, indeed rank shame, whenever he thought of anyone thinking of him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although her history was like the other inmates, she no longer felt condemned, only glad and pure.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and all the work of your hands, and your ***joy will be complete***.” Deuteronomy 16:15.

\_\_\_\_\_ He felt like he had cast his bread on the waters, as God said to do, and that he now had a great harvest.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had never imagined receiving such an overwhelmingly positive response, answering every prayer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As beautiful as he found nature, the fishing guide always had a gnawing feeling all was temporary.  
\_\_\_\_\_ No matter what she seemed to try, to devote herself to, nothing ever worked, leaving her unsatisfied.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had persisted against all odds, just trusting God, and now she felt as if everything had come right.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “Then that person can pray to God and find favor with him, they will see God’s face and ***shout for joy***; he will restore them to full well-being.” Job 33:26.

\_\_\_\_\_ Nearing the end of his lonely life, he felt broken, wasted, empty, knowing that all was for naught.  
\_\_\_\_\_ In her dream, as Christ smiled at her, beckoning her on, she felt like she was about to burst into song.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Having stood firm, resolute in faith, she gradually felt God turning toward her, and her heart exulted.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The doctor’s news that her cancer was gone pleased her, but she was far happier just having trusted God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As he stood on the lakeshore, he reveled as he caught a vision of God, not in nature’s splendor, above it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the ***oil of joy***.” Hebrews 1:9.

\_\_\_\_\_ The practice always left him feeling dirty, sad, but hey, he figured, no one would ever know.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She was the only one to speak up, speak out, object to the lies. And now, God’s gladness flooded her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She always felt alone, condemned in her conscience, even though she was doing what everyone else did.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He alone had spoken up for the faith, when everyone else, all who now answered to him, had sneered.  
\_\_\_\_\_ While the others watched, pointed, and laughed, he turned away, praying God’s forgiveness for them all.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Joy

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had first lost her husband, as was hard though natural and foreseeable, but then, horrifically, lost her son. She missed them both so dearly that her heart ached with grief. Fortunately, they were a family of faith. She had the confidence of her departed loved ones' salvation, even though their loss still hurt. She wanted to be with them, them to be with her. Or maybe, just maybe, she wanted to be with Jesus. Yes, that was it. She missed her husband and son, but she knew that she'd rejoin them, which meant something far greater, to join Jesus.

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2. He had so badly wanted to marry but just hadn't found anyone who shared his love for the Lord and loved him, as he loved her. He prayed and prayed that the Lord would lead him to a godly wife and that he would be a godly husband. On a couple of occasions, he thought that the Lord had answered his prayer, but then, promptly, he learned that the Lord had indeed not. He had finally given up, resigning himself to a life alone. But then, on inspiration, he made one last earnest appeal to the Lord. And suddenly, he met her, and between them, they both knew that they had love at first sight.

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3. They had once been epicureans, chasing after every rich person's whim and pleasure. But then, they had together experienced a powerful movement of the Spirit at a revival that they had just happened on a lark to attend. The result was that they renounced their lavish eating and drinking to instead seek the Lord's heart. Their friends noticed the change and, rather than condemning them, applauded their choice. And to be sure, they found riches in Jesus that they had never experienced in their former life.

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# Example Principles of Joy

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She had first lost her husband, as was hard though natural and foreseeable, but then, horrifically, lost her son. She missed them both so dearly that her heart ached with grief. Fortunately, they were a family of faith. She had the confidence of her departed loved ones' salvation, even though their loss still hurt. She wanted to be with them, them to be with her. Or maybe, just maybe, she wanted to be with Jesus. Yes, that was it. She missed her husband and son, but she knew that she'd rejoin them, which meant something far greater, to join Jesus. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 16:22: "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and **no one will take away your joy.**"* The principle is that when we retain sight of Jesus during grief, we rejoice to the point that no one can take away our joy. Keep sight of Jesus, and you will keep hold of joy.
2. He had so badly wanted to marry but just hadn't found anyone who shared his love for the Lord and loved him, as he loved her. He prayed and prayed that the Lord would lead him to a godly wife and that he would be a godly husband. On a couple of occasions, he thought that the Lord had answered his prayer, but then, promptly, he learned that the Lord had indeed not. He had finally given up, resigning himself to a life alone. But then, on inspiration, he made one last earnest appeal to the Lord. And suddenly, he met her, and between them, they both knew that they had love at first sight. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Samuel 2:1: "Then Hannah prayed and said, '**My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high.**'"* The principle is that no matter what loss or deprivation we face, when we ask the Lord and he answers, he restores our joy.
3. They had once been Epicureans, chasing after every rich person's whim and pleasure. But then, they had together experienced a powerful movement of the Spirit at a revival that they had just happened on a lark to attend. The result was that they renounced their lavish eating and drinking to instead seek the Lord's heart. Their friends noticed the change and, rather than condemning them, applauded their choice. And to be sure, they found riches in Jesus that they had never experienced in their former life. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 14:17-18: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and **joy in the Holy Spirit**, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and receives human approval."* The principle is serving Christ and pleasing God brings a godly joy along with peace and a sound conscience.

# Evidence of Joy

Sort the examples of God's joy (G) from the examples of sharing joy with others (O) or lack of joy (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ The Spirit whispered to her, so richly that she could feel his delightful stroke, until her spirit exulted.
2. \_\_\_\_ He'd received another annual bonus, in fact, a bigger one than ever, but all he felt was sadness.
3. \_\_\_\_ They jumped up and down, hugged, high-fived, and laughed as the preacher praised their Lord Jesus.
4. \_\_\_\_ The baby gurgled happily in his lap, but instead of smiling back, he stared sadly out the window.
5. \_\_\_\_ Things had been way too hard. Yet every evening, they still found something about which to laugh.
6. \_\_\_\_ As he read and re-read the Psalms, his confidence grew in God's love, God's gladness, even his gaiety.
7. \_\_\_\_ Looking deep into her newborn son's eyes, she for a moment felt the rapturous gaze of God himself.
8. \_\_\_\_ To most, the service had been hearty, uplifting, warming, even joyful, but she just skulked sadly out.
9. \_\_\_\_ She looked at him, smiling rather than frowning, then laughing. He was confused but then laughed.
10. \_\_\_\_ They stood and cheered, then yelled praise, as their daughter crossed the stage, beaming at her parents.
11. \_\_\_\_ How long had it been since she had even smiled? She couldn't remember what being happy was like.
12. \_\_\_\_ Looking around the room, seeing the happy people of all classes, he felt Jesus celebrating with them.
13. \_\_\_\_ The world was so weary, she thought, and yet she didn't show that weariness at all, only joy in Jesus.
14. \_\_\_\_ Every little thing annoyed him, and he let everyone know, until he had no friends, no one willing.
15. \_\_\_\_ Day after day, he'd clap his co-workers on the back and cheer them up, as his Lord daily did for him.
16. \_\_\_\_ As the happy couple said their vows, the sun broke through, streaming God's gladness down on them.
17. \_\_\_\_ Her mommy and daddy in prison didn't care for her, but she felt God's delight in her prayers.
18. \_\_\_\_ Where was his help? Where was his hope? For what had he to live anymore? Nothing satisfied him.
19. \_\_\_\_ If possible, they'd tired of their own weariness, so that now, sharing their faith, they rejoiced.
20. \_\_\_\_ Success had once driven him, until he let it all go. Now, faith's joy propelled him just as far.
21. \_\_\_\_ He recalled the gospel event, the Father looking down on his Son, saying how pleased he was in him.
22. \_\_\_\_ No, she couldn't think of anything that would make her happy again. Impossible, she concluded.
23. \_\_\_\_ He didn't feel like smiling, but did, or laughing, but did. He knew heaven would have him smiling.
24. \_\_\_\_ His confession of Christ now complete, he somehow felt the Father laughing in celebration with him.
25. \_\_\_\_ His impression of faith, from afar, was that it was a joyless pit, even more joyless than he felt himself.

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Joy

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You've not been yourself lately, your happy-go-lucky self. Well, okay, you've never exactly been happy go lucky, but you've generally been upbeat ... until lately. Lately, though, you've been very, very down, maybe not exactly depressed, but just very, very negative. You've been negative about work, and church, and school, and even family. In fact, you've been negative about yourself, your future, your past, your present, your prospects, indeed about everything. Things haven't even been that bad, not much worse than usual, which means things have been quite good as these things generally go for other people. Others would call you blessed, not stressed. And yet others have noticed your negative spirit. You could trace it to a couple or few things, but you've dealt with things like those things before, without being so negative. You've had the sense for a little while that you'd better figure this negativity out. It's just not right, you've concluded. Yet even more recently, in fact just last night, you received a word you are sure was from the Lord. Now, what was it? What was it again? You struggle to bring it back to mind because it seemed like exactly what you needed to hear.

*On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's joy? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's joy? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses on which you would draw, to share, for as James 3:17 states, "**the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.**"*

# Hope

God is the eternal optimist. He sees the most-dynamic possible future for each of us and then sets most firmly to bring that future about. In offering us eternity in heaven, God stamps his character as one imbued throughout with the deepest, richest hope. Indeed, God not only hopes for a glorious future but also guarantees it, promises it, assures us of it like no one else can assure. God's covenant extends hope to each of us who accept the covenant, who enter the relationship with him that he makes the basis for all hope. To say that God is hopeful is thus a great understatement. He is hope's guarantor, even though he leaves devotion's choice up to us, at least from our limited perspective. God augurs hope, offers hope, and guarantees that hope is not just sensible but compelled by his character.

God thus expects us to fill ourselves with hope, too, which is to fill ourselves with devotion to him, or indeed to let his Spirit fill us. For in his Spirit we find the greatest hope, a hope that is so richly expansive that it appears to us more like exultation. God's hope is so great, so powerful, that it makes us shout for joy when we finally see and embrace it. We shout God's praises precisely because he offers us such great hope of glorifying him, even of sharing in his glory, in his paradise, his heaven. The world intimates hope but then crushes it. And so, we look away from the world to God and to his eternal reward in Jesus Christ, an eternity that is our hope and salvation. See if the following exercises illustrate and confirm your hope in its everyday context.

# Remembering Hope

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Psalm 43:5

**Put your hope in God,**

**for I will yet**

**praise him**

**my Savior**

**and my God.**

# God's Hope

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “We boast in the *hope of the glory of God*.” Romans 5:2.

\_\_\_\_ Every time she read Isaiah’s account of God’s train filling the temple, time seemed to stop for her.  
\_\_\_\_ He despaired whenever he thought of the faceless, formless God whom the media projected to him.  
\_\_\_\_ Neither wins nor losses mattered anymore as at the service’s height, the athlete beheld God’s glory.  
\_\_\_\_ Her bitter mother had taught her that religion crushed the human spirit. Without religion, she could soar.  
\_\_\_\_ She lived poorly in a hovel, yet every dawn brought to her a glimpse of God’s present and future glory.  
\_ E \_

2. “[Love] always protects, always trusts, always *hopes*, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:7.

\_\_\_\_ Somewhere deep in Christ’s intimacy she found his hope for her, a hope that she did not yet see or feel.  
\_\_\_\_ As he looked again at the solid balance in his checking, he realized that God had more hope than he did.  
\_\_\_\_ *You’ll never amount to anything*, father yelled at son, adding a profanity invoking God’s damnation.  
\_\_\_\_ Things had gone so well lately that her anxiety had increased because she knew that it couldn’t last.  
\_\_\_\_ She heard God has a plan for each, including her. She was glad he saw a plan because she sure didn’t.  
\_ E \_

3. “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, *in hope* that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay...” Romans 8:20-21.

\_\_\_\_ As he looked at the storm damage, he could think of nothing but an awful end to all humanity.  
\_\_\_\_ She marveled serenely at the new growth that had sprung up since the mountain’s cataclysmic blast.  
\_\_\_\_ Unlike many of his friends, he connected his environmental work with God’s plan to redeem all things.  
\_\_\_\_ News of new nuclear warheads in despotic regimes confirmed for him an apocalyptic end to all things.  
\_\_\_\_ She relished her role in clinical research, drawing on God’s desire to heal and resurrect living things.  
\_ E \_

4. “For *through the Spirit* we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which *we hope*.” Galatians 5:5.

\_\_\_\_ Looking at the calendar, he figured he’d skip today’s AA meeting because he wasn’t going to change.  
\_\_\_\_ No matter how often he fell and failed, he never lost God’s strong sense of desiring his righteousness.  
\_\_\_\_ She knew she’d never measure up to her sister’s godly standard, and so why bother even trying?  
\_\_\_\_ She saw in her husband’s recent confession of Christ the prospect for God’s amazing transformation.  
\_\_\_\_ They welcomed their son into their home to recover especially because he was striving in faith.  
\_ E \_

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Sharing Hope with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “Though he slay me, yet will I **hope in him**; I will surely defend my ways to his face.” Job 13:15.  
\_\_\_\_ His old friend kept chiding him to give up on his faith, for the little good it did him, but he refused.  
\_\_\_\_ She’d had just about enough of prayer, fasting, and Bible study, and so let her faith lapse for a while.  
\_\_\_\_ She knew what her school friends thought of her church involvement, but it still meant everything to her.  
\_\_\_\_ His firing was the last straw, not just for his career but for faith. If God wouldn’t provide, then he would.  
\_\_\_\_ He sensed strongly that God was letting every trial come to him, but he also knew he should welcome it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
2. “No one who **hopes in you** will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.” Psalm 25:3.  
\_\_\_\_ He’d stuck to his guns, or more truly his faith, throughout the ordeal, until things finally came right.  
\_\_\_\_ Every time she’d trusted institutions, she’d failed, but every time she’d trusted God, she’d succeeded.  
\_\_\_\_ He wasn’t going to rely on anyone or anything but himself, even though things kept going south.  
\_\_\_\_ *I’d give that up if I were you*, the supervisor counseled the subordinate about her faith, so she let go.  
\_\_\_\_ She’d been the only student to report the cheating all had known, and now she had her godly reward.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
3. “I will remember them, and my soul is downcast within me. Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have **hope**: because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.” Lamentations 3:20-22.  
\_\_\_\_ All he could see from this first big business loss was a never-ending spiral downward to utter defeat.  
\_\_\_\_ First, she lost her mother, and then her job, and yet she saw a glimmer of relief in every gospel song.  
\_\_\_\_ He’d never suffered disability before, now realizing how tough it was, but he clung to his faith in God.  
\_\_\_\_ All she could think about as she took two more pills was her deceased mother’s angry countenance.  
\_\_\_\_ She learned long ago that God would appear to relieve her suffering, as he had so many times before.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
4. “Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your **hope in God**, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.” Psalm 43:5.  
\_\_\_\_ To him, prayer just seemed depressing mumbo jumbo. He wanted to be a man of decisiveness, action.  
\_\_\_\_ She had completely tired of social media, games, drinking, everything, except she wanted more Bible.  
\_\_\_\_ He couldn’t explain his malaise, except he hadn’t really been in the word and holding to Jesus lately.  
\_\_\_\_ Friday nights at church, just recalling the love of Jesus, always picked her up, enough to keep on.  
\_\_\_\_ Her son, she feared, was lost, and yet that’s not what the parable told her, and so she kept praying.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Hope

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had hoped so long for her own shop that she'd nearly forgotten that it had been her dream since childhood. For a long time, her dream hadn't looked like it would come true. Those years were hard, when all she did was toil silently for others, deep in the shadows, frustrated, without getting to unleash the creativity and energy that God had given her to pursue her dream. But now that it was here, she felt boundless energy, along with a huge heart of gratitude toward God. Her shop would be a witness to him.

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2. Looking back, his life seemed a wasteland, leaving him with little hope. What more, or what else, could he possibly accomplish so late in life to leave a worthwhile legacy? All was ruin, everything in his life told him. All was lost. And yet, he'd recently attended church at the invitation of his neighbors. He didn't even know why they'd bothered troubling with an old man like him. But when he left church that morning, he had the strong sense that all wasn't lost, maybe instead that all was just beginning. He hadn't really thought of the gospel message before in that way, although of course, until recently, he hadn't been looking back over a wasted life.

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3. The disadvantaged youths whom he mentored were from such broken homes that the most-distinct thing about them was their lack of hope. Until he met them and began to get to know them, he had always associated youth with dreams, energy, ambitions. But these youths had none of those attributes of youth. They instead seemed weary, like old men and women, even though they were barely teens. Fortunately, he had something more, something better than youth to give them. He had the life and salvation of Jesus Christ. What a gift this ministry was to these youths, he thought, as he saw their curiosity awaken about the gospel message.

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# Example Principles of Hope

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She had hoped so long for her own shop that she'd nearly forgotten that it had been her dream since childhood. For a long time, her dream hadn't looked like it would come true. Those years were hard, when all she did was toil silently for others, deep in the shadows, frustrated, without getting to unleash the creativity and energy that God had given her to pursue her dream. But now that it was here, she felt boundless energy, along with a huge heart of gratitude toward God. Her shop would be a witness to him. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Proverbs 13:12: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." The principle is that hope feeds the heart, and hope realized becomes the stuff of life. Don't put off hope, and don't hope for things you know that you cannot obtain, because hope delayed and never satisfied frustrates life. Pursue attainable dreams that God puts on your heart.*

2. Looking back, his life seemed a wasteland, leaving him with little hope. What more, or what else, could he possibly accomplish so late in life to leave a worthwhile legacy? All was ruin, everything in his life told him. All was lost. And yet, he'd recently attended church at the invitation of his neighbors. He didn't even know why they'd bothered troubling with an old man like him. But when he left church that morning, he had the strong sense that all wasn't lost, maybe instead that all was just beginning. He hadn't really thought of the gospel message before in that way, although of course, until recently he hadn't been looking back over a wasted life. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Ecclesiastes 9:4: "Anyone among the living has **hope**--even a live dog is better off than a dead lion." The principle is that if we have life, we have reason to hope. Hope while you are alive because the dead have no hope. Accept Christ now, while you live and have the chance.*

3. The disadvantaged youths whom he mentored were from such broken homes that the most-distinct thing about them was their lack of hope. Until he met them and began to get to know them, he had always associated youth with dreams, energy, ambitions. But these youths had none of those attributes of youth. They instead seemed weary, like old men and women, even though they were barely teens. Fortunately, he had something more, something better than youth to give them. He had the life and salvation of Jesus Christ. What a gift this ministry was to these youths, he thought, as he saw their curiosity awaken about the gospel message. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Isaiah 40:30-31: "Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall, but those who **hope in the Lord** will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." The principle is that natural strength wears out, while spiritual strength grows and persists.*

# Evidence of Hope

Sort the examples of God's hope (G) from the examples of sharing hope with others (O) or lack of hope (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ As she talked of the very end of her life, coming so soon, the Spirit filled her with God's eternal glory.
2. \_\_\_\_ She hated her employment from the first day and sure couldn't see it getting any better.
3. \_\_\_\_ She picked up her bawling child and set her gently back on the bicycle, knowing she'd succeed.
4. \_\_\_\_ *Why practice?* he thought. The band leader wasn't going to give him a chance anyway, he was sure.
5. \_\_\_\_ The coach didn't mind that the girl had struck out again. All he wanted was that she would try again.
6. \_\_\_\_ As she looked at her infant whose father had abandoned her, she knew God's great hope for her.
7. \_\_\_\_ He'd never known such a one-sided, generous offer as God's eternity, not in all his years of dealing.
8. \_\_\_\_ She hit the snooze button again, knowing she'd be late for class, but what good was it, anyway?
9. \_\_\_\_ Her husband had failed before, and she knew that he would fail again. Yet she continued praising him.
10. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor waved her hand to stop the worker's excuse, then handed him the day's assignment.
11. \_\_\_\_ He took his last \$50 to buy poker chips. His finances were a wreck, so he may as well have some fun.
12. \_\_\_\_ She finally saw what God had done in resurrecting Jesus: he had defeated her one impossible enemy.
13. \_\_\_\_ The report card looked no better than the last one, but the mother gave her boy an encouraging hug.
14. \_\_\_\_ They couldn't seem to get a hold of their budget, so they quit trying, instead running up credit cards.
15. \_\_\_\_ She looked at the bathroom scale in resignation. Nothing had changed. Yet she wasn't giving up.
16. \_\_\_\_ As bad as he wanted his health back, he valued one thing more, which was God's eternal promise.
17. \_\_\_\_ God, she knew, hadn't given up on her, even though everyone else had long ago thrown her overboard.
18. \_\_\_\_ He knew ignoring his son's video gaming was wrong, but he'd never amount to anything anyway.
19. \_\_\_\_ How many times had he tried to quit smoking? Yet he remained determined to try until he had quit.
20. \_\_\_\_ The physician looked her patient in the eye, saying that she was sticking with him through this ordeal.
21. \_\_\_\_ His faith, though weak, wasn't what mattered. He knew instead that God's faith was what mattered.
22. \_\_\_\_ The neighborhood was such a mess that he decided to just let his neat little lawn go to weeds.
23. \_\_\_\_ The pastor wanted to tear into his congregation, to say how angry he was, but he just preached grace.
24. \_\_\_\_ No matter what he tried to discourage God, no matter where he went to hide, God remained at his side.
25. \_\_\_\_ She knew that she should speak up, help the committee reset a positive course, but what good was it?

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Hope

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You've been leading a planning group for a faith-based charitable organization. To you, the organization has great prospects and substantial resources for contributing to a great mission. Yet you sense that the members of your planning group, who include organization leaders, staff, and volunteers, don't necessarily share your optimism. At first, their pessimism took you aback. You had assumed that they were all as excited as you, especially because they share your faith. But gradually, you came to see that although they respected and valued the organization and knew that it had many resources, they didn't ascribe to a strong, positive worldview. Nothing was wrong with the organization. Rather, something was wrong with the members of your planning group. So, you decided to do some coaching along the way, to see if you could relight the fire beneath your group's worldview.

*On what Bible verses or principles would you draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's hope? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's hope? Above all, what would you want to result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, being like Ezra, who **"devoted himself to the study and observance of the law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel."** Ezra 7:10.*

# Truth

God is a truth teller. What that means may not be perfectly clear, until one considers Jesus, who is the incarnation and fullness of God. Jesus fully reflected God's truth-telling attribute, just as he perfectly reflected every other attribute of God. John 18:37-38 records Jesus telling Pilate that he came into the world to testify to the truth and that everyone on truth's side listens to Jesus. Moreover, John 14:6 records Jesus saying that he is the truth and the way and the life. Jesus is the truth because his embrace provides the way to eternal life in his Father. Jesus testified to the truth when he proclaimed his gospel. Jesus became the way when completing his work on the cross and his Father resurrected him. Yet Jesus spoke much more truth than the essential truth of the gospel. Jesus also gave dozens of commands including the greatest commandment to love God and its corollary to love neighbor.

God expects us to be truth tellers, too. God's word repeatedly condemns liars, especially those who cheat, defraud, and steal, to the offense of God and oppression of others. Truth telling begins with only stating things that accurately represent reality, fact. We should not exaggerate and embellish, nor mislead and conceal. Yet truth telling in the faith context includes sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. We are not telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth when we leave out the greatest truth, the one truth essential to everlasting life. To conceal in any relationship the way to eternal life is to mislead in the worst of ways. Truth telling, while sounding simple, can be harder to recognize and reflect in its many contexts. See if the following exercises help.

# Remembering Truth

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## John 14:6

**I am the way**

**and the truth**

**and the life.**

**No one comes to the Father**

**except through me.**

# God's Truth

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. "I, the Lord, ***speak the truth***; I declare what is right." Isaiah 45:19.

\_\_\_\_\_ No matter how often he read the Bible, he always found it revealing more of what he needed to know.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The philosophy text they all accepted as wise denounced the Christian faith as built on fables and lies.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The revelations she'd never known shocked her the first time she listened to the pastor with her friend.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Nothing but a bunch of contradictions*, the man said about Jesus to his breakfast friends, who all nodded.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The counselor was saying the opposite of what the Bible taught, and she sure knew which was true.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know ***him who is true***. And we are in ***him who is true*** by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the ***true God*** and eternal life." 1 John 5:20.

\_\_\_\_\_ All her studies, from science to philosophy to religion, proved that Jesus stood over all as the one God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He didn't understand theology but knew that he didn't need to understand. Jesus was enough, indeed all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She loved Eastern religions, their colors and charm, and Buddhism for helping her withdraw into herself.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Christ is a figment of the modern Western mind*, the commentator was saying to a cheering audience.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The fact of the resurrection changed everything for him, turning the world's offerings into nonsense.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. "Jesus answered, '***I am*** the way and ***the truth*** and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6.

\_\_\_\_\_ He'd heard televangelists preaching but just didn't get all the fuss and so figured it was all about money.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She'd tried to be good all her life, without much success, until she met the Lord, the author of all good.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Remarkably, he was beginning to think that his roommate was right that Jesus alone met every test.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She liked to read about Jesus, especially to read his parables, but she preferred Mohammed's strictness.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She kept falling into the same trap of believing the world's wisdom, but each time Jesus corrected her.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. "Yet I am writing you a new command; its ***truth is seen in him*** and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining." 1 John 2:8.

\_\_\_\_\_ His lifetime studies had done no more than weary him, making him an expert of everything and nothing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She loved her college courses because she kept seeing God sightings in them, even where others did not.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The scientist laughed at his friend's church attendance, joking that someday he'd see science's true light.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He realized later that coming to Christ was like opening the doors of a vast library he'd never known.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Nothing made sense to her, until suddenly, in the story and revelation of Christ, everything made sense.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Sharing Truth with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “These are the things you are to do: ***Speak the truth to each other***, and render true and sound judgment in your courts....” Zechariah 8:16.

\_\_\_\_ Although hard for both, the father set his teen daughter down for a heart to heart about her friendships.  
\_\_\_\_ *That’s good enough*, the tutor said to end the session, while knowing that the student would likely fail.  
\_\_\_\_ They loved sharing each evening insights into God’s word that each had discovered throughout the day.  
\_\_\_\_ *Oh, you’d be perfect!* she told her classmate, knowing the opposite, she’d certainly hate the hard role.  
\_\_\_\_ Neither side got all they’d asked because neither side deserved it. They each won some and lost some.  
\_ E \_

2. “***Buy the truth*** and do not sell it— wisdom, instruction, and insight as well.” Proverbs 23:23.

\_\_\_\_ While her roommate surfed social-media sites all night, she went to bed listening to favorite sermons.  
\_\_\_\_ He used to follow Twitter for whatever trended but had taken instead to reading Bible-study plans.  
\_\_\_\_ *What a waste*, he thought whenever he saw his wife reading the Bible, *she could be having fun*.  
\_\_\_\_ The professor had read everything, the latest, but had no clue when the student started quoting the Bible.  
\_\_\_\_ She kept a journal of everything that she learned from God’s word, including commentator insights.  
\_ E \_

3. “But whoever ***lives by the truth*** comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.” John 3:21.

\_\_\_\_ Her silent motto had been that *only losers get caught*, and so she took extra pains to avoid detection.  
\_\_\_\_ His accountant offered a tax savings that the accountant said *might be legal*, but he turned it down.  
\_\_\_\_ *No one will know*, her friend had said, but she shook her head and left the store without the merchandise.  
\_\_\_\_ His employer had no way of knowing whether he made the rounds or not, so he took a night off.  
\_\_\_\_ The cashier had given her an extra \$10 bill, and so she drove back around to the window to return it.  
\_ E \_

4. “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and ***in truth***.” John 4:24.

\_\_\_\_ She liked attending Christian concerts with her friends but had no real interest in the Bible or Jesus.  
\_\_\_\_ Although she loved them, the highlight of her week wasn’t worship songs. It was quiet time with Jesus.  
\_\_\_\_ His store carried anything spiritual, whether stones, minerals, incense, Zen texts, or Christian symbols.  
\_\_\_\_ Whether he raised his hands, bowed his head, or shouted didn’t matter, so long as Jesus had his heart.  
\_\_\_\_ The worship songs and prayers perfectly reflected the sermon, which itself was right out of the Bible.  
\_ E \_

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Truth

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had always done everything that anyone had asked. She had also followed every rule, welcomed every good cause, and met every expectation. She had devoted her whole life to doing right and being right, always polite, always appropriate, always diplomatic. On that basis, she had a certain measure of standing, a certain measure of success. Outwardly, just about anyone would have to say that she had lived a decent life. Yet inside, she felt empty, lost, even angry, bitter. She had few friends and fewer moments of contentment. And she had no idea how her life would end.

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2. The two preachers were like night and day in their personalities and approaches. One had the sonorous voice of a preacher and fully dressed the part, often in flowing robe. The other had an ordinary voice and ordinary clothes. The first preached using an intellectual's vocabulary laced with the latest popular expressions, all *narrative, conversation, and space*, while the other used ordinary words and phrases, even old fashioned. And the first loved the congregation's praises, while being quick to put in their place anyone who thought anything less. The other wanted only to step quickly from the pulpit with a clean conscience that he had preached nothing but Christ.

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3. Just about everyone with whom they spoke, everyone from whom they took counsel, were in agreement. They nearly all felt that the couple had only one thing to do, only one proper course. Yet the couple, while seeking and welcoming counsel, had a deeper commitment to honor, one between them and their holy God. And so, while they listened carefully to what everyone said, they also continued in prayer and reflection, studying God's word, discerning, watching and listening for the slightest movement. And when it came, and they agreed that they had discerned it properly, they did what no one had counseled and none had expected, though with it, they had the peace of God.

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# Example Principles of Truth

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She had always done everything that anyone had asked. She had also followed every rule, welcomed every good cause, and met every expectation. She had devoted her whole life to doing right and being right, always polite, always appropriate, always diplomatic. On that basis, she had a certain measure of standing, a certain measure of success. Outwardly, just about anyone would have to say that she had lived a decent life. Yet inside, she felt empty, lost, even angry, bitter. She had few friends and fewer moments of contentment. And she had no idea how her life would end. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 1:17: "For the law was given through Moses; grace and **truth came through Jesus Christ.**" The principle is that law-keeping, while fine, doesn't earn one heaven. In truth, eternity comes with embracing Jesus Christ.*

2. The two preachers were like night and day in their personalities and approaches. One had the sonorous voice of a preacher and fully dressed the part, often in flowing robe. The other had an ordinary voice and ordinary clothes. The first preached using an intellectual's vocabulary laced with the latest popular expressions, all *narrative, conversation, and space*, while the other used ordinary words and phrases, even old fashioned. And the first loved the congregation's praises, while being quick to put in their place anyone who thought anything less. The other wanted only to step quickly from the pulpit with a clean conscience that he had preached nothing but Christ. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 7:18: "Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a **man of truth**; there is nothing false about him." The principle is that entertaining the intellectual curiosity of others for one's own renown has nothing to do with the gospel. Proclaiming the gospel makes one a person of truth.*

3. Just about everyone with whom they spoke, everyone from whom they took counsel, were in agreement. They nearly all felt that the couple had only one thing to do, only one proper course. Yet the couple, while seeking and welcoming counsel, had a deeper commitment to honor, one between them and their holy God. And so, while they listened carefully to what everyone said, they also continued in prayer and reflection, studying God's word, discerning, watching and listening for the slightest movement. And when it came, and they agreed that they had discerned it properly, they did what no one had counseled and none had expected, though with it, they had the peace of God. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 14:16-17: "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the **Spirit of truth**. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." The principle is that followers of Christ live a spiritual life that God's own Spirit constantly informs, while worldly people reject spiritual things of God.*

# Evidence of Truth

Sort the examples of God's truth (G) from the examples of sharing truth with others (O) or lack of truth (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ Though angry at the lawlessness and powerless to stop it, he knew every knee would bow to Christ.
2. \_\_\_\_ He looked at the dusty old Bible on his shelf and decided to sell it in the garage sale or toss it out.
3. \_\_\_\_ As she hugged them, she always made a point of asking her grandchildren if they loved Jesus.
4. \_\_\_\_ She knew that the Bible had something to say to her, but she was too angry and ready for revenge.
5. \_\_\_\_ He spent many late nights discussing faith with his camping buddies, though he didn't know its effect.
6. \_\_\_\_ While the leader claimed a personal vision, the elders kept going back to God's word for guidance.
7. \_\_\_\_ She knew that she could trust the author, who drew repeatedly on the scripture exactly in its context.
8. \_\_\_\_ Her mother always quoted the Bible, the teenager thought in frustration, thinking *I'll decide for myself*.
9. \_\_\_\_ *I don't think that's what scripture says*, she gently told her friend who touted the latest self-help book.
10. \_\_\_\_ The father gently corrected his teenage son that Jesus wasn't punishing him. Sin has its consequences.
11. \_\_\_\_ The commentator criticized her gentle Christian guest as judgmental, exclusive, wrong, and bigoted.
12. \_\_\_\_ He read and reread everything that Jesus said about money because he knew his counsel was reliable.
13. \_\_\_\_ The pastor slowly opened the Bible as the member talked and then showed the member the verse.
14. \_\_\_\_ *Sure*, the friend replied, *do what you feel is best*, even while something told the friend to object.
15. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer leaned gently in and whispered a comforting verse to the stammering child, who smiled.
16. \_\_\_\_ The commentaries disagreed with one another, but the verse was crystal clear, so he stuck with that.
17. \_\_\_\_ Her training said it was impossible, but she nonetheless accepted the biblical account as the gospel.
18. \_\_\_\_ He knew that his employer was violating the safety regulation but figured it was no use speaking up.
19. \_\_\_\_ *That's not how God works*, the mentor gently reassured the angry student who had blamed God.
20. \_\_\_\_ The couple replied that they'd follow the biblical approach despite what their families were arguing.
21. \_\_\_\_ She replied to her friend that Jesus really did rise because he said he would, and scripture said he did.
22. \_\_\_\_ The bystander had seen it all, the whole accident, but didn't want to get involved and so walked away.
23. \_\_\_\_ The wife consoled her husband over the job loss while speaking verse after verse to encourage him.
24. \_\_\_\_ Despite what others said, he knew the crucifixion and resurrection meaning because the Bible said so.
25. \_\_\_\_ The customer had seen the man hiding the goods inside his coat and boots but denied it to police.

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Truth

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You are meeting with a college student whom you have been mentoring through an alumni program with the student's faith-based school. The student is in the mentoring program because of issues the student faced in the first term of freshman year, including low grades, excessive class absences, and dormitory violations. You know the student well enough from academic information, parent information, and advisor information that you are confident that the student has no health problems or mental, emotional, physical, or learning disabilities. Indeed, the student instead has every advantage of financial support, strong academic preparation, and a stable home with supportive parents. The student is also ambitious about a career in the student's chosen major field. The problem, you've reliably discerned, is spiritual. The student lacks a sense of accountability to our omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and loving God, and thus lacks accountability to the student's parents, college, classmates, and future spouse, and to the student. You know you'll have the student's attention for about ten minutes. Do you have anything to say?

*On what Bible verses or principles would your counsel draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show God's truth? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show God's truth? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, so that you, like the spies in Luke 20:21 admitted that Jesus taught, "teach the way of God **in accordance with the truth.**" Acts 17:11.*

# Mercy

God stamped himself as merciful when sending his Son Jesus Christ into the world to save it through him. God had no obligation to excuse human sin. He had, to the contrary, flooded the earth to rid it of sinful humanity but for the righteous Noah and his family. Yet God in that event promised to never again do so. And in so promising, God revealed his great mercy. To exhibit mercy means to forgo just punishment in favor of unearned forgiveness, out of compassion for mercy's subject. God fully revealed his merciful character when Jesus implemented God's long-held salvation plan, perfected in the Savior's resurrection. Mercy is God's heart for humankind because God is the supremely loving Supreme Being. The I Am of God embraces humankind compassionately, indeed intimately and passionately, as God's own image.

God thus expects us to be merciful, too. While God's grace is pure gift, unearned by humankind, God's mercy bears the condition that we also be merciful. As we judge others, so God judges us. If we forgo judgment in favor of its counterpart mercy toward our fellow humans, then God does not judge us, either, and instead shows like mercy. God's mercy, though, far exceeds our own, for God out of his mercy grants eternal life, when all that we can grant our fellow humans is brief toleration, perhaps some service, in the greatest of cases some sacrifice, for which God rewards. Mercy is an attribute to which all should aspire because we all have need of God's mercy. See if the following exercises help you see mercy, both God's and our own, in action.

# Remembering Mercy

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## James 2:12-13

**Judgment without mercy**

**will be shown to anyone**

**who has not**

**been merciful.**

**Mercy triumphs**

**over judgment.**

# God's Mercy

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “And the Lord said, ‘I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. ***I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy***, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’” Exodus 33:19.

\_\_\_\_\_ He would never understand why God had chosen to ignore his rank sin, but God clearly had done so.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her concept of God was a wholly rational being, dispensing punishment perfectly equal to the crime.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Only in her Savior did she find the absence of judgment, and more, the presence of complete acceptance.  
\_\_\_\_\_ God wasn't fair, he was sure, because the worst people seemed so often to do better than the best.  
\_\_\_\_\_ No, he had replied to his rude inquisitor, God is not judgmental, even when we are. Exhibit A: Jesus.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. “Then the Lord will turn from his fierce anger, will ***show you mercy***, and will have compassion on you.” Deuteronomy 13:17.

\_\_\_\_\_ The child knew that he had deeply offended God, and yet the child sensed that God's anger had passed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She accepted her awful addiction as her own responsibility, and yet from Jesus she felt nothing but love.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He imagined God in a continual rage at him, and he didn't even blame God for that rage. He deserved it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The neighbor said that the motor-vehicle accident must have been God's punishment for the wrongdoer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was stunned to learn from the words and actions of Jesus how willing God was to look the other way.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. “But in ***your great mercy*** you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and ***merciful God***.” Nehemiah 9:31.

\_\_\_\_\_ He didn't give a thought to confessing his crime to God, believing instead he was way past confession.  
\_\_\_\_\_ For the serious wrong they'd done, they should have been out of business, but somehow, they survived.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He expected the Bible to condemn him, which it justly could do, but he found forgiveness instead.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew only one thing to do, which was to run, hide, cover up, conceal. She'd never known mercy.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She felt as if she hadn't heard the message correctly. Could it be, she wondered, God was still with her?  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. “***His mercy extends to those who fear him***, from generation to generation.” Luke 1:50.

\_\_\_\_\_ His dad had been a deadbeat, a good-for-nothing, and so he figured God consigned him to be so, too.  
\_\_\_\_\_ God was an exquisite mystery to him, how God could at once be so holy while also so utterly forgiving.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The convention goers all agreed that evolution was taking humankind beyond antiquated religion.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Nowhere had she ever found someone like Jesus, so full of grace and acceptance, while so intimidating.  
\_\_\_\_\_ In her steep fall, she remembered with gratitude how her grandmother had prayed for her so earnestly.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Sharing Mercy with Others

Distinguish the verse examples (E) from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. “For ***I desire mercy***, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” Hosea 6:6.  
\_\_\_\_ The injured child’s parents were naturally angry but still spoke on the wrongdoer’s behalf at sentencing.  
\_\_\_\_ The usher scolded the children harshly for interrupting the solemn service with their impromptu song.  
\_\_\_\_ The teacher could have had the student expelled for striking her but sought the board’s leniency.  
\_\_\_\_ The camp leader made the miscreants run laps, then gave their awards to others before kicking them out.  
\_\_\_\_ When the shopkeeper learned who had painted the graffiti, the shopkeeper offered the vandal a job.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
  
2. ““Blessed are ***the merciful***, for they ***will be shown mercy***.”” Matthew 5:7.  
\_\_\_\_ The supervisor excused the over-sleeping worker’s absence, remembering his own need for an excuse.  
\_\_\_\_ She picked up the clothes ready to scold her daughter, but then stopped, thinking of her daughter’s grace.  
\_\_\_\_ The customer snapped at the mentally disabled bagger for putting cans on top of vegetables.  
\_\_\_\_ The busy barista glared at the fumbling patron who should have had her money ready standing in line.  
\_\_\_\_ He nearly yelled in the telephone at the call-taker’s stupidity but dismissed it, recalling his own fault.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
  
3. ““Shouldn’t you have had ***mercy on your fellow servant*** just as I had on you?”” Matthew 18:33.  
\_\_\_\_ *Which one of you numbskulls drank my pop?* the college student shouted, examining the empty fridge.  
\_\_\_\_ The worker picked up the co-worker’s tools to store, as the supervisor did for the worker the prior night.  
\_\_\_\_ The husband quietly picked up and hung his wife’s wet towel over the bar to dry, without complaint.  
\_\_\_\_ She was sure she’d been in line ahead of the large family when they arrived and sternly let them know.  
\_\_\_\_ Rather than get angry as her roommate would have, the tenant just made a note to buy more shampoo.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
  
4. “If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; ***if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully***.” Romans 12:6-8.  
\_\_\_\_ He’d once again forgotten to pick up milk on the way home, and so she stomped out, slamming the door.  
\_\_\_\_ *Looks like you’ve not had a ticket in years*, the officer had said when issuing the warning with a smile.  
\_\_\_\_ She hated that her dad always forgot her swim meets, *always, always, always*, she told him angrily.  
\_\_\_\_ *Hey*, the hall monitor had called to the running boys, giving them a smile and hug as they walked by.  
\_\_\_\_ It was the neighbor’s turn to mow their common side yard, but she cheerfully started up the mower.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles of Mercy

Identify a principle, with a verse if possible, from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She was so angry at her former college roommate that she could hardly see straight. She'd never been so embarrassed in her life. And now, they were about to see one another for the first time since then, at the alumni event. She knew exactly what she wanted to do, what she wanted to say, and what effect on her former roommate she wanted her actions to produce. Yet just before they greeted one another at the event, she caught what she later felt was a vision of her holy Father looking down on her, showing both a stern face and a forgiving face. Taking the cue, she gave her former roommate a smile and hug, astonishing her former roommate who had clearly expected something else.

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2. He knew that he had at first reacted badly to the called third strike. After all, it was the worst call he'd ever seen, and everyone, even on the other side, agreed. Yet right after the game, he sought out the umpire to apologize, even though he knew that the umpire should be apologizing to him. He just hadn't felt right about taking out his anger on the umpire, even though the critical bad call fully justified his anger. As he shook the umpire's hand and gave him a kind pat on the back, he could see the umpire's relief. He was surprised, though, when the umpire, rather than apologizing, mumbled something about having been distracted with the thought of his ailing wife. He quickly offered the umpire a prayer, which the umpire accepted.

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3. The couple knew that they were wrong but also knew that they couldn't do much about it by now. It was too late. The only thing left was the consequence of their wrongdoing, if any, not that they even knew what the consequence might be. Maybe nothing, maybe everything. That's how scary it was. They reflected together long and hard about it, going over and over what they might do. Finally, they decided to throw themselves on God's mercy, leaving it wholly in his hands, confessing completely their every wrong, ready to accept whatever he had for them. And when they were done, they knew that they had done the right thing, which was to account themselves first and foremost to God.

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# Example Principles of Mercy

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page:

1. She was so angry at her former college roommate that she could hardly see straight. She'd never been so embarrassed in her life. And now, they were about to see one another for the first time since then, at the alumni event. She knew exactly what she wanted to do, what she wanted to say, and what effect on her former roommate she wanted her actions to produce. Yet just before they greeted one another at the event, she caught what she later felt was a vision of her holy Father looking down on her, showing both a stern face and a forgiving face. Taking the cue, she gave her former roommate a smile and hug, astonishing her former roommate who had clearly expected something else. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Luke 6:36: "**Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**" The principle is that God's mercy toward us should spur us to be merciful toward others.*
2. He knew that he had at first reacted badly to the called third strike. After all, it was the worst call he'd ever seen, and everyone, even on the other side, agreed. Yet right after the game, he sought out the umpire to apologize, even though he knew that the umpire should be apologizing to him. He just hadn't felt right about taking out his anger on the umpire, even though the critical bad call fully justified his anger. As he shook the umpire's hand and gave him a kind pat on the back, he could see the umpire's relief. He was surprised, though, when the umpire, rather than apologizing, mumbled something about having been distracted with the thought of his ailing wife. He quickly offered the umpire a prayer, which the umpire accepted. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *James 2:12-13: "Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because **judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.**" The principle is that unless one shows mercy, God will judge the unmerciful.*
3. The couple knew that they were wrong but also knew that they couldn't do much about it by now. It was too late. The only thing left was the consequence of their wrongdoing, if any, not that they even knew what the consequence might be. Maybe nothing, maybe everything. That's how scary it was. They reflected together long and hard about it, going over and over what they might do. Finally, they decided to throw themselves on God's mercy, leaving it wholly in his hands, confessing completely their every wrong, ready to accept whatever he had for them. And when they were done, they knew that they had done the right thing, which was to account themselves first and foremost to God. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Samuel 24:14: "David said to Gad, 'I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, **for his mercy is great;** but do not let me fall into human hands.'*" *The principle is that God is more merciful than we are and so we should prefer his judgment over human judgments.*

# Evidence of Mercy

Sort the examples of God's mercy (G) from the examples of sharing mercy with others (O) or lack of mercy (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ He should have lost his job, his marriage, his home, his finances, everything. But here he was, intact.
2. \_\_\_\_ *If he isn't going to bring his hamper up, then he'll just wear dirty clothes*, the mom insisted to herself.
3. \_\_\_\_ The pastor loved his congregation, with all its faults, just as they loved him, with all his faults.
4. \_\_\_\_ The indigent customer still owed five dollars from last month's tab, so the grocer rudely cut him off.
5. \_\_\_\_ The bumbling teacher was amazed the students went on about their work as if nothing had happened.
6. \_\_\_\_ She hadn't just stumbled; she'd gone in for the full fall. And yet, somehow, life went on nearly normal.
7. \_\_\_\_ The physician said later that every patient with that diagnosis had died within a year. She lived on.
8. \_\_\_\_ The laborer and his kid hadn't gotten all leaves out of the window wells, and so she refused to pay.
9. \_\_\_\_ The candidate knew that the reporter could have ripped her reputation to shreds, justly, but hadn't.
10. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor shrugged at the broken equipment, just saying quietly to the worker to be more careful.
11. \_\_\_\_ The principal hadn't seen this student in the office before, and so he made sure that he wouldn't again.
12. \_\_\_\_ The motor-vehicle accident should have killed them all, but somehow, they were unscathed.
13. \_\_\_\_ The diner had yelled at the server who had just kept smiling back, suspecting the diner was ill or sad.
14. \_\_\_\_ The officer yelled at the youths and, when one didn't run, walked up and grabbed him by the neck.
15. \_\_\_\_ The editor patiently corrected the intern's spelling and grammar, handing back the marked-up copy.
16. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer patiently explained again to the prison inmate that Jesus offered salvation to *everyone*.
17. \_\_\_\_ The six choir members were the only ones to emerge from the collapsed building alive.
18. \_\_\_\_ The director stopped the orchestra, pointed at the substitute, and demanded she get off the stage.
19. \_\_\_\_ The neighbor apologized profusely for breaking the weed whacker, but its owner just waved it away.
20. \_\_\_\_ Everyone knew that the nervous speaker had misspoken badly, but they all clapped heartily anyway.
21. \_\_\_\_ She had been the only one of the hundred candidates without a perfect score, but the job was hers.
22. \_\_\_\_ The coach caught the heavy kid by the arm, jerked him over to the sideline, and yelled at him good.
23. \_\_\_\_ She could have laid on her horn like everyone else, but she just waved the line-jumper through.
24. \_\_\_\_ The seawall had collapsed everywhere except where the fortunate family had been standing.
25. \_\_\_\_ The students all jeered at the embarrassed substitute teacher whose glasses had fallen and cracked.

1G 2L 3O 4L 5O 6G 7G 8L 9O 10O 11L 12G 13O 14L 15O 16G 17G 18L 19O 20O 21G 22L 23O 24G 25L



# Counsel in Mercy

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow.*

You have been supervising a new young employee working on her first job. She clearly lacks basic employment skills, things as simple as showing up on time or, if absent, giving you the notice that any employer deserves. You sense, though, that she just hasn't learned those personal skills, not just because this job is her first job but also because she comes from a badly broken home where life skills may be poor or absent. You find her to have generally good demeanor and a real commitment to things, even if her follow-through is almost entirely lacking. You've seen small improvements, although clearly not enough. You are pretty sure that any other employer would have fired her weeks ago. You, though, have been hesitating. Recently, the employee did something that wasn't just incompetent but was instead misconduct. It didn't result in significant loss but could have done so. You must meet with the employee after deciding what to do, not only about her employment but about how to share with her what you are going to do, which you don't quite know yet. Your employer welcomes faith in the workplace. What is your course and counsel?

*On what Bible verses or principles would you draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to show Christ's mercy? And what would you not say, express, or do, again to show Christ's mercy? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, the ones involved, and our Lord? Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, because God has hidden his instructions "**from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.**" Matthew 11:25.*

# Part II

## Overcoming Fallenness

While the Bible reveals God's nature, plan, and attributes, to the extent that humankind can comprehend them, through the Bible God also reveals human fallenness, brokenness, and sin. The Bible describes many sins, none of which the follower of Christ desires, and all of which the Christ follower would like to be able to identify and avoid. This Part II chooses ten sins to study, recognize, confess, and avoid. Eschewing the sin that God condemns goes hand in hand with embracing God's righteousness. Practicing holiness implies or requires confessing and repenting of sin.

The first sin, pride, some say feeds all other sins, and so must begin our Part II study with that primary sin. A second sin, greed, accompanies pride closely, born from the same narcissistic womb. Hatred must join our study, for how often must we confront its awful seed? Fear and anxiety are more-subtle, twin sins worthy of study, to put them firmly behind us. Idolatry must take its place in our study, as an even-more-subtle and nefarious foe, one that God especially condemns in his Ten Commandments.

Satan, the Bible tells us repeatedly, is a deceiver, a liar and the father of lies, John 8:44 tells us, making deception a worthy study. We know, too, the peril of judging others, when in doing so we only bring judgment on ourselves, as Matthew 7:1 records Jesus warning us. So, make judgment a study to ensure that we know its insidious presence. Two lesser evils, contention and sensuality, round out ten sins. Study all ten of these sins in the following order or choose and study the most difficult for you. As you do so, let the Spirit convict you and help you confess and repent of sin. And prepare to help others do likewise.

# Pride

The common interpretation given to Ezekiel 11:17 is that pride is the sin from which Satan fell, making pride the father of all sin. Second Corinthians 11:14 tells us that Satan still masquerades as the angel of light, proud of his beauty, long after Jesus saw him fall from heaven like lightning, as Luke 10:18 records Jesus saying. Pride goes before destruction, Proverbs 16:18 confirms, a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 8:13 adds that wisdom hates pride and arrogance, linking it with evil behavior and perverse speech. Proverbs 21:4 equates a proud heart with the unplowed field of the wicked that produces sin. On the Bible's many condemnations of sin, Augustine, Aquinas, Chesterton, Lewis, and many others trace all sin to the foremost sin, the awful sin of pride.

Pride is indeed insidious. Cherishing an undeservedly high opinion of oneself causes all manner of other sin. The proud crave compliments, having made an idol of their own image. To serve their idol self, they are hypercritical of themselves and others. They hide their defects rather than confess and correct them, and they exalt their own place and person over the place and person of others. They may serve others frequently, although not to care for those others but for their own credit, thus making a show of what should have been humble service. They may be productive, effective, and efficient, although not from the heart but to elevate their reputation. Failing in recognition, the proud go from pleasingly passive to unhappily aggressive. Constantly comparing themselves to others, the proud are divisive, contentious.

God commands us not to be prideful. Avoiding pride at first seems simple, like holding the tongue from bragging and self-promotion. Yet God may well expect more from us than to hold the proud tongue and silence the self-serving mind, to quietly do the unnoticed work to which he calls us. Romans 12:10 says that we are to elevate and honor others above ourselves. Philippians 2:3 adds that we must do nothing to promote vain conceit but in humility value others above ourselves. God opposes the proud, James 4:6 warns us, while lifting the humble. Pride, though, is not always easy to avoid. Its presence can be subtle, hidden even within claims of great humility. See if the following exercises help you recognize pride and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Pride

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Philippians 2:3

**Do nothing**

**out of selfish ambition**

**or vain conceit.**

**Rather, in humility**

**value others above yourselves.**

# Recognizing Pride

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of pride from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Jeremiah 9:23-24: “Let not the wise ***boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches....***”

\_\_\_\_\_ *Just do what I do, and we'll be alright*, the co-worker said as they discussed avoiding meeting quota.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Let's get everyone's thoughts before deciding*, the chair told the committee members facing a big decision.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *You might not be up to it, but I can handle it*, the friend said of their planned hike up the steep mountain.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Be sure to rest when you can and watch out for others*, the guide said of their rafting adventure.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *We've got plenty of money to handle any problem coming our way*, the husband said to his wife.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Proverbs 26:12: “Do you see ***a person wise in their own eyes***? There is more hope for a fool than for them.”

\_\_\_\_\_ *I've totally got this covered*, the youth said when his friend suggested he listen to his mentor's advice.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Now just listen to me because I've been through this before*, the man told his committee members.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although she'd been through a similar mess before, something told her to get a sound friend's advice.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *You'd better see your advisor*, she told her student, *because I'm not trained at that level yet*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Let's just skip orientation*, she told her roommate, adding, *what are we, children? We know what to do!*

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Psalm 10:4: “***In his pride the wicked man does not seek him***. In all his thoughts there is no room for God.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She knelt again in prayer, trying to still her mind to hear the Spirit's nudging for an answer to her issue.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Hah!* he thought, watching families enter the church, *they have no idea of what's good for them*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her friend's Bible references always irked her, as if that dusty old book had any relevance for today.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He realized without regret that a long time had passed since opening his Bible, no less thinking of Jesus.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Something told him to see the pastor, but he figured he'd seen this one before and knew what to do.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Galatians 6:4: “Each one should test their own actions. Then, they can take pride in themselves, without ***comparing themselves to someone else***, for each one should carry their own load.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She put the glamor magazine aside, realizing that it was only encouraging her to feel bad about herself.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *She's nothing special*, the contestant thought, her mind continuing, *I've worked much harder than her*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teacher took care to share each evaluation only with the individual student, minimizing talk.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Why do I always do more than anyone else?* the employee grumbled to herself as she moved the chairs.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He loved circulating the firm's monthly list of hours billed, at which he invariably stood at the top.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Pride

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting pride from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. James 4:6: “But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: ‘God opposes the proud but ***shows favor to the humble.***’”

\_\_\_\_\_ He’d fallen a long way since his heyday on top, but somehow, he felt far more at peace, closer to God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She took a seat at the front, but the host asked her to move back to save the table for guests of honor.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She took her usual seat in the back, waiting happily as others pushed their way forward for recognition.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Speaking too soon of his own expertise, he hadn’t realized that they had brought in a specialist.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had an idea, but listening to others, he realized they had better ideas drawn from experience.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. James 4:10: “***Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ One more time back on her knees she went, begging God for relief, and suddenly her shame was over.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He felt a great burden lift when he admitted to his friends that he needed much more of God’s word.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew he didn’t deserve such shameful treatment, but the stronger he felt about it, the worse it got.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The chef had never been so humiliated in her life, despite her every protestation, leaving her floored.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She could feel her face redden as she lifted her hands in worship, but suddenly joy seized her.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility ***value others above yourselves,*** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She just did her own work rather than get involved helping others. She kept ahead of everyone that way.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He could have raised his hand to insist on getting proper credit, but he let it pass. She needed it more.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She gave the nicer coat to her sister, even though she’d gotten there first to pick out the best one.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She ordinarily would have helped prepare the meal and clean up, but *she* was household leader now.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He could either spend more time practicing or help the late members get set up. He chose the latter.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Proverbs 16:19: “Better to be ***lowly in spirit along with the oppressed*** than to share plunder with the proud.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He made sure to take a share, even though his contribution was only marginal. He still deserved it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He’d been feeling especially undeserving lately and so didn’t put his name in for any year-end award.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She insisted that her name appear on the letterhead along with the full members, for all she’d done.  
\_\_\_\_\_ They offered him honorary membership, but he felt better declining, especially when they shut down.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The club was just around the corner, and she could afford it, but she didn’t like its members-only policy.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles Against Pride

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She just didn't know what to say anymore when people congratulated her, told her how smart and skilled she was, and told her how successful she had become. She didn't feel right accepting credit for her success or attributing it to her skill. Yet she didn't want to ignore the compliments because doing so seemed rude. What, she wondered, would be most consistent with her deeply held faith?

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2. Gosh, he was good, and he seemed to increasingly know and enjoy it. He just had the Midas touch in his field, where everything in which he was involved, whether business or charitable, turned to pure gold. He was riding a winning streak that others could hardly believe. When they beheld it, they attributed it in large part to his unusual fitness for what he did, to his great skill. The rest they attributed to pure luck. He was fine with either attribution, just so they knew that he was good, darn good, better than anyone else.

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3. She had let her advisory board go a while ago, when she began feeling that they weren't seeing things with the fine discernment that she could see. She guessed that she was just better read, better prepared, and more experienced than they were. One thing was sure, and that was that she no longer needed them. Sure, a couple were retired pastors who had been around the block and who knew the Bible especially well. But she'd been to graduate school, earning a degree in public administration. What did they know about running a ministry that she didn't know better?

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4. He just couldn't seem to get the recognition, earn the credit that his hard and successful work deserved, and it made him angry. His anger kept him awake late into the night. His lack of recognition also made him worry over whether he might be in danger of being let go. He could feel things spiraling downward, making him unhappier than he'd ever been.

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# Example Principles Against Pride

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She just didn't know what to say anymore when people congratulated her, told her how smart and skilled she was, and told her how successful she had become. She didn't feel right accepting credit for her success or attributing it to her skill. Yet she didn't want to ignore the compliments because doing so seemed rude. What, she wondered, would be most consistent with her deeply held faith? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Galatians 6:14* says, **"May I never boast *except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*."** The principle is that not all boasting is out of bounds. God accepts boasting when done with clear conscience and done about things that he has done in and through us, in his Spirit's power. Paul reiterates in *Philippians 2:16* that when holding firmly to God's word, "I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain."
2. Gosh, he was good, and he seemed to increasingly know and enjoy it. He just had the Midas touch in his field, where everything in which he was involved, whether business or charitable, turned to pure gold. He was riding a winning streak that others could hardly believe. When they beheld it, they attributed in large part to his unusual fitness for what he did, to his great skill. The rest they attributed to pure luck. He was fine with either attribution, just so they knew that he was good, darn good, better than anyone else. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Corinthians 4:7* states, **"For *who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?* And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"** The principle is that we are no different from others in that anything good that we share is a gift from God, the power of the Spirit from Jesus Christ. We should give credit where due: God is the author of good works, prepared in advance for us to do, using the strong skills with which he richly blesses us.
3. She had let her advisory board go a while ago, when she began feeling that they weren't seeing things with the fine discernment that she could see. She guessed that she was just better read, better prepared, and more experienced than they were. One thing was sure, and that was that she no longer needed them. Sure, a couple were retired pastors who had been around the block and who knew the Bible especially well. But she'd been to graduate school, earning a degree in public administration. What did they know about running a ministry that she didn't know better? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Genesis 3:5* records Satan saying, **"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God, knowing good and evil*."** The principle is that we are obscenely prideful when thinking that we can judge good and evil with God's capacity. Instead, we must examine ourselves and do as God's word says.
4. He just couldn't seem to get the recognition, earn the credit that his hard and successful work deserved, and it made him angry. His anger kept him awake late into the night. His lack of recognition also made him worry over whether he might be in danger of being let go. He could feel things spiraling downward, making him unhappier than he'd ever been. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Philippians 4:4-7* says, **"*Do not be anxious about anything*, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."** The principle is that prideful entitlement, ingratitude, and seeking after approval and recognition only makes us unhappy and anxious. We should instead rely on God.



# Evidence of Pride

Sort the examples of pride (P) from the examples of humility (H):

1. \_\_\_\_ How could anyone, especially someone right out of the academy, challenge his evaluation, he thought.
2. \_\_\_\_ Although the recruit was just out of the academy, the captain realized that he might have a good idea.
3. \_\_\_\_ Just as he was about to take credit for the innovation, he remembered how much help he'd had.
4. \_\_\_\_ She loved the look of the gold-plated sign with her name on it above the door, right where it belonged.
5. \_\_\_\_ He could feel people looking at him, admiring him, in his fancy new car, and the feeling pleased him.
6. \_\_\_\_ Her Facebook posts were perfect, better than anyone else, and she looked at them often with pleasure.
7. \_\_\_\_ Why didn't he respect her, she wondered in anger? He didn't know how good he had it with her.
8. \_\_\_\_ He hardly noticed anymore when he exaggerated his numbers. Everyone did. It made him look good.
9. \_\_\_\_ Wait. Had she just inflated her unit's earnings? The thought nagged her until she corrected them.
10. \_\_\_\_ The mentor was about to tell her all he'd done, but a voice in his head said to just listen instead.
11. \_\_\_\_ The mentor wanted their relationship to get off on the right note, so he brought along his portfolio.
12. \_\_\_\_ The mother looked at her accomplished son, thinking how hard she'd worked to make him all he is.
13. \_\_\_\_ Winning the award, he felt like he'd finally got the recognition that he had long earned and deserved.
14. \_\_\_\_ Winning the award, he felt nothing but gratitude for his parents, his coaches, and his one great God.
15. \_\_\_\_ She smirked as her teammate gave the credit for their win to God. What about all their training?
16. \_\_\_\_ Her heart swelled with gratitude for Jesus as she pointed skyward, clasped her hands, and prayed.
17. \_\_\_\_ He kept a journal of each new achievement and shared it widely, propelling him to work even harder.
18. \_\_\_\_ With each new achievement, he would fall to his knees, joyously giving God the credit for their work.
19. \_\_\_\_ The missionary kept a close count of to how many he had witnessed, for his promotional letters.
20. \_\_\_\_ The missionary hewed quietly to the work, letting the Spirit lead, silently cherishing each of his works.
21. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer silently rejoiced that the leader had mistakenly left his name out of the newsletter.
22. \_\_\_\_ The moment he noticed his name's omission, the volunteer sent a chiding email asking for correction.
23. \_\_\_\_ In his story about their work, the leader omitted mention of his substantial role, crediting volunteers.
24. \_\_\_\_ The leader made sure that the story about their work began with a recounting of his founding role.
25. \_\_\_\_ The youth loved the captain's C on his jersey and leading the team onto the field, until they lost.

1P 2H 3H 4P 5P 6H 7H 8P 9H 10H 11P 12P 13P 14H 15P 16H 17P 18H 19P 20H 21H 22P 23H 24P 25P

# Counsel Against Pride

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against pride? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

You have gradually noticed ever greater signs of pride in yourself. The Spirit seems to convict you a little more each day that pride is among your problems, perhaps your primary problem. You find yourself exaggerating things in your own favor, when speaking about your experience and accomplishments. You realize that you quickly become angry, taking exaggerated offense, at any challenge or slight to your character or commitments. You also find yourself seeking acknowledgment. You frequently do things just to hear your name mentioned positively and to get credit for those things. Indeed, you prioritize your tasks and opportunities not based on what the Lord desires but on what would bring you the most notice, the greatest credit. You begin to realize, too, that you don't just want others to think highly of you but to think *more* highly of you than others. You rankle when others get attention, whether you deserve equal or greater attention or not. You look back at your life and see how you have done small and large things to achieve and then get public credit for your achievements. Your ambition outweighs the quality of your relationships. You have no doubt: pride fills and drives you. So, what now are you going to say or do?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for: "we have examined this, and it is true. So hear it and apply it to yourself." Job 5:27.*

# Greed

Jesus is as clear in his condemnation of greed as anyone would need. Luke 12:13-15 records Jesus saying to guard against all kinds of greed because life is not in gathering abundant possessions. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus told the fearsome account of the rich man luxuriating in his comforts until condemned to hell at his death, where he asked Abraham in heaven to send to him for comfort the beggar Lazarus who had lain outside his gates. In Luke 12:16-21, he told the parable of the rich man who prepared to build bigger barns to store his abundance, upon which God that very night demanded his life. In Luke 6:24-26, Jesus pronounced woes on the rich who have already received their comfort and the satiated fat who must later go hungry.

Greed is indeed evil. The Bible reserves some of its harshest judgment for those whom greed drives to hoard wealth. James 5:5 warns that the rich who hoard wealth should cry because of their coming misery, adding that the corrosion of their wealth will eat their own flesh as it testifies against them. The same passage warns that cheating others to live in luxurious self-indulgence just fattens the rich for slaughter, when the cries of the workers whom they cheated reach the almighty Lord's ears. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 6:9 that harmful desires for riches just tempt and trap the greedy, plunging them into ruin and destruction.

God commands us not to be greedy. Avoiding greed at first seems as simple as quieting the mind of covetous desires. Hebrews 13:5 tells us to simply let what we have be enough because God never leaves or forsakes us. Yet 1 Corinthians 5:10 warns that we must inevitably associate with greedy people, who fill the world. Temptation to greed is everywhere in our ghastly materialistic world. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus gives us the solution: to store our treasure in heaven rather than on earth because where we put our treasure, our heart inevitably follows. One could take a lifetime, though, learning what it means to store treasure in heaven. See if the following exercises help you recognize greed and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Greed

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Luke 12:15

**Be on your guard**

**against all kinds of greed;**

**life does not consist**

**in an abundance**

**of possessions.**

# Recognizing Greed

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of greed from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Luke 11:39: “Now then, *you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed* and wickedness.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He tried to make a point of letting others know when he made a special offering, but in fact it was rare.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She quietly slipped the envelope stuffed with her cash into the offering plate, hoping no one noticed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her business displayed all manner of charity acknowledgments even as she inflated bills for profit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although he gave generously, he preferred giving online for its anonymity, wanting only God to know.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Advertisers touted the insurer’s foundation gifts, but those gifts were tiny next to the advertising budget.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Habakkuk 2:5: “[*H*he is as greedy as the grave and like death is never satisfied....”

\_\_\_\_\_ He rejoiced his bonus this year had been bigger than ever because next year’s should be even bigger.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d had a great year but went over her client accounts again, seeing if she could squeeze any more.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Wow, he thought. He’d never imagined business could be so good. Thank God, thank God, thank God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sure, her income had fallen off with the economy this year, but she was still so grateful for everything.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her raise had exceeded everyone else’s raise, but she demanded a meeting with her supervisor anyway.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. 1 Thessalonians 2:5: “You know we never used flattery, nor did we *put on a mask to cover up greed*—God is our witness.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She had no problem speaking with her employer about her worth, though she felt more-than-fairly paid.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every evening he closed his office door so his family wouldn’t see him looking through his investments.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She hid the things that she most coveted in the back of her drawer so her sisters wouldn’t see them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He liked gold jewelry and didn’t mind showing it, although he knew it was just a silly fad, a thing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He forced a smile handing out the year-end cash gifts, grumbling to himself they didn’t deserve them.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 2 Peter 2:14: “With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; *they are experts in greed*—an accursed brood!”

\_\_\_\_\_ Although her elderly client was always suspicious of her, she had no interest in or skill at stealing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ With years of practice, he knew how to adjust upward the bills so that customers never caught him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The other boys seemed to know how not to get caught shoplifting, but he never even tried.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d studied her employer’s security measures until she found a way to sneak cash from the drawer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her clients loved her design work, and so she had no conscience in secretly marking up their wares.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Rejecting Greed

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting greed from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Colossians 3:5: “***Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:*** sexual immorality, impurity, lust, ***evil desires and greed***, which is idolatry.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He knew he tended to dwell on his growing net worth, and so he forced himself to check only quarterly.

\_\_\_\_\_ She knew that she shouldn't be indulging in her doll collection, but she excused it as harmless fun.

\_\_\_\_\_ He soon discovered his weakness for shiny new cars, and so he intentionally bought a used vehicle.

\_\_\_\_\_ He easily rationalized his roving eye for photos of women on the internet as victimless recreation.

\_\_\_\_\_ When her coach called out her obsession over her appearance, she promptly put the glamor mags away.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Ephesians 5:3: “But ***among you there must not be even a hint*** of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of ***greed***, because these are improper for God's holy people.”

\_\_\_\_\_ The moment his conscience caught him taking two desserts, he put not just one but both desserts back.

\_\_\_\_\_ The couple looked at their income versus giving. Sensing a giving shortfall, they quickly made it up.

\_\_\_\_\_ Sensing they'd not given as much this year as they should have, they figured to make it up next year.

\_\_\_\_\_ They knew they could afford a new car with leather seats and so bought it, though not really into it.

\_\_\_\_\_ They knew they could afford the new car with leather seats, but neither really wanted anything fancy.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility ***value others above yourselves***, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others.”

\_\_\_\_\_ The father wanted that promotion, so he decided not to coach his kid's team so he could take it instead.

\_\_\_\_\_ The father could have taken the extra work for a promotion but decided to coach his kid's team instead.

\_\_\_\_\_ She'd been wanting that new job for years, but when it came, she turned it down to help her parents.

\_\_\_\_\_ When her boss offered her the position, she accepted on the spot, hoping her old folks could manage.

\_\_\_\_\_ His back hurt, but his elderly neighbor needed the yard help, and so he took a painkiller and went at it.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 1 Corinthians 5:11: “But now I am writing to you that ***you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is*** sexually immoral or ***greedy***, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He didn't mind that the new owner raised prices and cut services, figuring a bigger bonus at year end.

\_\_\_\_\_ He liked his work, but when the new owner jacked up prices and cut services, he looked for another job.

\_\_\_\_\_ She so enjoyed shopping with her new friend that she didn't mind running up her credit card a good bit.

\_\_\_\_\_ She enjoyed shopping with her friend, but when she realized she was overspending, she stopped going.

\_\_\_\_\_ To him, the lavish parties made no sense at all for the charity, and so he quietly resigned from its board.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3E NENE 4E NENE

# Principles Against Greed

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. He sensed that he had a choice to make: continue to attend the men's Bible study, continue to secure his walk with Jesus and grow in his faith, or on the other hand to pursue the time-consuming hobbies and rich collections that had formerly consumed his attention, resources, and time. Was God calling him out of something in which he should not be involved so deeply? What was the harm in hobbies, even if they consumed money and time? Clearly, he had some choice to make. Only what was the basis, the grounds, for that choice?

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2. She couldn't explain why she had this unending craving. She didn't even truly like the things that she craved, whether binge-watching streamed shows, or stuffing herself with sweets, or the other, darker things she didn't want her family and friends to know. Was she that corrupted? What was the source of these awful, insatiable desires?

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3. She liked her new church but had a nagging feeling that something wasn't right. The pastors, from the senior pastor on down, all had these remarkable spiritual stories, the likes of which she hadn't heard before. They seemed to walk in a different world inhabited by constant miracles of God, whom they represented as showering unasked blessings on them simply because they had discovered hidden truths. Their testimonies obviously thrilled the members, who showered the church's leadership with gifts. What was she sensing?

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4. He looked out across his congregation, wondering how much or little it had changed in his two years at the church. He had taken the pastorate believing that God's word could soften their hearts, as the elders who hired him had admitted their members needed. Whether their love for Christ had just grown cold, or something deeper was at work, he couldn't quite claim. What he saw, though, was that they were rich in the world's ways, not so much in God's ways. What was going on?

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# Example Principles Against Greed

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. He sensed that he had a choice to make: continue to attend the men's Bible study, continue to secure his walk with Jesus and grow in his faith, or on the other hand to pursue the time-consuming hobbies and rich collections that had formerly consumed his attention, resources, and time. Was God calling him out of something in which he should not be involved so deeply? What was the harm in hobbies, even if they consumed money and time? Clearly, he had some choice to make. Only what was the basis, the grounds, for that choice? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Ephesians 5:5 says, "For of this you can be sure: **No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.**" The principle is that greed prevents our entry into God's kingdom, our adoption as his children. To confess Christ and come under his lordship, we must forgo our own interests, relinquishing greed. God then blesses us back with his own riches, far greater than those we might claim on our own.*
2. She couldn't explain why she had this unending craving. She didn't even truly like the things that she craved, whether binge-watching streamed shows, or stuffing herself with sweets, or the other, darker things she didn't want her family and friends to know. Was she that corrupted? What was the source of these awful, insatiable desires? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *1 John 2:16 states, "For **everything in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--comes not from the Father but from the world.**" The principle is that lusting after things, which is the essence of greed, is a product of a godless world, of godless living. The more one receives the Father's Spirit, the less one lusts after material things of this world.*
3. She liked her new church but had a nagging feeling that something wasn't right. The pastors, from the senior pastor on down, all had these remarkable spiritual stories, the likes of which she hadn't heard before. They seemed to walk in a different world inhabited by constant miracles of God, whom they represented as showering unasked blessings on them simply because they had discovered hidden truths. Their testimonies obviously thrilled the members, who showered the church's leadership with gifts. What, though, was she sensing? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *2 Peter 2:3 states, "**In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.**" The principle is to guard against teachers who make up stories apart from the Bible, contradicting Bible truths for their own gain.*
4. He looked out across his congregation, wondering how much or little it had changed in his two years at the church. He had taken the pastorate believing that God's word could soften their hearts, as the elders who hired him had admitted their members needed. Whether their love for Christ had just grown cold, or something deeper was at work, he couldn't quite claim. What he saw, though, was that they were rich in the world's ways, not so much in God's ways. What was going on? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Ezekiel 33:31 says, "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to hear your words, but they do not put them into practice. **Their mouths speak of love, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.**" The principle is that some teachers will distort the gospel for their own gain. Be on your guard against them. Stick to the truth.*



# Evidence of Greed

Sort the examples of soul-destroying greed (G) from the examples of spiritually healthy selflessness (S):

1. \_\_\_\_ He didn't like having his friends over to his house, where they drank his beer. Better their house.
2. \_\_\_\_ He loved entertaining friends and always made sure to have extra refreshments for them.
3. \_\_\_\_ Each year he gave a little less to the child he'd been supporting, hoping he'd soon fall off their list.
4. \_\_\_\_ She always let her mother in law buy her boy his Christmas gifts so she had more fun money to spend.
5. \_\_\_\_ Her mother in law insisted on buying her boy a nice Christmas gift, but she still got her boy the best.
6. \_\_\_\_ The boy noticed how his dad always took the best seat and food, and so he made sure to take, too.
7. \_\_\_\_ The boy noticed how hard his mother worked to make everyone feel cared for, and so he did, too.
8. \_\_\_\_ He could have cut off the other vehicle but slowed to be sure its driver could make it safely into line.
9. \_\_\_\_ She gave her accelerator a shove, lurching her car forward just in time to keep the other from merging.
10. \_\_\_\_ The office manager didn't like coffee, but she made a point of fixing it early each morning for others.
11. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer always showed up a half hour early to help the staff member get ready for the event.
12. \_\_\_\_ The staff member always gave the volunteers the left-over food, when she could have kept it herself.
13. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer made a point of showing up late for each event to be sure not to have to set things up.
14. \_\_\_\_ The diner left a ten-percent tip after the lavish meal, figuring the meal's high cost justified a low tip.
15. \_\_\_\_ The server enjoyed making her customers feel special, even though few could afford to tip her.
16. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor made sure to close his office door so that the workers couldn't see him put his feet up.
17. \_\_\_\_ When the supervisor closed his office door, the workers would point it out and take a good long break.
18. \_\_\_\_ One worker kept at work while the others took an extra-long break, figuring he worked for the Lord.
19. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor felt the employer was a little cheap at year end and so bought his workers gift cards.
20. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor divided the bonus funds up among his workers, giving himself the biggest reward.
21. \_\_\_\_ The owner closed for the week between Christmas and New Year's to be sure his employees rested.
22. \_\_\_\_ The husband took the better steak cut for himself and gave the fatty cuts to his wife and kids.
23. \_\_\_\_ She made sure her husband had the biggest slice of pie, twice as big as hers and bigger than the kids.
24. \_\_\_\_ The boy always made his bed in the morning because he saw how hard his mother worked.
25. \_\_\_\_ The girl tossed her clothes on the floor despite her mother's many entreaties, figuring she'd go play.

1G 2S 3G 4G 5S 6G 7S 8S 9G 10S 11S 12S 13G 14G 15S 16G 17G 18S 19S 20G 21S 22G 23S 24S 25G

# Counsel Against Greed

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against greed? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

You have long been a member of a board over a well-respected corporation. Not too long ago, though, the board membership changed, and with the change came a change in corporate culture. You sensed it immediately, although the change took some time to manifest itself in the corporation's practices. Management began to let go long-term employees who had built the corporation. The corporation raised prices for its goods and services, even as it farmed out functions to cheap overseas providers, and shipped the work itself overseas, too, for cheaper labor prices. Profits skyrocketed, pleasing the corporation's major shareholders, even as employee and management morale plummeted. You've even fielded complaints from employee acquaintances that although flush with cash, the corporation is cutting employee benefits and stiffing long-time suppliers. Yes, the corporation's stock is higher than ever, but you sense nothing but pain and alarm everywhere, other than the board room. Have you anything to say or do?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as Deuteronomy 17:4 says, when a serious matter **"has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly,"** and take appropriate action if it is true.*

# Hatred

God is love. He doesn't like hatred. Proverbs 26:24 gives an important clue why hatred is so evil, saying that whoever hates disguises the heart, blessing with the lips while harboring wickedness in the heart. God sees the heart. No one fools God. He knows the two faced. People chased after his Son in public ministry, but as John 7:7 records Jesus saying, people hated him for testifying that the world's works are evil. First John 3:13 cautions followers of Jesus not to be surprised that the world will hate them, too.

Hatred is indeed corrupting and destructive, and not just with our relationships with others but also with our relationship to God. As 1 John 4:20 says, anyone who hates a brother, hating the seen, cannot love God, the unseen. Leviticus 19:17 explains: when you hate a brother in your heart, you stand ready to incur sin. Hate breeds sin. Hate produces the opposite of the goods that love produces, as 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 tells us. Love makes patience and kindness, while hate breeds envy, pride, arrogance, and rudeness. Love rejoices at truth, while hate celebrates wrongdoing, insisting on its own irritable and resentful way. We must accept God and no other as our master, for as Matthew 6:24 records Jesus saying, no one serves two masters without hating one or the other.

So, God commands us not to be hateful. Avoiding hate at first seems simple, like not seething against one's family and friends. Who would, at least for long? Yet God expects more, much more. Matthew 5:44 records Jesus saying not to hate but to love your enemies. Loving enemies is a much taller order than loving friends. Matthew 5:21 records Jesus equating judgment for anger toward a brother or sister with judgment for murder. First John 3:15 confirms that to hate a brother is to murder, and no murderer has eternal life within. Hatred is not just intense but subtle, insidious like other sins. It lurks in anger toward a family member, not just rage against enemies. See if the following exercises help you recognize hatred and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Hatred

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Luke 6:27

**Love your enemies,**

**do good**

**to those**

**who hate you.**

# Recognizing Hatred

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of hatred from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Proverbs 10:12 says: “***Hatred stirs up conflict***, but love covers over all wrongs.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She joined her group of friends, eager to share the latest fashion gaffe she’d seen the new girl commit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She joined her friends, eager to tell them how much she enjoyed the new girl’s laughter and company.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Good*, he thought when his co-worker arrived late again, *more ammunition to share with the boss*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teacher pulled aside the rough little kid yet again, gently coaching him to be kinder to others.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He liked all the other neighborhood kids except one whose attitude ground him. He’d show him.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Psalm 109:3 prophesied: “***With words of hatred they surround me; they attack me without cause.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ Her Christian neighbors were kind and generous to her, but she loved running them down to her friends.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The radio host held his greatest scorn for religion, the minions who followed it, and their mythic figures.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The professor, though not a so-called believer, made sure to show respect for students who showed faith.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The shopkeeper wasn’t interested in the religious tract, but he encouraged the youths to warm up inside.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The leaders of the student group railed against the campus Christian group that had helped the charity.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Psalm 109:5 recounts: “They repay me evil for good, and ***hatred for my friendship.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ She looked at her faithful neighbor’s dish she’d just emptied, thinking how she could fill it to send back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Another casserole*, she grumbled over her Christian neighbor’s latest help. *Like I can’t care for myself?!*  
\_\_\_\_\_ He wished his faith-filled co-worker would leave him alone rather than always taking interest in him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His faithful co-worker’s consistent kindness and interest so impressed him that he began reciprocating.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The protesters shouted obscenities as the Christians gathered at the pole to pray for the campus.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Proverbs 10:6 states: “Whoever ***conceals hatred with lying lips*** and spreads slander is a fool.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He didn’t appreciate his co-worker’s insults, and he said so, but he didn’t hold it against her at all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Oh, I like her just fine*, the worker said unconvincingly about the newbie, *just not her weird beliefs*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She liked her new neighbor except for his vehicle’s loud exhaust, which she politely asked him to quiet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He gave his boss the report in which he’d been sure to compliment the vendor before trashing her work.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *I liked the new pastor’s sermon*, she told her neighbor weakly, *except I couldn’t understand most of it*.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Hatred

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting hatred from the non-examples (N) where hatred persists, before writing examples of your own:

1. Proverbs 15:17: “Better ***a small serving of vegetables with love*** than a fattened calf with hatred.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He liked the little diner where everyone knew one another, although the other place had better food.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The new place’s food was exquisite, but the owner and staff seemed arrogant, even condescending.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She liked visiting the nursing home where her grandmother doted on her, even if the place was creepy.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The new manager gave him a promotion and new office but treated him like dirt, not like his old boss.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He preferred hanging out with the *unpopular* kids. They at least all accepted one another.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Psalm 69:14: “***Rescue me from the mire, do not let me sink; deliver me*** from those who hate me, from the deep waters.”

\_\_\_\_\_ *Don’t worry*, his supervisor was saying, *I’ll correct the false report. You’ve always done your job here.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ The greeter took the worried guest to the church’s financial advisor to sign up for the budget training.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *That’s your problem*, the counselor told the student, adding, *We’re not your mommy and daddy here.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *I’m busy right now, son*, he told his boy, adding, *I’m sure you and that bully will work things out.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ The care director nodded in approval, saying, *We’ll get a check right over for her back rent.*

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Mark 13:13: ““Everyone will hate you because of me, but ***the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ When the others all quit the confession-of-faith process, he went along with them as his friends.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was the only one to complete the faith commitment, while the others laughed at him as foolish.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her friends joined the tennis team instead of continuing their Bible study, which they now mocked.  
\_\_\_\_\_ At first, she hadn’t liked the way they talked down about faith in Jesus, but now she pretty much agreed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His colleagues befriended him at first, but discovering his faith, they just smiled at him condescendingly.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Luke 6:27: “***Love your enemies***, do good to those who hate you.”

\_\_\_\_\_ *I’ll show him*, she thought. *He thinks he can just offend me. Well, he’s got plenty that I can offend, too.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her angry public outburst had hurt him deeply, but he made a point of washing her car anyway.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was tired of taking his neighbor’s guff at every opportunity and so resolved to give it back double.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His neighbor ridiculed his politics and beliefs at every chance, but he just kept mowing her lawn kindly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His boss had cut his pay and taken credit for his own work, but he just worked all the harder, as for God.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles Against Hatred

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. He was surprised that the company thought so much of him to make such a generous offer. He could see that the company didn't treat its employees well at all. They all hated working there. He'd once have never thought of working there. But the company's offer was substantial. It went against everything in which he believed, but he had to give it serious consideration.

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2. He was so angry with the other managers, those who had completed the challenging project on their own, that he drew special pleasure from attacking them in his memos and emails. They should have included him and relied on him. He'd have done the project quicker and better. They deserved every bit of his anger for ignoring his greater expertise. They'd sure pay.

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3. She suspected that her boss preferred spending time and lavishing good projects on her newer co-worker. In fact, she knew so. Things had changed when her co-worker had joined the firm. She'd once been her boss's favorite, but now the new co-worker was reaping her former rewards. She could feel her anger smolder toward the new co-worker. Couldn't her co-worker see how the change was affecting her?

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4. He hadn't gone to church with his family for weeks, indeed months, maybe even years, now that he thought about it. At first, he just felt he needed rest, a break. Gradually, though, he realized that his attitude was changing. He really didn't even respect his family for going. Who was this invisible God, anyway, and what had God ever done for him? He didn't like that God seemed to expect things from him, when he just wanted to be himself. Wasn't that good enough? He was beginning to really dislike this demanding, strange God, if he even existed.

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# Example Principles Against Hatred

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. He was surprised that the company thought so much of him to make such a generous offer. He could see that the company didn't treat its employees well at all. They all hated working there. He'd once have never thought of working there. But the company's offer was substantial. It went against everything in which he believed, but he had to give it serious consideration. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Samuel 13:15 recounts, "Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, **he hated her more than he had loved her.** Amnon said to her, 'Get up and get out!'" The principle is that loving on the wrong basis can rebound to hate. Better to do the right thing always, rather than take undue advantage, expecting love.*
2. He was so angry with the other managers, those who had completed the challenging project on their own, that he drew special pleasure from attacking them in his memos and emails. They should have included him and relied on him. He'd have done the project quicker and better. They deserved every bit of his anger for ignoring his greater expertise. They'd sure pay. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *In Ezekiel 35:11, the Sovereign Lord warns, "**I will treat you in accordance with the anger and jealousy you showed in your hatred of them** and I will make myself known among them when I judge you."* The principle is that when one treats others with hatred, God may treat the hater the same way, defending those whom the hater oppresses.
3. She suspected that her boss preferred spending time and lavishing good projects on her newer co-worker. In fact, she knew so. Things had changed when her co-worker had joined the firm. She'd once been her boss's favorite, but now the new co-worker was reaping her former rewards. She could feel her anger smolder toward the new co-worker. Couldn't her co-worker see how the change was affecting her? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Recounting Joseph, Genesis 37:4 states, "When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, **they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him.**"* The principle is that jealousy over favoritism leads to hatred and mistreatment. Better not to be jealous. Better not even to go there.
4. He hadn't gone to church with his family for weeks, indeed months, maybe even years, now that he thought about it. At first, he just felt he needed rest, a break. Gradually, though, he realized that his attitude was changing. He really didn't even respect his family for going. Who was this invisible God, anyway, and what had God ever done for him? He didn't like that God seemed to expect things from him, when he just wanted to be himself. Wasn't that good enough? He was beginning to really dislike this demanding, strange God, if he even existed. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Deuteronomy 7:10 warns, "**But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.**"* The principle is that one pays when rejecting and hating God. No gain accrues from rejecting our Savior.



# Evidence of Hatred

Sort the examples of hatred (H) from the examples of its opposite love (L):

1. \_\_\_\_ She always got up from whatever she was doing to greet her husband at the door when he got home.
2. \_\_\_\_ He avoided his wife whenever he got home from work so he didn't have to see her silly smiling face.
3. \_\_\_\_ The cook glared at the laughing servers. Didn't they know how hot the kitchen was that afternoon?
4. \_\_\_\_ The server wasn't busy, so she prepped the other servers' plates and brought ice water to the hot cook.
5. \_\_\_\_ Her favorite part of the service was the songs, when she could just feel close to her glorious Jesus.
6. \_\_\_\_ He wished the services were shorter so that he could get back to his den to watch the football shows.
7. \_\_\_\_ He always took the parking spot closest to the door, getting there early just to be sure no one else did.
8. \_\_\_\_ Her husband always took her coat, always opened the door for her, and always carried in the groceries.
9. \_\_\_\_ He figured that she could take care of herself. After all, no one was taking care of him in any manner.
10. \_\_\_\_ She made sure that their supervisor knew that her co-worker had come in late for the umpteenth time.
11. \_\_\_\_ Her co-worker was late yet again, but she got the equipment started for her. Her co-worker had kids.
12. \_\_\_\_ Her little guy was a handful, but she knew that if she was just patient with him, he'd grow out of it.
13. \_\_\_\_ He knew his mother was stressed about money, so he made sure to make his bed and hang his clothes.
14. \_\_\_\_ She couldn't understand why her folks worried about money, so she made sure to let them know.
15. \_\_\_\_ He could see that his wife was tired, so he made sure to mow the lawn and take out the garbage.
16. \_\_\_\_ He was tired of always mowing and taking out the garbage. It was her turn, he figured, so he left it.
17. \_\_\_\_ Even though he was tired, he insisted on giving his wife her nightly neck rub. She was tired, too.
18. \_\_\_\_ He yelled at his coach to get off his back. He was better than anyone else. Coach should just shut up.
19. \_\_\_\_ She could tell the teller had a long day, so she made sure to have her papers ready and to smile at her.
20. \_\_\_\_ Why couldn't these tellers get a life? Why were they so surly? He'd be sure to grumble right back.
21. \_\_\_\_ He slammed the tools to the ground, storming off, disgusted that the subcontractor had done it again.
22. \_\_\_\_ He'd have to fix the subcontractor's work, but he knew he was just a kid still getting a handle on it.
23. \_\_\_\_ She called the company after the youth left, to yell at the manager for hiring such a worthless dolt.
24. \_\_\_\_ She called the company after the youth left, patiently explaining to the manager the youth's errors.
25. \_\_\_\_ He didn't feel up to it, but when his daughter asked, he immediately said yes, knowing she needed it.

1L 2H 3H 4L 5L 6H 7H 8L 9H 10H 11L 12L 13L 14H 15L 16H 17L 18H 19L 20H 21H 22L 23H 24L 25L

# Counsel Against Hatred

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against hatred? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

She had a deep and longstanding problem with her husband's family, so much so that she really didn't like them anymore, if she ever did. They never seemed fair to her, never seemed to respect and appreciate her the way that she deserved. She was not only a pretty-special person but also a pretty-special wife for all that she did for her husband. His family should know and appreciate that fact, but it clearly didn't. They ignored her birthday, ignored her elaborate preparations when they visited, and ignored how well she cared for her children. They didn't share her faith or her politics, and they took every opportunity to let her know about it. Why should she show them any favor? Why should she lift as much as her little finger for them, when they mistreated her so badly? She was of a mind to call each of them up, one at a time, to tell them how badly they had behaved toward her. Either that, or she was just going to cut them off. Yes, that was better. She'd no longer have anything to do with them. All they did was make her miserable. She wondered what her best friend would say, what advice she would have for her. She needed advice right now, that's for sure. She'd had it.

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as Ecclesiastes 7:25 says: **"I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly."***

# Anxiety

In the anxious world in which we live, many find it strange to call anxiety a sin. We are instead to show sympathy for the anxious, who after all are only a victim of their difficult circumstances. Anxiety is a symptom of disease and culture, not something one controls. Yet God's word shows that anxiety is sometimes a consequence of things we do control, indeed of sin, whether our own sin or the sin of others who afflict us. Ezekiel 12:19 links anxiety to the violence of those who suffer it. Ecclesiastes 2:22 links anxiety to senseless striving, Psalm 139:23 to uncontrolled thoughts. And God's word also indicates that we can address anxiety as something within our control. Philippians 4:6 commands us not to be anxious but to just ask God for our needs.

Anxiety, we know, is indeed perilous. The anxious court other physical and mental diseases, weakening the heart and resolve. Anxiety, when nurtured and practiced, is the opposite of faith. Faith, Hebrews 11:1 tells us, is confidence in things for which we hope, assurance about what we do not see. Anxiety lacks confidence in things for which we hope and rejects assurance about what we do not see. Anxiety rolls off the faithful like rain off a duck, while soaking the faithless to their core. Anxiety steals glory from God, treating him as stingy and powerless.

God wisely commands us to cast off anxiety, as 1 Peter 5:7 instructs. Matthew 6:25 records Jesus telling us not to worry about our life, about what we will eat, drink, or wear. God cares for the birds who do not sow or reap and whom God values far less than he values us. Wouldn't he care far more for us whom he made in his own image and so greatly values? Worry, Jesus tells us in the same passage, cannot add so little as one hour to a life. As Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs, trust in the Lord and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths. See if the following exercises help you recognize anxiety and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Anxiety

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Philippians 4:6

**Do not be anxious about anything**

**but in every situation**

**by prayer and petition,**

**with thanksgiving,**

**present your requests to God.**

# Recognizing Anxiety

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of anxiety from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Ecclesiastes 2:22: “What do people get for all the toil and *anxious striving with which they labor under the sun?*”

\_\_\_\_\_ If he could just get one more account finished before the end of the year. He sighed and rubbed his eyes.  
\_\_\_\_\_ That last account would have to wait until early next year. Time to celebrate Christmas with the family!  
\_\_\_\_\_ She got the mop out to do the floors again right after finishing them. Why couldn't they just stay clean?  
\_\_\_\_\_ The lawn looked a little shaggy, but she wanted to be fresh for her company, so she let it go.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His lawn had to be perfect, the very best on the block at least, or he was going to be very grumpy.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Psalm 139:23: “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know *my anxious thoughts.*”

\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn't let it go but kept turning it over in his mind throughout the night. Why? Why did he do it?  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wondered what he would do next to turn her world upside down. Would it be the kids? Her folks?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sure, he was difficult, but she wasn't going to wonder what was next. She had great faith and support.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The company was a financial mess, but that was old news. She'd be alright because she had skills.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She'd had her job a decade, but every year she found her stomach knotting as she waited for renewal.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Proverbs 12:25: “*Anxiety weighs down the heart*, but a kind word cheers it up.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She jumped out of bed before the alarm went off, eager to take on the day's challenges, no matter what.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She dragged herself out of bed after tossing and turning all night, afraid of what the day would bring.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He looked at the happy intern, wondering why he hadn't smiled like her in what seemed like forever.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He smiled back at the happy intern, assuring her that she would indeed love working at the plant.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He no longer attended his men's study or went to lunch with friends but just holed up alone, worried.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Ezekiel 12:19: “*They will eat their food in anxiety* and drink their water in despair, for their land will be stripped of everything in it because of the violence of all who live there.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He was glad he offered the other side the compromise. He doubted they'd take it, but he was at peace.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had given the opposition both barrels, everything he'd had, and now he could barely eat for worry.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She'd held her tongue, even though wanting to set him straight. She smiled. Better to turn the cheek.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She'd definitely had her say. He now knew right where she stood. She took another bitter bite.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Slamming the door, she poured the last old soup in the pot, wondering when her next meal would be.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Rejecting Anxiety

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting anxiety from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. 1 Peter 5:7: “***Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ She had plenty about which to worry—child, job, school—but knew her Lord’s favor, trusting in him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She figured she’d better back off on school and maybe even quit her job because nothing would work.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Ever since that worship service last year, when he met the Lord, he’d had a strange peace around him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His wife raised her arms in victory as the song burst forth, but he just grumbled to himself all was lost.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her mind wanted to spiral down, but she just focused on the great hand of Jesus and fell quietly asleep.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

2. Psalm 94:19: “***When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought me joy.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ As she was about to despair and call in sick for work again, she remembered her Lord and took heart.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her baby wouldn’t stop crying, and she felt her spirit weaken, until that verse flooded back to her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her baby would never get over his colic, she was sure, and she felt as if God had forgotten her, too.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He rued the day that he had met her because now all was uncertainty and confusion with no hope or joy.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although things were unclear and challenging, he felt the Lord especially near, especially faithful.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

3. Ecclesiastes 11:10: “So then, ***banish anxiety from your heart*** and cast off the troubles of your body, for youth and vigor are meaningless.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She tried to remember a verse, any verse, but recalling none, she turned again to ruing her problems.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Doing so took some discipline, but every time she recited her favorite verse, she found her mind at rest.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He could feel despair welling up, but he pushed it aside to think again of God’s coming kingdom.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He could feel despair deep within him, and so he dwelled in it, bringing it up to turn over in his mind.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had another surgery coming up, but this time, he was leaving it to God, whom he knew loved him.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

4. Philippians 4:6: “***Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ This time things looked different, indeed hopeless. He had no idea what would happen. So, he gave up.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Well, he’d never faced *this* before, but he figured he’d manage as he had before, which was in prayer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Something had to be wrong, he thought. He’d never had things go so well. He’d find something wrong.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her friends told her that she needed more than prayer, but she figured prayer was exactly the thing for it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Aren’t you worried?* her mother implored, but she felt nothing but peace as she committed to prayer.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles Against Anxiety

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She hadn't been spending time at the fitness club long before she found herself oddly anxious. She had joined the club to keep her weight in check and get a little stronger. And indeed, she was looking and feeling better physically, better than ever. But the club certainly wasn't like church. Her head spun with the rumors and relationships, this person running off with that person and this spouse cheating on that spouse. Was this how the world outside of church worked? Had she been living a sheltered life?

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2. He'd always had a curious mind, and so he'd been excited to join the new group of philosophical explorers, as they called themselves, although they met in a bar and didn't have philosophy jobs or degrees. They were just intellectually restless souls like himself, travelers going here and there, either in a modest search for truth or maybe just for diversion and entertainment. Anyway, whatever their purpose, instead of finding interesting new ideas to satisfy his curiosity, he instead found himself increasingly depressed by their ruminations, even anxious. What was going on?

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3. She had a meeting coming up with her board, and she could only guess the topic. Were they going to fire her? Thank and reward her? Her mind raced and stomach turned. She started making notes, drafting questions and answers, covering everything she could imagine. Still, she really had no idea, and the board chair wouldn't tell her. She was at a complete loss. Finally, she turned to a friend for advice on how best to prepare. Her friend would know what to do, she knew.

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4. He went back and forth trying to decide whether to reserve a table at this fine restaurant or that one. He loved his Saturday nights out on the town, and though it was only Monday, he was already relishing the next one. He looked at their menus online again, trying to decide. And what wine would he order? Maybe he should ask his friend. He'd give it until mid-week by which time he'd have to decide. He fretted over making the right decision.

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# Example Principles Against Anxiety

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She hadn't been spending time at the fitness club long before she found herself oddly anxious. She had joined the club to keep her weight in check and get a little stronger. And indeed, she was looking and feeling better physically, better than ever. But the club certainly wasn't like church. Her head spun with the rumors and relationships, this person running off with that person and this spouse cheating on that spouse. Was this how the world outside of church worked? Had she been living a sheltered life? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Deuteronomy 28:65 says, "Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There **the Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart.**" The principle is that the Lord's peace does not dwell among certain groups, in certain places. Choose your company and place wisely if you wish to avoid an anxious spirit.*
2. He'd always had a curious mind, and so he'd been excited to join the new group of *philosophical explorers*, as they called themselves, although they met in a bar and didn't have philosophy jobs or degrees. They were just intellectually restless souls like himself, travelers going here and there, either in a modest search for truth or maybe just for diversion and entertainment. Anyway, whatever their purpose, instead of finding interesting new ideas to satisfy his curiosity, he instead found himself increasingly depressed by their ruminations, even anxious. What was going on? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Luke 2:48 recounts, "When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been **anxiously searching for you.**'" The principle may be that we find Jesus in his Father's house, not on the highways and byways. Find Jesus in the word, not the woods.*
3. She had a meeting coming up with her board, and she could only guess the topic. Were they going to fire her? Thank and reward her? Her mind raced and stomach turned. She started making notes, drafting questions and answers, covering everything she could imagine. Still, she really had no idea, and the board chair wouldn't tell her. She was at a complete loss. Finally, she turned to a friend for advice on how best to prepare. Her friend would know what to do, she knew. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Matthew 10:19 records Jesus saying, "'But when they arrest you, **do not worry about what to say or how to say it.** At that time you will be given what to say....'" The principle is that we must rely on the Holy Spirit to speak through us in challenges rather than on our own words and wisdom. Know and trust God's word.*
4. He went back and forth trying to decide whether to reserve a table at this fine restaurant or that one. He loved his Saturday nights out on the town, and though it was only Monday, he was already relishing the next one. He looked at their menus online again, trying to decide. And what wine would he order? Maybe he should ask his friend. He'd give it until mid-week by which time he'd have to decide. He fretted over making the right decision. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Luke 12:29 records Jesus saying, "And **do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.**" The principle is that we can spend way too much time chasing our little pleasures rather than thinking about what the Lord wills. The Lord gives us not just what we need but also enough of what we want.*



# Evidence of Anxiety

Sort the examples of anxiety (A) from the examples of its opposite faith (faith):

1. \_\_\_\_ He'd never seen anything like this issue, but God had been with him before and would be here, too.
2. \_\_\_\_ This issue was different, far greater than anything he'd seen, and he sensed he'd succumb to it, too.
3. \_\_\_\_ She could feel her stomach turn and her mind whirl, making her dizzy. She hated her job stress.
4. \_\_\_\_ Her job was stressful, like any job, she figured. She had learned to just give it over to her Lord.
5. \_\_\_\_ He couldn't see his way through this latest problem his wife's addiction caused, but they'd make it.
6. \_\_\_\_ Her drug addiction dragged them down, she knew, and she hated it so much she wanted her life to end.
7. \_\_\_\_ He'd never had an underclassman challenge his starting role this way and worried he wasn't up to it.
8. \_\_\_\_ He loved that an underclassman had challenged his starting role, knowing they'd both be better for it.
9. \_\_\_\_ Why did they argue about money, she wondered? Why did she always feel they never had enough?
10. \_\_\_\_ She was glad her husband talked with her about money. Things were tight, but they'd have enough.
11. \_\_\_\_ The pastor looked at the week's giving, seeing that it was down again, but trusting the Lord to provide.
12. \_\_\_\_ Seeing the week's giving was down again, the pastor decided to call a board meeting to plan cuts.
13. \_\_\_\_ She'd heard that giving was down and wondered whether she'd lose her job. She just couldn't sleep.
14. \_\_\_\_ She'd heard that giving was down but felt confident the Lord would provide. They'd survive just fine.
15. \_\_\_\_ His heart sank when the check didn't come. He yelled at his kids that evening and ignored his wife.
16. \_\_\_\_ When the promised check didn't come, he took a deep breath, said a prayer, smiled, and headed home.
17. \_\_\_\_ Although she never knew if they'd make the mortgage each month, she trusted her faithful husband.
18. \_\_\_\_ Once again, it looked like they'd miss the mortgage. She had a thing or two to say when he got home.
19. \_\_\_\_ The owner took one look at the proposal and set it aside. He knew it was right but couldn't handle it.
20. \_\_\_\_ She worried over having a child and wasn't even pregnant. No wonder he wouldn't speak about it.
21. \_\_\_\_ She wasn't sure she could handle having a child but trusted God in all things. Her husband hugged her.
22. \_\_\_\_ When the time of her delivery came, she felt an amazing peace, when she had expected fear.
23. \_\_\_\_ He knew they'd not make it before the last room filled, and he glared at her for making them late.
24. \_\_\_\_ She was sorry that she'd taken so long but was pretty sure they'd still find a room, and they did.
25. \_\_\_\_ Looking at his new child and young wife, his legs weakened with fear, and so he took another drink.

1F 2A 3A 4F 5F 6A 7A 8F 9A 10F 11F 12A 13A 14F 15A 16F 17F 18A 19A 20A 21F 22F 23A 24F 25A

# Counsel Against Anxiety

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against anxiety? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

The friend listened to the couple talk—well, argue, really—about money. The friend knew a good bit about finance, and so the couple had asked to talk with the friend about their disagreement over finances, how they always argued with one another. The friend listened again, hearing the wife’s worry that they’d not be able to pay their bills, and the husband’s worry that the wife was spending too much and that he’d lose his job. Why didn’t he make more, the wife insisted? Why didn’t she spend less and get a job to help, the husband insisted? The friend wanted to share sound counsel about budgeting and priorities, but the friend could tell that something deeper was at play and that they’d never listen to him until they got past the emotion. Clearly, the wife worried a lot about money. Just as clearly, the husband worried deeply about losing his job and not being able to provide. The strange thing for the friend was that the couple seemed to be just about as well off as any other couple whom the friend knew. Why did this couple argue while other couples did not? The friend listened again to the couple’s worries.

*Don’t forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as Romans 11:34 says, “**Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?**”*

# Fear

The Bible makes fear a central concern of spirituality, of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Fear is not the first emotion that most would connect with faith, but Jesus does make that connection. As Mark 4:40 records Jesus saying to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” Or on another occasion to a synagogue leader whose daughter others reported dead, recorded in Mark 5:36, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” And again, to his disciples, recorded in Luke 12:32, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” And again, at the Last Supper, as John 14:27 records, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” Hebrews 13:6 thus rejoins, “So we say with confidence, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?’”

Fear can indeed debilitate. Fear, like anxiety, may be another opposite of faith. Faith says to proceed in confidence of the Lord’s will. Fear says that the Lord is absent and so we must fend for ourselves, when we know that the world’s powers are so much greater than our own. Faith says to just believe in the Lord’s power, sovereignty, and love for us. Fear says that the Lord doesn’t care, leaving us to provide for ourselves in a world that often seems set against us. Faith says to look to the Lord while walking in death’s shadow. Fear says to look to the earth, finding death itself. Fear would have us pull back from one another, while faith would have us give ourselves to others. Fear drains, while faith encourages, bucking us up for the world’s next onslaught.

The above verses make clear that God commands us not to fear. The one good fear is fear of the Lord who holds power over our future. We are not to fear anything else, not others, not disease, not death, not circumstances. Courage, though, takes practice. It takes trusting in the Lord. It takes knowing that we walk in God’s kingdom with nothing to fear, certainly not death, for the Father surely resurrected our Lord Jesus Christ. In him we have eternal life, and with eternal life in his presence, we lack nothing. The world that we would fear if we had no faith has nothing to offer us, nothing approaching eternal life. See if the following exercises help you recognize fear and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Fear

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## John 14:27

**Do not let**

**your hearts**

**be troubled**

**and do not**

**be afraid.**

# Recognizing Fear

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of fear from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Matthew 8:26: “He replied, ‘You of little faith, **why are you so afraid?**’ Then he got up and rebuked the wind and the waves, and it was completely calm.”

\_\_\_\_\_ They were sure that they wouldn’t make it to the Christian camp over the winding roads against cliffs.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew that there had to be a way out of this downturn, as deep as it was. He’d find a way, for sure.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The father who was such a bully was now suing her for custody. She was sure she’d lose her child.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although things looked bleak, and she knew it would be tough, she found assurance in her deep faith.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His company was in chaos and its doors about to close. He was sure he’d lose everything. Life was over.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Deuteronomy 1:17: “Do not be **afraid of anyone**, for judgment belongs to God.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He was scared of the new student who had a beard, did drugs, had tattoos everywhere, and hated him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The teacher intimidated her badly, until she was so scared that she didn’t want to go to his class.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although the teacher was scary, she trusted that God knew her heart. What was the worst he could do?  
\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor seemed not to like her, and she might lose her job, but God would provide, she knew.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor had it in for her, and she couldn’t afford to lose this job. Maybe she should just quit.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Matthew 10:26 “So do not be **afraid of them**, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Sure, the supervisor was off that day, but he knew how careful she worked, so he’d figure out who did it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He didn’t think the supervisor would ever find out he’d done the work, not those dangerous losers.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her grandparents might have thought she’d broken the lamp, not that scary liar she had for a cousin.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The principal could do what he wanted, she knew, but God was on her side, and she’d done nothing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She was overwrought that the awful principal would kick her out when she’d had nothing to do with it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Deuteronomy 3:2: “The Lord said to me, ‘Do not be **afraid of him**, for I have delivered him into your hands, along with his whole army and lands.’”

\_\_\_\_\_ The national retailer had just opened an outlet in town, but she was sure she’d survive with loyal clients.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew she couldn’t fight the national retailer. She was sure she’d lose everything she’d worked for.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d hardly trusted him in their brief marriage and couldn’t trust him divorce, but she’d be alright.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The scoundrel had everything locked up, the whole city, so that his own business didn’t stand a chance.  
\_\_\_\_\_ To be sued by that bully of a corporation was not only embarrassing but frightening, to lose it all.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Fear

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting fear from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. 1 John 4:18: “***There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear***, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”

\_\_\_\_\_ Initially, she’d been a little worried, but the more she focused on Jesus’s love, the less she worried.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Not only did this new matter worry her, but she could see that it must be God judging her harshly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Whenever the challenge looked too big, he thought of Jesus in the furnace with the three Jews.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The challenge looked bigger and bigger, until he didn’t even feel up to going to church, being so scared.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d get down toward the end of another tough week, but then she’d get her courage back in worship.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Romans 8:15: “***The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again***; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She once would have hidden in her bedroom for weeks at the offense, but in Christ she walked free.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He could see that in faith he was now bearing up under the same stresses to which he once succumbed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had no way out of his own mess, and so he did what he always did: make his family pay for it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn’t take it and wouldn’t take it, so he pulled another fifth from the cupboard and had at it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Instead of running to the bottle, she went to her knees, and the Spirit’s peace and comfort flooded her.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. 1 Peter 3:14: “But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘***Do not fear their threats; do not be frightened***.’”

\_\_\_\_\_ Her boss threatened the unit that he’d cut their hours and fire half of them. She broke down in tears.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d heard her boss issue the same unfair warnings before, but this time, she just turned it over to God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The stock market was plummeting again, their retirement evaporating, but he trusted in God’s provision.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As the stock market fell deeper, he frantically called brokers, chain smoking through the ordeal.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The driver cut her off, slammed on his brakes, and gave her the finger, but she just smiled and relaxed.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Philippians 1:14: “And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and ***dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear***.”

\_\_\_\_\_ In his teaching, he was careful never to make any reference to faith because he knew some objected.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He used to worry about making any little reference to faith in class but now chatted freely about it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ None of her friends shared her faith in Christ, and so she never spoke of it, even though she wanted to.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew none of her friends shared her faith in Christ but boldly invited them to special events anyway.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He used to ignore his neighbor’s railing against religious folks but now gently rejoined him, with smiles.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles Against Fear

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. He knew that the syndicate could crush him financially, ruin his reputation, and run him out of town, squashed like a bug. He'd never had any problem working within its requirements..., until now. What it was proposing that he do, he could not do in good conscience. It might be illegal, and even if legal, it wasn't right, just, and fair. Yet the syndicate was leaning on him, hard, as if he had no choice. He could tell he had a big decision, a career-and-character-defining decision to make.

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2. She now knew it was wrong, that little thing in which she'd been engaging for so long. When it started, she didn't know any better. Indeed, a professional had suggested it to her, as if it was what everyone would do. But she'd never felt good about it, and now she knew why. Her Bible studies had taught her so, and she was sure that God was convicting her to stop it. She just wasn't sure that she wanted to stop or had to stop.

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3. He'd changed, he knew that much. And he liked the change. Sure, doing as God clearly said was sometimes hard, especially when everyone else was taking the easy route, and most of them seemed to be doing just fine. And not everything that God required of him seemed to make immediate sense. Sometimes, he couldn't see why God asked him to do things until much later, if at all. But he was sure that he should comply, should obey. After all, who was greater than God?

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4. She had at times an overwhelming sense of fear, of judgment and condemnation, when she thought about her past, especially one specific aspect of it. Who or what was the source of that fear? Was it God, or was it Satan? She knew in her head that Christ paid for her past, redeeming her before God. Somehow, though, that knowledge hadn't yet reached her heart, her emotions. She wished that it would, and quickly, because at times her sense of dread was so strong that she could barely breathe.

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# Example Principles Against Fear

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. He knew that the syndicate could crush him financially, ruin his reputation, and run him out of town, squashed like a bug. He'd never had any problem working within its requirements..., until now. What it was proposing that he do, he could not in good conscience do. It might be illegal, and even if legal, it wasn't right, just, and fair. Yet the syndicate was leaning on him, hard, as if he had no choice. He could tell he had a big decision, a career-and-character-defining decision to make. *EXAMPLE ANSWER: Luke 12:4 records Jesus saying, "I tell you, my friends, **do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more.** But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell." The principle is that when facing a choice between honoring God or bowing to intimidation, honor God for the long-term consequences. He is always greater.*
2. She now knew it was wrong, that little thing in which she'd been engaging for so long. When it started, she didn't know any better. Indeed, a professional had suggested it to her, as if it was what everyone would do. But she'd never felt good about it, and now she knew why. Her Bible studies had taught her so, and she was sure that God was convicting her to stop it. She just wasn't sure that she wanted to stop or had to stop. *EXAMPLE ANSWER: Hebrews 10:26-27 states, "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a **fearful expectation of judgment** and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." The principle is that when the Spirit reveals your sin to you, don't ignore him. Stop sinning immediately, or only God's judgment remains.*
3. He'd changed, he knew that much. And he liked the change. Sure, doing as God clearly said was sometimes hard, especially when everyone else was taking the easy route, and most of them seemed to be doing just fine. And not everything that God required of him seemed to make immediate sense. Sometimes, he couldn't see why God asked him to do things until much later, if at all. But he was sure that he should comply, should obey. After all, who was greater than God? *EXAMPLE ANSWER: Genesis 22:12 recounts the Lord saying to Abraham at Isaac's near sacrifice, "Now I know that you **fear God**, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." The principle is that we have one legitimate fear, which is the fear of God, meaning to obey him knowing the eternal consequence of disobedience.*
4. She had at times an overwhelming sense of fear, of judgment and condemnation, when she thought about her past, especially one specific aspect of it. Who or what was the source of that fear? Was it God, or was it Satan? She knew in her head that Christ paid for her past, redeeming her before God. Somehow, though, that knowledge hadn't yet reached her heart, her emotions. She wished that it would, and quickly, because at times her sense of dread was so strong that she could barely breathe. *EXAMPLE ANSWER: Genesis 3:10 records Adam saying, "I heard you in the garden, and **I was afraid because I was naked**; so I hid." The principle is that we will fear God if we do not have the covering and protection of Jesus's sacrifice. Hear God, and cling to Jesus without fear.*



# Evidence of Fear

Sort the examples of fear (F) from the examples of faith-filled courage (C):

1. \_\_\_\_ She just couldn't be sure that her children were saved, loved the Lord, and so she fretted daily.
2. \_\_\_\_ At peace, she knew that the Lord would call and save her children, just as she had so earnestly prayed.
3. \_\_\_\_ His past still ate at him, on his worst days gnawing at the pit of his stomach. He'd never be free of it.
4. \_\_\_\_ He hated flying, sure that his life would end in one big fiery crash, but his work required it of him.
5. \_\_\_\_ She marveled at the Lord's power to protect and save her, even as the great jet roared into the sky.
6. \_\_\_\_ The technology confused her, but she trusted no matter what the world required of her, God controlled.
7. \_\_\_\_ He knew that someday hackers would steal his identity, destroying his life, and so he checked daily.
8. \_\_\_\_ Starting a new job was daunting, but she relished it, knowing God's grace in her co-workers' hearts.
9. \_\_\_\_ She thanked the Lord she had finally managed to accumulate some retirement funds. He was good.
10. \_\_\_\_ Every week, sometimes two or three times a week, he checked his retirement balance, never enough.
11. \_\_\_\_ He hated speaking in front of others, knowing how foolish he looked, shaking in his boots.
12. \_\_\_\_ They'd never find a decent house in this awful market, she told her husband despondently, crying.
13. \_\_\_\_ They'd been looking for a while now, but he was sure God had the right home for them, with patience.
14. \_\_\_\_ The professor seemed so hard, and the rumors were flying. He was sure he'd failed despite best effort.
15. \_\_\_\_ The course was hard, but she liked challenges, and she'd done everything she could to succeed.
16. \_\_\_\_ They hadn't heard from their daughter in a week, but they knew her sense and God protected her.
17. \_\_\_\_ When they hadn't heard from their son for a week, they were sure he had disappeared forever.
18. \_\_\_\_ He knew the risks of serving in the military but welcomed them, knowing God had called him.
19. \_\_\_\_ He just wanted to get home from the mission trip, which he never should have pursued at such risk.
20. \_\_\_\_ They were falling further behind in the budget, but he trusted that God would provide for his calling.
21. \_\_\_\_ He loved his wife and trusted her call to ministry was genuine and trustworthy, despite its challenges.
22. \_\_\_\_ She doubted that God really would have called them to ministry. She was sure it would end badly.
23. \_\_\_\_ This disease seemed different, far more deadly. How could God have let this happen to them?
24. \_\_\_\_ The doctors were skeptical and realistic, but he felt nothing but calm confidence, gladly expressed.
25. \_\_\_\_ The economy turned down right after their building launch. He knew they were in for disaster.

1F 2C 3F 4F 5C 6C 7F 8C 9C 10F 11F 12F 13C 14F 15C 16C 17F 18C 19F 20C 21C 22F 23F 24C 25F

# Counsel Against Fear

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against fear? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

The young man could hardly get hold of himself, he was so upset. He and his new wife had agreed that they would not have children until they were both out of school and at least one of them had a job. But now, she was pregnant. How could they possibly afford a child when neither of them even had a job? And they were still at least a year away? He was shaking, he was so upset, and knew he wouldn't sleep well now for months—hah, for years, once the child came. What were they going to do? He didn't even have the wherewithal to discuss it with his wife yet. She knew he was still *processing it*, as he told her, but what was there to process? They were toast. They'd probably be homeless, and then what would happen to them? They might not even be able to complete their education. That's it! He'd have to quit school, or she'd have to quit, or both would have to quit, to take menial jobs for the rest of their lives. He didn't even know how expensive raising a child is except that it took a ton of money and sacrifice. The hard thing was, he had nothing he could do. They were stuck in an impossible situation, and boy, were they going to suffer for it. He could hardly drag himself around the apartment, the stress of it was so bad. Maybe his friend could give him some advice, but really, what could his friend possibly say or do?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as the physician Luke wrote in his gospel's chapter one, verse three: “**I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning**” in order to “write an orderly account” of these things.*

# Idolatry

Idolatry, that sin of offense to God that God thus must especially condemn, sounds so old fashioned, as if decent folks today would never engage in it. Isaiah 45:20 describes as ignorant “those who carry about idols of wood, who pray to gods that cannot save.” Who indeed would do such senseless things? In 1 Corinthians 12:2, Paul reminds us of our ignorance when, as pagans, “somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.” But we are not pagans today, are we? Then, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:7 not to be idolaters like those who eat and drink only to get up “to indulge in revelry.” Who among us today are reveling?

Yet idolatry is a thoroughly modern sin. We can make an idol not just of wood or revelry but of anything other than God, which is idolatry’s subtle power. Even the best of things, the good things that God himself grants us, can become idols when we place them above God. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:13 about the powerful temptation of sin, in the same passage noting that God always provides a way out so that we can flee from idolatry. Don’t court temptation, especially to idolatry. Colossians 3:5 similarly warns us not to toy with idolatry but to put it to death. Whether it is things that we craft or things that we enjoy or things that bring us standing—whatever are those things that draw us away from God and to them, these things we must put off so that we continue to walk with God.

Idolatry is indeed subtly devastating. Its challenges only begin with the fact that the concept of idolatry is a foreign one to the modern mind, so steeped that mind is in its own idolatry. Beyond recalling the peril of idolatry, we must then recognize it among the many things, both tangible and intangible, that can serve as idols. And then, we must will ourselves to reject idolatry, when so many of the things out of which we tend to make idols are in themselves good. Such is idolatry’s unusual power. See if the following exercises help you recognize idolatry and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Idolatry

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 Corinthians 12:2

**When you were pagans,**

**somehow or other**

**you were influenced and**

**led astray**

**to mute idols.**

# Recognizing Idolatry

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of idolatry from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Ezekiel 14:4: “When any of the Israelites *set up idols in their hearts*..., I the Lord will answer them myself in keeping with *their great idolatry*.”

\_\_\_\_\_ They loved going clubbing, getting good and drunk, and not remembering what they did that night.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He loved baseball, but he kept a good grip on himself, putting faith first, then studies, before fun.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Glamor was her thing, and the latest pop star her hero. She planned on going to fashion school for it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Although she loved fashion and design of all kinds, she stayed grounded in the church, knowing God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew he had a weakness for luxury cars, but what was wrong with indulging one little weakness?  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 1 Samuel 15:23: “For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and *arrogance like the evil of idolatry*.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ He loved being smart and effective, the way people depended on him, and the power he held over them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wasn’t going to let anything—*anything*—stand between her and being the top student in her class.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wanted to be first in her class, which was possible, but other things were more important, like God.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He wanted credit for the company’s turnaround, but whether he got the credit or not, he knew God knew.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He deserved the credit for the company’s turnaround, and no matter what, he was going to get the credit.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Acts 17:16: “While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was distressed to see that *the city was full of idols*.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ He didn’t mind New York trips, enjoying some attractions, but was always glad getting back to reality.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He loved traveling to Las Vegas, where he found so many things to pursue and taste to his liking.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every chance she got, she would go online searching for the latest tidbit of entertainment gossip.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She followed entertainment, laughing at the stars’ escapades, but her devotion was to God’s word.  
\_\_\_\_\_ No matter the season, he was into sports, following the games and players, and betting ever more on it.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Revelation 9:20: “The rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues *still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping* demons, and *idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood-- idols that cannot see or hear or walk*.”
- \_\_\_\_\_ She worked hard to be a successful artist, but as much as it meant, being a Jesus follower meant more.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her art meant everything to her, as her acquaintances could tell, for she never stopped talking of it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His walls displayed his famous car designs, but he deflected attention to his Lord who gave him skill.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He covered his walls with his car designs, pointing them out to anyone. He ate, drank, and slept cars.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The one thing that meant the most to her was recognition as an author. She’d kill for more acclaim.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Idolatry

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting idolatry from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. 1 Corinthians 10:13-14: “But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. Therefore, my dear friends, ***flee from idolatry.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ The clickbait at the end of the articles he read was attractive until he realized its destructive goal.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He found himself spending more time chasing clickbait online but figured it was harmless amusement.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The moment she realized she was giving unhealthy attention to leading her bowling league, she quit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The only thing she had to distinguish herself was her tennis skill, which she honed endlessly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His employer wanted a press release on his achievement, hoping to attract an award, but he declined.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 1 Peter 4:3: “For you have spent enough time ***in the past doing what pagans choose to do***—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and ***detestable idolatry.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ He was glad his old carousing was over. He had no regrets leaving behind friends who still pursued it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ For a long time he’d spent every penny on his gun collection but had sold every last gun when seeing it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ They had cut back but still enjoyed frequenting the casinos for the shows, good booze, and gambling.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Most of his drinking buddies had disappeared, some married with kids, but he still enjoyed a good time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had drawn her entire self-worth from men for most of her life until realizing its hopelessness.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. 1 John 5:21: “Dear children, ***keep yourselves from idols.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ Nothing stopped her from watching her favorite preacher, whom she quoted over the Bible, sometimes.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She loved listening to sermons and had several preachers whom she nearly worshiped until she saw it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had practiced hundreds, probably thousands of hours, but then something called him to back off.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wanted a good marriage but knew it would never be perfect, relieving both her and her husband.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had to have the perfect marriage, after her mom and dad split, and she’d do anything to make it so.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 1 Corinthians 12:2: “You know that ***when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ She had so many strong interests that nearly anything could light her passion, and she pursued them all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ In retrospect, she could see how foolish she had been to chase the things she had chased, meaningless.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He knew everything one could know about his hobby, and he boasted about his reputation as its king.  
\_\_\_\_\_ After years devoting herself to her craft, she realized that only she cared, while it cared not for her.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had once been so proud of the things he made, but now they seemed to testify against his devotion.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles Against Idolatry

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She loved her craft work for giving her a creative outlet among a community of like-minded friends. She found herself spending more and more time, and more and more money, equipping herself to pursue her craft work with ever greater skill and devotion. The friends soon meant less to her, as her craft work came to mean more. She stopped joining her Bible study group each week and found many Sunday mornings better for craft work.

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2. The new pastor had a theory of communion that they'd never heard before but that attracted them. They found themselves attending ever-more-elaborate meals and hosting those meals at ever-greater expense. The pastor encouraged that they participate only with the select few who shared the pastor's devotion to the practice. The foods themselves, they began to grow to ensure that they had the purity necessary for the meal rites, even as they became fierce advocates for local produce. The practice put off many, but what did they know?

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3. She looked at her bank account, the little left of it. As she did so, she realized for the first time that she had squandered her inheritance on worthless things, endless tweaks to her home decor that made her home no safer, more convenient, or more valuable. Then she looked at her credit-card bills, with more debt on them than money she had to pay. She would need a long time to dig out from under her wasteful spending, and all for what good?

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4. He had once squandered his every paycheck and anything more that he could coax from his wealthy parents, on running after things—food, drink, women, fast cars, lavish vacations, anything. What had he done? His immersion in his faith community had brought him back from the brink. He now felt nothing but elation at not pursuing his former things and, more so, at knowing Jesus. His rescue had been a true miracle, something that he would never understand here on earth but always appreciate, eternally.

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# Example Principles Against Idolatry

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She loved her craft work for giving her a creative outlet among a community of like-minded friends. She found herself spending more and more time, and more and more money, equipping herself to pursue her craft work with ever greater skill and devotion. The friends soon meant less to her, as her craft work came to mean more. She stopped joining her Bible study group each week and found many Sunday mornings better for craft work. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Deuteronomy 4:15 says, “‘You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore, watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol....’” The principle is that God is not in the images that we see, fashion, and pursue. We know God through his invisible qualities.*
2. The new pastor had a theory of communion that they’d never heard before but that attracted them. They found themselves attending ever-more-elaborate meals and hosting those meals at ever greater expense. The pastor encouraged that they participate only with the select few who shared the pastor’s devotion to the practice. The foods themselves, they began to grow to ensure that they had the purity necessary for the meal rites, even as they became fierce advocates for local produce. The practice put off many, but what did they know? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *In Revelation 2:20, Jesus says, “You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching **she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols.**” The principle is not to tolerate those who teach immorality and devotion to idols.*
3. She looked at her bank account, the little left of it. As she did so, she realized for the first time that she had squandered her inheritance on worthless things, endless tweaks to her home decor that made her home no safer, more convenient, or more valuable. Then she looked at her credit-card bills, with more debt on them than money she had to pay. She would need a long time to dig out from under her wasteful spending, and all for what good? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Ezekiel 23:49 says, “**You will suffer the penalty for your lewdness and bear the consequences of your sins of idolatry.**” The principle is that God punishes idolaters. Watch out that your pursuits are not of idols, lest you bear the consequences.*
4. He had once squandered his every paycheck and anything more that he could coax from his wealthy parents, on running after things--food, drink, women, fast cars, lavish vacations, anything. What had he done? His immersion in his faith community had brought him back from the brink. He now felt nothing but elation at not pursuing his former things and, more so, at knowing Jesus. His rescue had been a true miracle, something that he would never understand here on earth but always appreciate, eternally. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, “They tell how **you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.**” The principle is that we must turn from every idol to serve God, relying on Jesus to rescue us from judgment.*



# Evidence of Idolatry

Sort the examples of idolatry (I) from the examples of godly submission and obedience (O):

1. \_\_\_\_ His estate included enormous wine, art, and car collections, all left to a dissolute son, none to charity.
2. \_\_\_\_ Her estate provided amply for devoted children and grandchildren, while funding church and charity.
3. \_\_\_\_ His elaborate headstone depicted his favorite hobbies, with not a word or symbol of family or faith.
4. \_\_\_\_ His webpage bore every super-this designation and top-that ranking without a word toward values.
5. \_\_\_\_ She really didn't care to list the many awards she'd received or want people to know, just to trust her.
6. \_\_\_\_ She never felt more at peace, closer to God, than when practicing and performing her worship music.
7. \_\_\_\_ She owned the most exquisite instruments and costumes, and threw lavish parties for kindly critics.
8. \_\_\_\_ He laughed over the critical review of his faith stories, trusting that God would use them if he wished.
9. \_\_\_\_ She knew she had good looks but also knew that outward beauty was fleeting, inward beauty divine.
10. \_\_\_\_ She did anything to maintain her youthful beauty, and her unpaid cosmetic-surgery bills proved it.
11. \_\_\_\_ He spent more hours at the gym looking in the mirrors than with his wife and kids at home.
12. \_\_\_\_ He tried to stay in shape, but faith and family came first, meaning he was there for his kids and church.
13. \_\_\_\_ He jumped down the throat of anyone who had the least little criticism of his skill or management.
14. \_\_\_\_ He kept a perfect lawn, running out and removing any leaf, and sharply chastising any child trespasser.
15. \_\_\_\_ She liked a neat lawn but liked even more when the neighborhood kids had a safe place to play.
16. \_\_\_\_ He gave his hair a quick brush, failing to tame the cowlick, and then rushed out to join the fun.
17. \_\_\_\_ She kept brushing and brushing her hair, staring in the mirror at it for hours, stroking it mindlessly.
18. \_\_\_\_ She had a decent tennis game, just enough to make it fun for whatever tennis partner was interested.
19. \_\_\_\_ He did anything he could think to reduce and hold down his golf handicap, eager to tell it to anyone.
20. \_\_\_\_ They'd intentionally bought a home less than they could afford so that they could do more for church.
21. \_\_\_\_ They had the perfect home and perfect address until the next development opened, and off they went.
22. \_\_\_\_ She couldn't understand why they hadn't invited her when she'd invited them and been to every party.
23. \_\_\_\_ She wanted an invitation but had done plenty of the social circuit lately and needed reflective time.
24. \_\_\_\_ He couldn't get his favorite jeans clean in time but was fine with whatever was available and fit.
25. \_\_\_\_ His jeans had to be pressed with a sharp crease in them, and his shirt starched, or he wasn't going out.

11 20 31 41 50 60 71 80 90 101 111 120 131 141 150 160 171 180 191 200 211 221 230 240 251

# Counsel Against Idolatry

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against idolatry? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

He understood that he ought not make an idol of anything. He very badly wanted to do the right thing, and not making an idol of anything was one of those right things. He wanted to be a good provider for his family, as the Bible urged, yet he didn't want to be a workaholic. He wanted to be a good supporter of his church, but he wanted to keep a good balance and not go overboard. He wanted to be a good employee, but he didn't want to make his work more important than faith or family. He wanted to be a good friend but not to be a people pleaser. Into these and many similar commitments, he poured his soul and self, constantly checking himself with a zeal that bordered on compulsion. Indeed, he never let down, barely giving himself any time just to dwell richly in Jesus. He kept such a tight control on things that he didn't find the time not to be in control of things, especially to let go of his many commitments. As he realized that he may have made an idol of not making an idol and instead of doing the right thing, he suddenly found himself without answer, without direction. For the first time in his adult life, he was aimless, afraid that he had made an idol of sound aims. As he spiraled into confusion, he began to think that he needed some solid spiritual counsel, some new insight or direction.

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as Proverbs 2:1 says, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed if you **call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding**..., then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Job 5:27.*

# Deception

The Bible makes deception a major concern. Jesus warned in Matthew 24:4-5 not to let anyone deceive you, Luke 12:1 to guard against the false teaching of the religious leaders, Mark 12:38-40 to watch out for the law teachers, Matthew 18:6 not to cause a child to stumble, and Luke 11:52 woe to law experts who destroy knowledge while preventing others from entering his kingdom. Matthew 9:4 reveals that Jesus knew that the law teachers entertained evil thoughts in their hearts. Paul warns in Galatians 1:7 that people would confuse and pervert the gospel, in 2 Timothy 3:13 that impostors will go from bad to worse in deceiving and being deceived, and in Romans 2:13-16 that those who turn from God to deceive are open graves. First Peter 2:1 warns that false teachers will introduce destructive heresies denying the Lord's salvation.

Deception is indeed destructive. We have God's word. In God's word, we find not only security, peace, love, care, and comfort but also eternal salvation. The stakes for truth could not be any higher. Other sins may tarnish our witness and reduce our reward, but deception casts into doubt any reward at all, indeed the one great reward that we would join Jesus with his Father in heaven. We must not fall away, pulled by deception to our destruction. We must also not draw others away, compounding our loss in the loss of others.

God's word thus cautions us repeatedly to resist deception. James 1:16 says not to let others deceive you. Romans 14:16 says not to let another speak evil about what you know is good. Galatians 3:1 says not to let others bewitch you into abandoning the gospel's truth. Ephesians 5:6 says not to let anyone deceive you with empty words. First Timothy 3:7 says to have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales, while 1 Timothy 6:20 says not to listen to godless chatter and false knowledge that non-believers profess. Galatians 4:16 says instead to be zealous for truth. Plainly, adhering to the truth requires vigilance and close study of God's word. See if the following exercises help you recognize deception and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Deception

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Jeremiah 17:9

**The heart is deceitful**

**above all things**

**and beyond cure.**

**Who can**

**understand it?**

# Recognizing Deception

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of deception from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Genesis 3:13: “Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ***‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’***”

\_\_\_\_\_ He had known what to do, but somehow the manager convinced him otherwise. Now he was in trouble.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The manager had told him he’d be alright, but his conscience had kept him from making the big error.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her friends warned her against the relationship, but she felt she knew better. Now she knew she didn’t.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When her friends warned her against the relationship, she stepped back, and now was she ever glad.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The Bible had seemed clear on the point, but he found an advisor who told him to go ahead anyway.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Exodus 20:16: “***“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”***”

\_\_\_\_\_ *He just wasn’t interested*, she found herself telling her friend, although in fact he’d been happy to help.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *She left it unlocked*, he told the angry supervisor, even though he didn’t know that was the case.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *I haven’t met her*, he truthfully told his grumbling friend about the new neighbor, giving her a chance.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *Never had any problem with him*, she honestly told the principal about the student accused of disrupting.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *She never wants to help*, he complained about the new hire, though he was just upset at something else.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Leviticus 19:11-12: ““Do not steal. Do not lie. ***Do not deceive one another.*** Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.””

\_\_\_\_\_ She’d wanted not to share everything with him, but something told her better to be entirely above board.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d just shaded the truth a little about her drinking and partying, not much, because she liked him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He figured best not tell her that one little thing or she’d probably not have anything to do with him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The hay had mold, he knew, but he made sure to place the bad bales on the bottom when selling them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The lumber wasn’t the top grade the customer wanted, but she sensed he’d never know the difference.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Matthew 24:4: “***For false messiahs and false prophets will appear*** and perform great signs and wonders ***to deceive, if possible, even the elect.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ He’d heard predictions that the world would end next year, but he knew what Christ said about the hour.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d grown tired of her church but loved the new evangelist who preached a coming great prophet.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The traveling evangelist entertained her for sure, but the Spirit and God’s word showed her his error.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He’d always liked the mystical nature of religion and so got deeply into numerology and astrology.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She slowly came to agree with her philosophy professor that Jesus couldn’t be the only way to heaven.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Deception

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting deception from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Acts 20:30: “Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So ***be on your guard!***”

\_\_\_\_\_ She'd been in God's word long enough to notice when a teaching wasn't right. And this teaching wasn't.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The impressive organizer was so adamant in her fantastic insight into the verse that they all went along.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He hadn't heard that interpretation before and so asked his pastor, who quickly pointed out its heresy.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The television preacher attracted huge new audiences with his prediction of the date of Christ's return.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The harder her friend tried to convince her the verse meant something mystic, the more she resisted.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 1 Timothy 4:7: “***Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales***; rather, train yourself to be godly.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She'd heard the extra-biblical myth, studied it, and learned that it was not just apocryphal but harmful.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her neighbor had a string of funny superstitions, but she made a quiet point of not encouraging them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He loved to read fiction, the stranger and more fantastic, the better, until he gave himself a Norse name.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She and her friends formed a secret society in which they assumed avatars and acted out their fantasies.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When he heard his son repeat the tale, he took him aside to quietly admonish him to stay in God's word.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Hebrews 13:9: “***Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ He loved researching the dark spiritual practices of so-called primitive cultures. Something was in it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His study group urged him to read the ancient work interpreting dreams, but he saw nothing godly in it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Philosophy attracted her, but when she saw how foolish so much of it was, she chose another major.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She collected fairies, not just because they cheered her up but because they surrounded her with magic.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He always enjoyed literature, but when he found he had to learn Roman gods, he chose another course.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Proverbs 16:19: “[W]e have renounced secret and shameful ways; ***we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God.*** On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.”

\_\_\_\_\_ His study partner wanted to know something of which he was unsure, but he took a stab at an answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His study partner had asked a good question, and so they turned to a reliable commentary for answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The pastor didn't mind speculating because he was pretty sure his congregation couldn't tell, anyway.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The pastor distinguished in her sermon between inferences theologians drew and God's plain word.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *I want to correct something*, the leader began the study, *that we may have gotten wrong last time.*  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E ENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles Against Deception

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. After their move, they had joined the only church in town. They quickly found that although the members were very friendly, the church engaged in substantial community service, and the body felt like a warm family, the church's leaders and members followed some unusual doctrine. At first, they listened carefully, thinking that maybe the new doctrine was just emphasizing certain things in God's word to which they had previously paid no attention. But soon, they felt the Spirit drawing them to verses that directly contradicted much of the doctrine. They agreed to pray about what to do.

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2. Several elders were concerned enough over their young pastor's recent foray into numerology that they asked for a special meeting of the elder board. The board chair asked that each elder pray in advance of the meeting for the Spirit's guidance and for biblical discernment. They all liked the young pastor, and some had already expressed that they hoped to see a satisfying way forward. They just needed some clarity, agreement, and unity on the issue.

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3. She was so pleased with her spiritual development and the increasingly responsible roles that it had garnered her in the church. She had always admired those who knew God's word, and now she was one of them—a lay leader in her church, respected for her biblical knowledge and wisdom. But then a young member had questioned something she said and had cited chapter and verse against it. Imagine the upstart's nerve! She'd show her a thing or two.

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4. He looked back over the small congregation's long history, wondering why they hadn't grown. They'd had several highly interesting preachers, real entertainers, lead them, even if some of them were a bit quirky. Well, they'd had a few real oddballs, but they'd still been nice people. Other churches were too picky about doctrine. Here, they'd learned to tolerate differences. After all, what was heresy but your neighbor's religion?!

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# Example Principles Against Deception

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. After their move, they had joined the only church in town. They quickly found that although the members were very friendly, the church engaged in substantial community service, and the body felt like a warm family, the church's leaders and members followed some unusual doctrine. At first, they listened carefully, thinking that maybe the new doctrine was just emphasizing certain things in God's word to which they had previously paid no attention. But soon, they felt the Spirit drawing them to verses that directly contradicted much of the doctrine. They agreed to pray about what to do. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Matthew 16:6 recounts, "‘Be careful,’ Jesus said to them. ‘Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’" The principle is that we must measure any teaching against its fidelity to the word. Trust the word. Guard against false teaching.*
2. Several elders were concerned enough over their young pastor's recent foray into numerology that they asked for a special meeting of the elder board. The board chair asked that each elder pray in advance of the meeting for the Spirit's guidance and for biblical discernment. They all liked the young pastor, and some had already expressed that they hoped to see a satisfying way forward. They just needed some clarity, agreement, and unity on the issue. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Timothy 1:3-4 states, "[S]tay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. Such things promote controversial speculations rather than advancing God's work—which is by faith." The principle is that we should not tolerate false doctrine. Only sound doctrine advances God's work.*
3. She was so pleased with her spiritual development and the increasingly responsible roles that it had garnered her in the church. She had always admired those who knew God's word, and now she was one of them—a lay leader in her church, respected for her biblical knowledge and wisdom. But then a young member had questioned something she said and had cited chapter and verse against it. Imagine the upstart's nerve! She'd show her a thing or two. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Corinthians 3:18 says, "Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become ‘fools’ so that you may become wise." The principle is that we can at times fool ourselves. No one has all the answers. We should always be ready for correction.*
4. He looked back over the small congregation's long history, wondering why they hadn't grown. They'd had several highly interesting preachers, real entertainers, lead them, even if some of them were a bit quirky. Well, they'd had a few real oddballs, but they'd still been nice people. Other churches were too picky about doctrine. Here, they'd learned to tolerate differences. After all, what was heresy but your neighbor's religion?! EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Corinthians 11:19-20 says, "You gladly put up with fools since you are so wise! In fact, you even put up with anyone who enslaves you or exploits you or takes advantage of you or puts on airs or slaps you in the face." The principle is that we must not be gullible, putting up with false teachers who turn us back to enslaving doctrine.*



# Evidence of Deception

Sort the examples of deception (D) from the examples of truth-telling (T):

1. \_\_\_\_ He knew how many strokes he'd taken to get to the green, but nobody saw them, so he left two out.
2. \_\_\_\_ His club inadvertently moved the ball just before he swung, and so he called a penalty on himself.
3. \_\_\_\_ She bought the clothes ready made but was happy for buyers to think that she'd sown the clothes, too.
4. \_\_\_\_ She returned the item after having worn it out a couple times. No one could tell, so who cared?
5. \_\_\_\_ Revealing his faith would get him left out, but as things were, he couldn't hide it. Why would he?
6. \_\_\_\_ Everyone there seemed to hold the same opinion, but she spoke up anyway, as she knew she must.
7. \_\_\_\_ When everyone in the room agreed, she just kept her contrary faith commitment to herself.
8. \_\_\_\_ No one knew he was late that morning, but he made out his time sheet to show his short hours anyway.
9. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor didn't like conflict and wanted to encourage his workers, but she needed the correction.
10. \_\_\_\_ The supervisor let her shoddy work slide, knowing she'd soon get laid off anyway. What's the point?
11. \_\_\_\_ When she asked how she was doing, the supervisor just told her *fine*, though she wasn't working out.
12. \_\_\_\_ The leader needed some family time, and so rather than make an excuse, she just told her team so.
13. \_\_\_\_ She wanted to impress her team how hard she worked and so made an excuse when needing a break.
14. \_\_\_\_ The coach didn't want to embarrass himself after he saw the replay and so insisted he was right.
15. \_\_\_\_ The player wanted the coach to think he was a reliable ball handler and so insisted he didn't fumble.
16. \_\_\_\_ He knew he'd fumbled and so immediately told the coach so, even though the coach would be angry.
17. \_\_\_\_ Her parents trusted her with the car, and then she'd gone and done something stupid. Better fess up.
18. \_\_\_\_ She couldn't tell her parents what she had done after they had trusted her with the car, so she didn't.
19. \_\_\_\_ The pastor knew his mistake and so promptly emailed the member to apologize before it got worse.
20. \_\_\_\_ He didn't think the member would discover his error and so he let it go, hoping she'd not find out.
21. \_\_\_\_ When she realized that she had exaggerated the figure, she interrupted the chair to correct herself.
22. \_\_\_\_ Seeing the misquote, the sales clerk immediately called the customer to assure her of a refund.
23. \_\_\_\_ The sales clerk didn't discover the error until later and so let it go because the customer overpaid.
24. \_\_\_\_ The youth hadn't completed the training but let the leader assume that he had so that they could play.
25. \_\_\_\_ The youth reminded the leader that she hadn't finished the certification, much to the leader's relief.

1D 2T 3D 4D 5T 6T 7D 8T 9T 10D 11D 12T 13D 14D 15D 16T 17T 18D 19T 20D 21T 22T 23D 24D 25T

# Counsel Against Deception

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against deception? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

They'd hired the charity's new executive director a few months ago after a recruiting and interview process that in retrospect seemed swift. Maybe they'd moved too quickly. Yes, surely, they had done so because now they knew that the new executive director didn't have the skills that they thought and maybe not the character and commitment, either. Talking privately among themselves, the interview team admitted that they were in part to blame for what now looked like a poor fit, the wrong hire. They could have had more interviews, checked more references, deliberated, prayed. But they also perceived that they had a more-serious problem with the candidate whom they chose: she appeared now to have seriously misrepresented her experience, qualifications, and commitments. They could already point to a couple of specifics in her resume that they were now sure were not true, although they hadn't confronted her about those apparent misrepresentations yet. And in fact, that was their present problem. They didn't know what to do, whether or how to bring it up with her. They sensed that they were doing no good for themselves, her, and others to let it go, talk about it behind her back, and drift ever more rapidly in the wrong direction. What, though, was their next step? How does one confront, or if not confront then correct, deception?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as 1 Corinthians 11:28 says, "**Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.**"*

# Judgment

God, who judges but sent his Son to rescue, not to judge, doesn't want us judging others. If we are to be like Christ, then we must not judge and condemn others, because Christ came to save, not condemn. Jesus himself said so in several different contexts, as Matthew 7:1, Luke 6:37, and John 8:7 all recount. Followers will remember his lesson about removing the speck from a brother's eye and his saving from stoning the woman caught in adultery. Not just followers but everyone knows Jesus's Golden Rule, recorded in Luke 6:31, to do to others as you would have them do to you. We do not wish others to judge us, so we must not judge others. Pretty simple.

Judging others, though, is a national pastime. We review, evaluate, and pass judgment on everything and everyone other than ourselves. We rank, score, editorialize, analyze, and ridicule, and not just important persons like politicians, trial lawyers, chief executives, and physicians, but persons whose roles we create for nothing other than judging, like contestants on singing, cooking, and dating shows, and obstacle courses. We judge not only character and commitment, not only skill and expertise, not only wisdom and articulation, but also food, art, clothing, vacation destinations, and hairstyles. We make judging into billion-dollar entertainment industries.

Yet Paul reminds us in Romans 2:1 that at precisely the point we judge others, we condemn ourselves, because we do just what others do. To the foolishness we see so clearly in others, we are blind in ourselves. If only we turned the critical eye that we have for others toward our own conduct and character, then we would escape God's own judgment. That is God's promise. Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. Take our eyes off others. See if the following exercises help you recognize judging others and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Judgment

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Matthew 7:1-2

**Do not judge,**

**or you too will be judged.**

**For in the same way**

**you judge others,**

**you will be judged....**

# Recognizing Judgment

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of judging others from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Romans 2:1: “You, therefore, have no excuse, *you who pass judgment on someone else*, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He could not believe how thick-headed his neighbor had become, and he wasn’t going to stand for it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His neighbor had some odd habits, but he supposed that he had his own and should mind his business.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She didn’t like the way that the new member dressed and talked, and she told her own friends so.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The new member was from another part of the country, everyone could tell, but she thought it charming.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Why couldn’t they just do it like she did? Why did they have to be so obstinate? She’d show them.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Romans 14:10: “You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you *treat them with contempt*? For we will all stand before God’s judgment seat.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She couldn’t bear to sit next to him, he was so repugnant. She made a point of glaring at him as she left.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He wasn’t going to sully himself greeting the workers, whom he studiously avoided as beneath him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He didn’t know any of the workers yet, but he made a point to smile and greet each one of them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She didn’t understand the youth’s mannerisms and habits, but she was going to try to connect anyway.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn’t explain why, but he just thought the youth was a complete dolt and so treated him like it.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. James 4:12: “Anyone who *speaks against a brother or sister or judges them* speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.”

\_\_\_\_\_ The team leader knew the member’s conduct would come up and so cut off any criticism in advance.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She was going straight to the supervisor, hoping he’d ream her co-worker out for being who she is.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The member took pains to point out that the volunteer didn’t even hold to true doctrine on all things.  
\_\_\_\_\_ They disagreed about their favorite preacher and some doctrinal things, but she respected her friend.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her assistant’s performance had been average, but she told the other assistants she didn’t respect her.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 1 Corinthians 6:1: “If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare *take it before the ungodly* for judgment instead of the Lord’s people?”

\_\_\_\_\_ The members and church board could not agree on defining membership and so consulted the Bible.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The matter involved church governance, but the board decided to file a lawsuit in the local court.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The church brought in the denomination’s pastoral counselor to ease the terminated pastor’s departure.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The church hired a professional mediator to attempt to reach a compromise with their departing pastor.  
\_\_\_\_\_ A management consultant led the church staff in studying how to reduce conflict and increase output.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Judgment

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting judging others from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Matthew 7:1: “***Do not judge, or you too will be judged.*** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He'd never seen anyone act quite so bizarre, but he didn't want to jump to conclusions and so waited.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *She's sick*, he told the officer, *a real whacko*, although he'd only seen her act unusual this one time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wanted to attribute his conduct to bad character but stopped, realizing the behavior was the thing.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew his type, and she knew he'd never change, even though she'd only just met him yesterday.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had seen her neighbor do it a hundred times, but she just bit her tongue not to say anything.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Romans 12:19: “***Do not take revenge***, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He wanted to tell off the creep, destroy him for all the scandal he'd done to her, but he held his tongue.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She could have moved his application to the end of the line, as he deserved, but she treated it as usual.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wasn't going to stand being mistreated and so quietly slipped his papers to the back of the line.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He deserved to be exposed, shamed, and ridiculed for what he'd done, and so she posted everything.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The easiest thing and just thing to do would have been to expose him, but she left him to the Lord.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. John 12:47: ““If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For ***I did not come to judge the world***, but to save the world.””

\_\_\_\_\_ *We follow a holy and righteous God*, the mentor told the boy, *but you're just not holding up your end*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ *No, I don't think God is judging you*, the friend was saying to her, *that's not his way, as his Son showed*.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He felt nothing but shame, sharing what he did, and yet the pastor just looked kindly back at him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As the penitent made his shameful disclosure, the elder shook his head, telling him that was his problem.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He looked as if he expected her to jump down his throat, but she just bowed her head and said *let's pray*.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Luke 6:37: ““Do not judge, and you will not be judged. ***Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned***. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.””

\_\_\_\_\_ He had made a mess of his participation, and so the leader told him that he wasn't welcome back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She had every reason to kick him out of the group, but something told her to show him God's mercy.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The youth just didn't fit in, and everybody knew it, so they appointed one to send him off rudely.  
\_\_\_\_\_ No one seemed to think much of the youth, which was why the mentor especially befriended him.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wanted to pray that God rain down fire over him, but instead she found herself asking forgiveness.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles Against Judgment

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. The chapter had been meeting for more than an hour, all of it spent discussing what an absent member had done. None of them liked it, and they were thinking not only of kicking the absent member out of the chapter, telling him not to come back, but also telling two other chapters not to welcome him. It wasn't anything dangerous, just conduct of which none of them approved, even though they'd all probably thought of doing it, and a few surely must have done so. The leader asked for a vote of what to do.

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2. They were making their first visit to the church, and immediately they noticed that the members were preparing to administer communion differently than their old church had done. And then the new church had no hymnals in the pews, only a screen with the song lyrics. They didn't even have pews, only padded chairs. And no deacons to seat them. The preaching was sound and music strong, but they didn't appreciate how the new church had done away with so many sound traditions.

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3. She had never spoken at length with someone who professed atheism, and so it took her aback when that's exactly what happened. She hadn't expected to have a long conversation on the train with anyone, but then she especially hadn't expected to talk about her faith, about religion. She wanted to just get up and find another seat, but something told her not to do so. What was it she was trying to remember? What would her Lord have done?

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4. He looked at the unfortunate young adult, so obviously crushed by the matter. And he could understand why. It hadn't been a pretty thing, indeed, had been a pretty awful thing in which the young adult had been involved. He'd seen some recover from the embarrassment and shame of it, but he wasn't sure that this young adult would. At first, he wasn't sure what to say, what posture to take. Should he be firm or gentle? Should he even listen and respond?

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# Example Principles Against Judgment

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. The chapter had been meeting for more than an hour, all of it spent discussing what an absent member had done. None of them liked it, and they were thinking not only of kicking the absent member out of the chapter, telling him not to come back, but also telling two other chapters not to welcome him. It wasn't anything dangerous, just conduct of which none of them approved, even though they'd all probably thought of doing it, and a few surely must have done so. The leader asked for a vote of what to do. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 8:7 recounts Jesus protecting the woman caught in adultery: "When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.'"* The principle is that we have plenty of sin of our own for God to condemn so that we should not be condemning others.
2. They were making their first visit to the church, and immediately they noticed that the members were preparing to administer communion differently than their old church had done. And then the new church had no hymnals in the pews, only a screen with the song lyrics. They didn't even have pews, only padded chairs. And no deacons to seat them. The preaching was sound and music strong, but they didn't appreciate how the new church had done away with so many sound traditions. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 14:3 states, "The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them."* The principle is that we shouldn't judge the value and character of another by the rituals and practices to which they adhere or don't adhere.
3. She had never spoken at length with someone who professed atheism, and so it took her aback when that's exactly what happened. She hadn't expected to have a long conversation on the train with anyone, but then she especially hadn't expected to talk about her faith, about religion. She wanted to just get up and find another seat, but something told her not to do so. What was it she was trying to remember? What would her Lord have done? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 3:17, "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."* The principle is that God saves rather than destroys, and so we should not tear others down but instead show them Jesus.
4. He looked at the unfortunate young adult, so obviously crushed by the matter. And he could understand why. It hadn't been a pretty thing, indeed, had been a pretty awful thing in which the young adult had been involved. He'd seen some recover from the embarrassment and shame of it, but he wasn't sure that this young adult would. At first, he wasn't sure what to say, what posture to take. Should he be firm or gentle? Should he even listen and respond? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted."* The principle is that when correcting another, we must do so in love and with care, for we also may need correction.



# Evidence of Judgment

Sort the examples of judging others (J) from the examples of graceful forgiveness (F):

1. \_\_\_\_ Why was he always that way and never the way he should be? she thought, until she was furious.
2. \_\_\_\_ She could make herself angry thinking about his faults or think about her own. She chose the latter.
3. \_\_\_\_ He was sure that the salesperson meant to cheat him and embarrassed when finding out his own error.
4. \_\_\_\_ She thought the server made a mistake on her bill but asked gently, not wanting to shame her.
5. \_\_\_\_ The drive-through had gotten her order wrong again, two days in a row, but she figured they were new.
6. \_\_\_\_ He fumed at the dry cleaner for giving him someone else's clothing until learning he got his wife's.
7. \_\_\_\_ He wrote the editorial presuming the worst motives on the council's part because they deserved it.
8. \_\_\_\_ The editor was careful not to attribute motives to the commission, not knowing why they acted.
9. \_\_\_\_ She just knew and so said her professor was a creep, even though he'd not said or done anything.
10. \_\_\_\_ The clerk took one look at the applicant and sneered, knowing his sort and what they were after.
11. \_\_\_\_ The clerk had seen a lot of applicants, and many had serious issues, but she gave each one a chance.
12. \_\_\_\_ The personnel director always gave an interview even when initially doubting that they'd hire.
13. \_\_\_\_ The personnel director never interviewed anyone with a red flag because you couldn't trust people.
14. \_\_\_\_ Finding no tip, the server figured they'd forgotten, rather than assume the worst. They'd be back.
15. \_\_\_\_ *Those stingy people*, the server grumbled over finding a cheap tip, *they're probably filthy rich, too*.
16. \_\_\_\_ When she saw that the garbage service had left one of the pails full, she laughed, ready to call them.
17. \_\_\_\_ From the sounds of the letter, she couldn't tell if they were joking, so she called rather than fight.
18. \_\_\_\_ Their correspondence was ambiguous, but he knew their type, and he wasn't going to have any of it.
19. \_\_\_\_ He was so disgusted at the new musician's gaffe that he wouldn't look at her after the concert.
20. \_\_\_\_ He had thought the new musician understood the arrangement but could see she had not. His mistake.
21. \_\_\_\_ The teacher started to correct the student but saw he was trying his best and so let him work it out.
22. \_\_\_\_ The teacher was tired of students not being prepared and so yelled at the latest one to make an error.
23. \_\_\_\_ The cadets should have received and read the instructions, but he had to be sure before criticizing.
24. \_\_\_\_ The child didn't usually cry, and so she spoke gently to her and let her compose herself before asking.
25. \_\_\_\_ The child shouldn't have cried, and she couldn't have children bursting out, so she made her sit out.

1J 2F 3J 4PF 5F 6J 7J 8F 9J 10J 11F 12F 13J 14F 15J 16F 17F 18J 19J 20F 21F 22J 23F 24F 25J

# Counsel Against Judgment

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against judging others? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

The investor with whom they'd long been working had just called, right before the closing of their long-pursued project. He was pulling out. He'd given no reason, either. He had just sounded upset and declined to talk right then. Of course, he had every right to do as he wished with his money. But he'd been such a great partner until then. They had trusted him, and he had deeply appreciated and obviously respected them. They thought that they'd found someone with whom they might work for years, for everyone's benefit. Now, they had nowhere to turn. They could have lined up other investors, probably, but he had been so supportive and sure that they had not even considered a backup, a Plan B. As they tried to collect themselves, they started to speculate on why he had pulled out. Their speculation turned to criticism of his character, with which they all felt uncomfortable because he had been such a great guy. But something must be wrong with him, they figured. Silence fell over the group as each of them searched for how to leave it. Do they blame it on him, or do they do something else like give him the benefit of the doubt?

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as 2 Timothy 2:15 says: **"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."***

# Contention

Contention is a sin that not only turns away the seeker but also burdens, divides, and disrupts the body of Christ, the church where we should be reflecting unity in community. In 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, the apostle Paul addressed the division in the church in Corinth, pleading that the church unite “in the same mind and same judgment.” Factions in the church were following different leaders, when to the contrary, Christ in no sense divided himself. Church leaders did not suffer crucifixion for members, whom the church did not baptize in their leaders’ names. We are instead one in Christ. Ephesians 4:3-6 reminds us that we have one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father over, through, and in all.

The Bible shows the source of contention. Jude 18-19 tell us that scoffers who lack the Spirit and instead follow their own natural instincts toward ungodly desires divide the body. Followers of Christ, those who abide in the Spirit and in whom Christ richly dwells, do not divide the body. Indeed, Luke 12:49-53 records Jesus saying that he came to divide followers from those who do not follow, not a division in the body but between the body and those who do not believe. Mark 3:25 records Jesus saying that a divided house, working against itself, cannot stand. We in the body must remain united, even as we allow the Spirit to divide our soul from spirit, as Hebrews 4:12 describes.

God commands us not to be contentious. Proverbs 6:16-19 warns that God detests those who stir up conflict in the community. Avoiding contention at first seems easy, as if one need only avoid argument. But pride and natural desires breed dissension. Avoiding contention thus begins not with outward restraint but inward commitment. We receive Christ’s Spirit, and we live in peace. His life brings us life, while we put to death the old self that pursues natural desires, sowing dissension. See if the following exercises help you recognize contention and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Contention

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Romans 12:18

**If it is possible,**

**as far as**

**it depends on you,**

**live at peace**

**with everyone.**

# Recognizing Contention

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of contention from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. James 4:1-2: “What causes ***fights and quarrels among you?*** ... ***You covet*** but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn’t understand why the new guy got the larger cubicle, and he was letting the manager know.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was glad for the new employee that she got the new cubicle because the old ones weren’t much.  
\_\_\_\_\_ After she’d waited her turn to start as a senior, and then the sophomore was starting, she decided to quit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She marveled at the sophomore’s skill and imagined how hard she must have worked to get to start.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The one thing she’d ever wanted, he had taken from her, and now she was going to make him pay.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Galatians 5:26: “Let us not become ***conceited, provoking and envying each other.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ He knew that his presentations were better thought out, more polished, and he let the others know so.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wished she had the looks the manager had and figured that’s how she’d won her position unfairly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She didn’t always agree with her manager but was glad that her manager dealt with all the hard things.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He wasn’t as strong or handsome as the head coach but would do all that he could to help him succeed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He said that the principal gave the head coach his position because he looked the part, not earned it.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Romans 16:17: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for ***those who cause divisions*** and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He grew concerned that the office was growing increasingly divided and so tried to mend fences.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was glad to have gotten several co-workers on his side and just needed to convince more of them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She went to the leader’s allies, quietly encouraging them to think again about supporting him any longer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She respected authority, if not always the person exercising it, and so refused to speak against the leader.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had no respect for authority, no matter who was using it, and so undermined any administrative act.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 2 Thessalonians 3:6: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from ***every believer who is idle and disruptive*** and does not live according to the teaching you received from us.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She worked fewer hours but managed to get more done than anyone, by quietly minding her business.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She somehow creatively managed to get done the least work and keep others from doing their work.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He took the new hire under his wing to teach him how to be most efficient and productive, good habits.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He told the new hire not to work too hard because the other workers didn’t like being shown up.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Every day, she’d bring a new crossword puzzle to work and get her office mates to help her with it.

\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Rejecting Contention

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting contention from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. Philippians 2:14-15: “***Do everything without grumbling or arguing***, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’”

\_\_\_\_\_ No one else had to do it, but he took his assignment as a sign of trust and respect for his work ethic.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He was the only one required to complete the reports, and he complained to every other worker about it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Feeding the stock early in the morning was cold and hard, but he grew to like working alone in the dark.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She wasn’t going to take being bossed around, so she found something in the new work to challenge.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She disagreed with the objective but figured that her supervisor knew best, so she’d just do it quietly.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Romans 14:1: “Accept the one whose faith is weak, ***without quarreling over disputable matters***.”

\_\_\_\_\_ She didn’t correct the new one who misunderstood the verse. They were getting to know one another.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She could tell that her roommate was tired and wanted to pick a fight, so she just complied quietly.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her roommate always got bossy when she was tired or upset. She was ready to set her straight on it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ When the friend she brought to church questioned the text, she showed her exactly why she was right.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The friend she’d brought to church for her first time questioned the pastor, but she let it go this time.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. 1 Timothy 2:8: “I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands ***without anger or disputing***.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He just couldn’t get his spirit right for prayer after their argument and so skipped the prayer meeting.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He didn’t feel like praying after their confusion that morning, but he did anyway and was glad for it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She would not let disagreements stop her worship and so sat with her usual group and raised her hands.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She usually worshiped joyfully with the same friends but sat in the back because of their spat that day.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The couple prayed quietly together that night despite having disagreed over their financial plan.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 2 Timothy 2:14: “Keep reminding God’s people of these things. ***Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen***.”

\_\_\_\_\_ The leader asked that they all use the New King James, but that was ridiculous, and so he used the NIV.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He preferred the NIV over any other translation, but he’d learned a few things from other versions.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She insisted he had said he would submit it, when he knew he had not, they argued back and forth.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Clearly, they had misunderstood one another, they both agreed. Both apologized for not being clearer.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The member listened to the pastors discuss the verse, noticing their civility even when seeing differently.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Principles Against Contention

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. The assistant could see and hear the ministry leaders disagreeing over the program, its goals, and its curriculum. She wanted to offer advice but wasn't sure whether it would help. To her, they seemed to be advocating for the same thing but were just unwilling to acknowledge one another. She started again to say something but stopped. Should she intervene, clarify, offer advice? The disagreement looked to her to be a grand waste of time and energy.

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2. The co-leaders had each asked the participant to wait his turn and wait the leader's acknowledgment before interjecting critical comments, but the participant didn't seem to want to listen. They finally approached the participant together, asking that he follow the group's norms to wait for others to finish and to ask the leader's acknowledgment before speaking, especially in challenge or criticism. They didn't mind disagreement but wanted to conduct civil, cordial gatherings. And yet, the participant continued interjecting rudely even after they met with him together.

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3. He'd had entirely enough of her trying to straighten things up but only messing up his things so that he couldn't find them. He'd asked her quietly and politely a couple of times to leave his things alone, and she'd gladly agreed, saying that he should straighten up his own things. But now, she'd done it again, without even asking him to straighten anything up himself. The nerve of her! He had only a few pet peeves, and this issue was fast becoming one of them. He was ready to tell her a thing or two.

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4. He knew exactly what the customers needed and wanted. He didn't need a new manager telling him what to do. He'd been doing just fine for the last twenty years without listening to some upstart, know-it-all, Ivy-League, B-school graduate. Those schools don't teach you what you need to know, anyway. They're all theory, no practice. The store would go broke if those know-nothings ran things. He wasn't going to challenge the new manager openly, but he sure wasn't going to do what he said.

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# Example Principles Against Contention

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. The assistant could see and hear the ministry leaders disagreeing over the program, its goals, and its curriculum. She wanted to offer advice but wasn't sure whether it would help. To her, they seemed to be advocating for the same thing but were just unwilling to acknowledge one another. She started again to say something but stopped. Should she intervene, clarify, offer advice? The disagreement looked to her to be a grand waste of time and energy. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Timothy 2:21 says, “**Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.**” The principle is that entertaining arguments just makes them worse. Walk away. Talk later rather than argue now.*
2. The co-leaders had each asked the participant to wait his turn and wait the leader's acknowledgment before interjecting critical comments, but the participant didn't seem to want to listen. They finally approached the participant together, asking that he follow the group's norms to wait for others to finish and to ask the leader's acknowledgment before speaking, especially in challenge or criticism. They didn't mind disagreement but wanted to conduct civil, cordial gatherings. And yet, the participant continued interjecting rudely even after they met with him together. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Titus 3:10 states, “**Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.**” The principle is that coaching divisive persons is probably a waste of time. Set the rules for behavior, give them a couple of chances with correction, then leave them out.*
3. He'd had entirely enough of her trying to straighten things up but only messing up his things so that he couldn't find them. He'd asked her quietly and politely a couple of times to leave his things alone, and she'd gladly agreed, saying that he should straighten up his own things. But now, she'd done it again, without even asking him to straighten anything up himself. The nerve of her! He had only a few pet peeves, and this issue was fast becoming one of them. He was ready to tell her a thing or two. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Proverbs 17:14 states, “**Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.**” The principle is not to start quarrels because they are hard to stop once started.*
4. He knew exactly what the customers needed and wanted. He didn't need a new manager telling him what to do. He'd been doing just fine for the last twenty years without listening to some upstart, know-it-all, Ivy-League, B-school graduate. Those schools don't teach you what you need to know, anyway. They're all theory, no practice. The store would go broke if those know-nothings ran things. He wasn't going to challenge the new manager openly, but he sure wasn't going to do what he said. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Proverbs 13:10 says, “**Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.**” The principle is that pride leads to strife. Reduce the pride, reduce the strife.*



# Evidence of Contention

Sort the examples of contention (C) from the examples of peacemaking (P):

1. \_\_\_\_ He loved to egg on the nerds on the bus until they got upset and wanted to cry or fight.
2. \_\_\_\_ He enjoyed teasing and laughter but knew the line not to cross, not wanting to upset anyone.
3. \_\_\_\_ She knew all his buttons to push and sometimes just pushed them to show that she was in control.
4. \_\_\_\_ She knew what upset him and what didn't upset him, and so she tried to avoid getting him rankled.
5. \_\_\_\_ They'd not argued hard in a long time and attributed it to the sermons they watched together daily.
6. \_\_\_\_ The manager could see that the old workers were picking on the new, young hires and enjoying it.
7. \_\_\_\_ The new hires didn't come with the toughness that plant work required, so they needled them harder.
8. \_\_\_\_ The work was hard enough not to make it harder, so the old workers let the new guy ease in.
9. \_\_\_\_ He went pew to pew, greeting the arriving worshipers but reminding them to oppose the building plan.
10. \_\_\_\_ The nonprofit passed over the volunteer to hire an outsider, and so the volunteer undermined the hire.
11. \_\_\_\_ The volunteer wanted the job but was glad that the nonprofit found someone so highly qualified.
12. \_\_\_\_ The musician didn't mind playing for two decades without being asked to lead, being a good soldier.
13. \_\_\_\_ The vocalist complained that they should be taking turns leading rather than one doing it all the time.
14. \_\_\_\_ The administrator sensed one of the workers was upset and so bought everyone lunch to ease tension.
15. \_\_\_\_ The unit leader saw one of the workers frown and shake her head and so called her on it on the spot.
16. \_\_\_\_ The pastor listened carefully to the elders and, sensing a lack of consensus, moved to another subject.
17. \_\_\_\_ The elder couldn't tolerate disagreement among the board members and so kept pushing discussion.
18. \_\_\_\_ The youth was used to his parents arguing about everything at home and so argued with the teacher.
19. \_\_\_\_ The youth saw his parents argue but didn't think it was worthy of a Christian and so refused to dispute.
20. \_\_\_\_ The teacher noticed that the youth avoided conflict and so made sure to reassure him of a safe space.
21. \_\_\_\_ The professor liked to get the class stirred up, thinking it helped energize them, and so argued at will.
22. \_\_\_\_ The customer insisted to the manager the cashier had intentionally cheated her, though just a mistake.
23. \_\_\_\_ The cashier apologized profusely to the customer, not wanting her to think it had been intentional.
24. \_\_\_\_ The superintendent calmly asked the custodian to check the windowsills again for dust and insects.
25. \_\_\_\_ The superintendent yelled at the custodian to stop being so lazy and do the stupid windowsills again.

1C 2P 3C 4P 5P 6C 7C 8P 9C 10C 11P 12P 13C 14P 15C 16P 17C 18C 19P 20P 21C 22C 23P 24P 25C

# Counsel Against Contention

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against contention? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

You've had a hard time getting through to your youth group, the otherwise fine group of youth whom you've mentored for quite a while now. They'd truly been a joy to follow, a joy to instruct, a joy to lead—until recently. Maybe they were just maturing, going through a phase, but whereas they were once all great friends, they lately have been competing over everything, and not just competing but contending..., well, yes, *fighting*. You've literally seen them go at one another as if mortal enemies, this group of youth who would once have given everything for one another. Now, everything is a matter of principle, and many things matters of pride. They've lost their peace and replaced it with something that is not quite enmity, not quite hate, but something approaching it. At first, you thought it was just horseplay, jocularly. But lately, you've seen that it is something worse, something deeper that you cannot tolerate in this group, or the group will have defeated its purpose, which is to build up their character, not tear it down. You're not sure what lesson to give, what demonstration or story or illustration, indeed what Bible passage or verse. But you know you need to put a stop to this contentious spirit, or someone's going to hurt someone else, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually if not physically.

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as 1 Corinthians 11:28 says, "**Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.**"*

# Sensuality

The sin of pursuing sensuality over sensitivity, condemned in Ephesians 4:19 and other verses and passages, is likely one of the less-obvious sins, especially in a society that plainly honors it. Part of the problem may be the subtlety of the distinction. We live through the senses, perceiving God through what he has made, as Romans 1:19-20 indicates. Yet we truly live, live eternally, not through the senses but the Spirit of God. And thus, when we pursue things of the senses, especially things of the appetite and flesh, carnal lusts, we pursue our end, not our beginning. Only when we put aside things of the flesh, crucify them, do we begin to live in the Spirit. Sensitivity involves waiting and listening for the Spirit, hearing the unexpressed, seeing the invisible, perceiving not through the eyes and ears and flesh but through our spirits, resonant with the rhythms of God.

Exercises distinguishing sensuality from sensitivity must therefore be useful, given their subtle distinction. The distinction is one that followers of Christ must make because to pursue sensuality, to pursue the desires of the flesh, is to reject the truth and walk away from God, as 2 Peter 2:2 suggests. Too many misunderstand: pursuit of the flesh is not merely an indulgence but a denial. Pursuing the flesh denies the existence, presence, and priority of God. Too many see holiness as a high standard and its opposite carnality as a watered-down state, when the difference is greater, going to how one stands with respect to the truth.

Avoiding sensuality may at first seem simple, like declining a bacchanalian invitation, as if no orgies lately, then we're good. Yet sensuality is far more subtle, creeping into one's day like a scam artist, into one's night like a thief. Think of the many little comforts, including sips, tastes, touches, glances, and smells, toward which your mind pulls throughout the day, rather than dwell in God, and you'll get a better sense of the invidious nature of sensuality. To live in the Spirit may take closing the eyes, ears, and mouth, and stilling the mind, while opening the heart to God. See if the following exercises help you recognize sensuality and how to minimize and avoid it.

# Remembering Sensuality

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Ephesians 4:19

**Having lost all sensitivity**

**they have given themselves over**

**to sensuality to indulge in**

**every kind of impurity,**

**with continual lust for more.**

# Recognizing Sensuality

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of sensuality from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. 2 Peter 2:2: “***Many will follow their depraved conduct*** and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ He had a conscience, but he wasn’t going to give up all gambling, drugs, drinking, and sleeping around.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He’d made a grave error, but he wasn’t going to let that error define him, wasn’t going to repeat it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She knew she had a problem but had no interest in giving it up, though she knew it hurt others, too.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her problem disturbed her, especially seeing it hurt others, and so she recommitted to giving it up.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He professed to be a Christian, but others mocked the faith for his hypocritical scamming of workers.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Romans 1:28: “Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so ***God gave them over to a depraved mind***, so that they do what ought not to be done.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ They traded links to pornography sites simply to amuse one another, while planning their next victim.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He led a ring of cocaine dealers who kept order with a team of hit men, none of whom had any scruples.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He’d been in to drugs badly, but somehow, after a come-to-Jesus moment, had entirely quit.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d gotten depressed and then hooked on painkillers, but she’d do anything to protect her children.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She’d been doing drugs so long and hard that she offered her children for money and lost them.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Ezekiel 16:47: “You not only followed their ways and copied their detestable practices, but in all your ways ***you soon became more depraved than they***.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ His mother had gotten him started as a youth running drugs, but a mentor at church pulled him back.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He started as a youthful drug runner but now ran the ring more ruthlessly than his deceased predecessor.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His friend had introduced him to the dark websites, but now he was creating his own content to post.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her friends had shown her the horrible websites, and she had acted amused, but they made her sick.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He’d gone to dog fights with friends but soon started buying and training dogs to fight to the death.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.
4. 1 John 2:16: “For everything in the world—***the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes***, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”  
\_\_\_\_\_ He liked cars, from an automotive family, but he never let his interest interfere with church or family.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He subscribed to every car magazine and went to every car show, until all he could think about was cars.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She was skilled at design and used those skills for a good career, but she saw God in all his creation.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She talked incessantly about her photography, the right light and angle, and spent her last dollar on it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She was so into fashion she left her family, went to New York, and fell into the drug and party scene.  
\_ E \_ \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2EENNE 3NEENE 4NENEE

# Rejecting Sensuality

Distinguish the verse examples (E) of rejecting sensuality from the non-examples (N) before writing examples of your own:

1. 2 Peter 2:7-8: “[H]e rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was ***distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless*** (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)....”

\_\_\_\_\_ When she saw what they were doing on the computer, she quietly turned away, disgusted they would.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She watched, amused, as the others went from scurrilous website to website, laughing at the content.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The company was coaching employees to hide illegal conditions from the regulators, but he refused.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The supervisor wanted them all to pretend to know nothing, and so to keep his job, he agreed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She felt awful for the women she saw soliciting men from her apartment’s street corner every night.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

2. 1 Corinthians 10:13: “[]God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But ***when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.***”

\_\_\_\_\_ His hunting buddies were drinking to excess, but he found a good book in the cabin to occupy himself.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Her roommate insisted on watching those wretched reality dating shows, but she found sermons online.  
\_\_\_\_\_ At first, she didn’t like the junk that her roommate watched on television, but she grew to enjoy it, too.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His probation officer told him not to hang out on the street, but he had nothing else to do.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The drugs were all available to him right on the street outside his door, but the Spirit kept him focused.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Matthew 26:41: “***Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.*** The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He figured he was just staying current and building his social-media skills, on Facebook all the time.  
\_\_\_\_\_ As soon as he realized he was scrolling his Twitter feed instead of listening to his family, he set it aside.  
\_\_\_\_\_ She went immediately to prayer when her friend took her gently aside to warn her of her relationships.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sure, he drank more than he used to, but he also had more friends who drank, so what’s the harm?  
\_\_\_\_\_ He and his mentor decided to pray about whether his ambition was interfering with his family life.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

4. 2 Peter 3:17: “Therefore, dear friends, since you have been forewarned, ***be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless*** and fall from your secure position.”

\_\_\_\_\_ He had bought the big-wheeled off roader despite the mortgage being behind and his wife upset over it.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His buddies owned big trucks, but he figured he would avoid their escapades rather than join them.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His college roommate had friends who brought drugs into their room, and he was curious about it all.  
\_\_\_\_\_ He couldn’t believe his college roommate, whom he liked, would dabble in drugs, so he asked to move.  
\_\_\_\_\_ His business partner cheated on his personal taxes, and so he made sure to pay every penny of his own.

\_\_\_\_\_ E \_\_\_\_\_.

1E NENE 2E NENE 3N EENE 4N ENEE

# Principles Against Sensuality

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. At first, she hadn't thought that the circle of new acquaintances to whom her work introduced her were so bad. She knew they had a bad reputation around town, but sometimes people get the wrong idea about others who may just be different. But getting to know them, and as she looked beneath their obvious faults, things like smoking and drinking and having many relationships, things that they seemed happy to flaunt, she found hints of something more disturbing, dark, unsafe, and threatening.

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2. He noticed how the neighbors took unusual pride that they did not drink or swear or gamble, all of which seemed fine, except their pride suggested another issue that he was now also noticing. Although they avoided the obvious faults, they seemed no less constrained against the more-subtle faults, and indeed, maybe more disposed to them. Formally, one couldn't judge them. But from a spiritual standpoint, they seemed more barren and corrupt than many who engaged in the more-obvious but relatively harmless indulgences.

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3. The couple had taken their friends' offer to join them on their boat, more like a yacht, over the holidays. They liked their friends, in part because they seemed balanced, liberated, even wise. They didn't party hard, fool around, or drink to excess, like some of their other married friends, with whose company they were careful. But when they joined their friends on their boat, they found the husband unusually devoted to the boat itself, as if it were more important than his marriage or friendships. And the wife had her own extraordinary devotion to how clean she kept it, again, as if cleanliness were more important than her friends or husband.

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4. She sure felt as if things couldn't get any worse in the culture. She also felt as if everyone involved in those desultory, even deadly cultural trends was suffering no consequence for them, no shame or judgment. Was the world somehow coming to its strange end, in which sinners triumphed in their depravity? Sometimes, she just had to turn off the news, things were getting so backward crazy.

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# Example Principles Against Sensuality

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. At first, she hadn't thought that the circle of new acquaintances to whom her work introduced her were so bad. She knew they had a bad reputation around town, but sometimes people get the wrong idea about others who may just be different. But getting to know them, and as she looked beneath their obvious faults, things like smoking and drinking and having many relationships, things that they seemed happy to flaunt, she found hints of something more disturbing, dark, unsafe, and threatening. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Ephesians 4:19* says, "**Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.**" The principle is that if one does not have a sensitive spirit for the Lord, then one will desire sensual experiences to replace the hole in the heart.
2. He noticed how the neighbors took unusual pride that they did not drink or swear or gamble, all of which seemed fine, except their pride suggested another issue that he was now also noticing. Although they avoided the obvious faults, they seemed no less constrained against the more-subtle faults, and indeed, maybe more disposed to them. Formally, one couldn't judge them. But from a spiritual standpoint, they seemed more barren and corrupt than many who engaged in the more-obvious but relatively harmless indulgences. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Colossians 2:23* states, "*Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but **they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.***" The principle is that formal rules, disciplines, and restrictions do not get to the root of sensual desire. One must dwell in the Holy Spirit, drawing on the Lord's righteousness.
3. The couple had taken their friends' offer to join them on their boat, more like a yacht, over the holidays. They liked their friends, in part because they seemed balanced, liberated, even wise. They didn't party hard, fool around, or drink to excess, like some of their other married friends, with whose company they were careful. But when they joined their friends on their boat, they found the husband unusually devoted to the boat itself, as if it were more important than his marriage or friendships. And the wife had her own extraordinary devotion to how clean she kept it, again, as if cleanliness were more important than her friends or husband. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Peter 2:19* states, "**They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for 'people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.'**" The principle is that sensual indulgences enslave, and the enslaved cannot promise and produce freedom.
4. She sure felt as if things couldn't get any worse in the culture. She also felt as if everyone involved in those desultory, even deadly cultural trends was suffering no consequence for them, no shame or judgment. Was the world somehow coming to its strange end, in which sinners triumphed in their depravity? Sometimes, she just had to turn off the news, things were getting so backward crazy. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Thessalonians 2:3*: "*Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and **the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction.***" The principle is that end times will reveal lawlessness. All comes to light, whether for salvation or destruction.



# Evidence of Sensuality

Sort the examples of sensuality (S) from the examples of its opposite holiness (H):

1. \_\_\_\_ He was so into collecting sports memorabilia that he had little room for anything else than drinking.
2. \_\_\_\_ She loved Pinterest and so gradually turned from pinning decor to pinning verses shared for friends.
3. \_\_\_\_ Her Facebook identity meant more than her relationships with family and friends, and mental health.
4. \_\_\_\_ He worked as a lifeguard, embracing its security mission, while keeping his attention from roving.
5. \_\_\_\_ The coach placed personal responsibility, physical and mental development, and teamwork above all.
6. \_\_\_\_ The coach's assistant was into body building and physique so much that he offered the kids steroids.
7. \_\_\_\_ She worked out compulsively to preserve her figure, at age thirty fitting in her high school clothing.
8. \_\_\_\_ He worked out lightly most days for mental and physical health, and to be a good family supporter.
9. \_\_\_\_ He loved the rush that he got from placing big bets impressing onlookers, whether he won or lost.
10. \_\_\_\_ His sports car had to be the fastest, even if it meant that his wallet was the emptiest for his family.
11. \_\_\_\_ Racing was in his family, and they built leadership and family ministries around the sport.
12. \_\_\_\_ He'd never had much, with his disability sometimes couldn't even make rent, but loved the Lord.
13. \_\_\_\_ Despite poverty, or because of it (he didn't know which), he lived to get high on anything available.
14. \_\_\_\_ Her friends obsessed about their hair and clothing, teasing her for not doing so with them.
15. \_\_\_\_ He couldn't explain why, but he had an insatiable passion for God's word and nothing else.
16. \_\_\_\_ She didn't know why, but she had an unquenchable thirst for entertainment news and magazines.
17. \_\_\_\_ Her inherited beauty allowed her to model, from which she developed a ministry to other models.
18. \_\_\_\_ Her entire life's goal had been to grace the cover of a national fashion magazine, and she did it!
19. \_\_\_\_ His business success never failed to surprise him, and to everyone he credited it entirely to the Lord.
20. \_\_\_\_ He honed his business acumen from college on, to be the richest and most-powerful self-made man.
21. \_\_\_\_ He could tell every variety of wine while blindfolded and made it his life goal to earn top sommelier.
22. \_\_\_\_ The couple liked wine, and had even taken wine tours, but they treated it as a convenient outreach.
23. \_\_\_\_ His favorite time of the week was sitting quietly in the back, watching the worshipers praise the Lord.
24. \_\_\_\_ He liked standing up front, raising his arms, singing loudly so that everyone noticed his great voice.
25. \_\_\_\_ They just kept putting their lavish meals at the club on credit until they couldn't afford the bills.

1S 2H 3S 4H 5H 6S 7S 8H 9S 10S 11H 12H 13S 14H 15H 16S 17H 18S 19H 20S 21S 22H 23H 24S 25S

# Counsel Against Sensuality

*Consider this scenario before reflecting over the questions that follow. On what Bible verses or principles would your response draw? What words would you say, attitudes would you express, and actions would you take to counsel effectively against sensuality? And what would you not say, express, or do? Above all, what would you hope would result from your interaction, for yourself, others involved, and our Lord Jesus Christ?*

Working hard together, each on their own careers but as financial partners, the couple had clearly done well. They each had great expertise and great reputations as professionals in their chosen fields. Together, they were able to afford the best house in the city, on top of its highest hill, with the best view, from which they entertained the most-powerful and influential citizens. They dressed in ensembles that they bought on frolics to New York's Fifth Avenue, and they drove luxury cars customized for them by famous designers. They attended Broadway openings and got invited to premiers, readings, and showings. Yet somewhere along the way, their lives together had lost their magic and meaning. They found themselves going through the motions. Neither had been at all religious—their parents had raised them outside of any faith tradition—but they both felt as if something religious, or something ritualistic, or something else, was just missing. They didn't think that it was kids they were missing, because they had decided not to raise a family. They were just ... lost. They had spoken frankly about it to each other and, as with everything, agreed wholeheartedly with one another. They finally turned to a close friend who held a strong but quiet faith. They wanted to hear about how faith worked into their friend's life.

*Don't forget to think of a verse or verses that you would draw on and perhaps even share, for as Psalm 139:23 says, "**Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxious thoughts.**"*

# Part III

## Persevering in the Process

The Bible both reveals God's attributes, as Part I explores, and reveals human brokenness, the subject of Part II. This Part III turns from attributes of a divine God and fallen humans to the process through which God redeems us. Discipleship is not so much about possessing certain attributes while avoiding others as it is a process of moving from our fallen state into God's divine kingdom. Faith is not entirely about the destination. It is a lot about the journey. To follow Christ is a path and pursuit, persevering through a divinely ordained process about which the Bible has much to say—and we have much to learn in application.

What steps, then, do the following sections address? The process of discipleship begins with conviction, for Christ did not come to save the healthy but the sick. No one accepts Christ without a degree, indeed a healthy dose, of conviction. Conviction alone, though, is not enough, for the mouth must confess what the heart receives in conviction. Crucifixion of the old self must then follow confession borne of conviction. Christ then offers his salvation, that profound act of mercy and grace. The Father then adopts the follower into his own family, brothers and sisters of his glorious Son Christ.

Our process does not end with adoption into the family of God but only then makes a good beginning. God then creates us anew in his Son's royal image. Created anew, new men and women, the Spirit sanctifies us for our holy work, a refining work. We then come into communion with Christ, dwelling richly in him as a member of his body. We further anticipate a resurrected body and, ultimately, redemption into the full presence of God. Study all ten of these steps in the following order or choose and study the most challenging or richest for you. As you do so, let the Spirit guide you into communion with our incomparable Lord and Savior. And prepare to help others do likewise.

# Conviction

The gospel, 1 Thessalonians 1:5 tells us, comes to us in the Holy Spirit with great power, bringing full and deep conviction. We share in Christ, Hebrews 3:14 tells us, if we hold that original conviction to our end. John 16:8 says that the Spirit comes convicting the world, proving the world to be wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment. We must hold our faith, Romans 14:22 tells us, as a conviction between ourselves and God, Romans 14:5 adding that we must each hold conviction in our own mind. Hebrews 11:1 tells us that faith is itself our conviction about things we do not see. God inspires all scripture to teach and convict us, 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us.

Peter's Pentecost sermon, recorded in Acts 2, convicted thousands that they had murdered the perfectly innocent Son of God, after which they received that very Son's baptism and salvation. First Corinthians 7:9-10 describes the process, holy grief producing conviction followed by repentance. John 8:8 gives the account of how Jesus's words about sin convicted those who were about to stone the woman caught in adultery. By contrast, the hard and impenitent heart, Romans 2:5-6 tells us, stores up the wrath of God's judgment. Those who do not receive this conviction, Revelation 20:12-15 reveals, God will convict at the great-white-throne judgment. Jude 14-16 clarifies that the Lord will bring tens of thousands of his holy ones to convict the grumbling and malcontent ungodly for following their own sinful desires.

We must each reach these points of conviction. We must each examine our conscience, aided by the Holy Spirit's illumination. Jesus was the only one whom none could convict of sin, he himself proved, as John 8:46 records. He is the perfect Son of God. The rest of us must see that we are unlike him and thus need him, letting our old sin nature die to take on his own perfection. See if the following exercises help you recognize conviction and how to pursue, promote, and preserve it.

# Remembering Conviction

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 Thessalonians 1:5

**Our gospel came to you**

**not simply with words**

**but also with power,**

**with the Holy Spirit**

**and deep conviction.**

# Principles of Conviction

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. A long life had led him to an unfortunate point of spiritual weariness. He had expected his body and energy to give out but hadn't expected his spiritual life to cool with them. He loved Christ and had lived a good life pursuing him. Wasn't that enough to keep his passion kindled? Ah, but somewhere in that construction he could see a defect. Perhaps he must remember something that he had once embraced, something about his passion not rooting itself in his good life but instead the perfect life of his Savior.

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2. She had never understood Christians. She just didn't see herself as sinful, when she believed that Christians made recognizing their sinfulness a first step toward becoming Christian. She was basically a good person, so why would she need a perfect Savior? If she wasn't good enough for God, then maybe God wasn't good enough for her.

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3. He had rejected his parents' Christianity long ago, when he went off to college and realized how foolish and old-fashioned his parents were. That rejection had hardened over the years, a resolution that his church-bashing friends, various events, and a strong cultural trend all hastened along. Recently, an old high school friend had tried to get him to reconsider, but when he sensed something awakening in him, he had gone straight to his shaman to put it to death.

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4. She had so loved Christ that she ordered her life around observances honoring him. She drew some from the Old Testament, some from her Catholic tradition, and others from websites and friends. She lit candles on special days, burned incense at special hours, made hand motions at special moments, and chanted special sayings over and over, among many other practices. No one she knew put such energy and conviction into these practices, from which she drew such solace. The purity and power of her observances impressed her. No one could blame her for anything.

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# Example Principles of Conviction

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. A long life had led him to an unfortunate point of spiritual weariness. He had expected his body and energy to give out but hadn't expected his spiritual life to cool with them. He loved Christ and had lived a good life pursuing him. Wasn't that enough to keep his passion kindled? Ah, but somewhere in that construction he could see a defect. Perhaps he must remember something that he had once embraced, something about his passion not rooting itself in his good life but instead the perfect life of his Savior. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Hebrews 3:14 says, "We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the end." The principle is that we must retain the conviction that we first felt of our need for Christ's sacrifice, absolving us of sin. Conviction begins the process, but conviction must also remain.*
2. She had never understood Christians. She just didn't see herself as sinful, when she believed that Christians made recognizing their sinfulness a first step toward becoming Christian. She was basically a good person, so why would she need a perfect Savior? If she wasn't good enough for God, then maybe God wasn't good enough for her. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 9:41 recounts Jesus saying, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains." The principle is that those who sense no conviction, no need of Christ, and claim holiness without him, remain in sin.*
3. He had rejected his parents' Christianity long ago, when he went off to college and realized how foolish and old-fashioned his parents were. That rejection had hardened over the years, a resolution that his church-bashing friends, various events, and a strong cultural trend all hastened along. Recently, an old high school friend had tried to get him to reconsider, but when he sensed something awakening in him, he had gone straight to his shaman to put it to death. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Mark 3:29 recounts Jesus saying, "[B]ut whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin." The principle is that a settled and firm rejection of the truth, when the Spirit confronts one with it, leaves no salvation to remain.*
4. She had so loved Christ that she ordered her life around observances honoring him. She drew some from the Old Testament, some from her Catholic tradition, and others from websites and friends. She lit candles on special days, burned incense at special hours, made hand motions at special moments, and chanted special sayings over and over, among many other practices. No one she knew put such energy and conviction into these practices, from which she drew such solace. The purity and power of her observances impressed her. No one could blame her for anything. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *James 2:10 says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." The principle is that relying on rule-keeping does not free one of sin but rather entraps one.*

# Evidence of Conviction

Sort the examples of conviction (C) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ She remembered the moment years ago when she realized how broken she was. Thank God for Christ.
2. \_\_\_\_ He had no need for religion. Life was good, and he could see it getting better, all the way to the end.
3. \_\_\_\_ Her mind kept turning over what her counselor said about not everything being others' faults.
4. \_\_\_\_ Imagine the nerve, he thought, that his mentor would ask him to examine his own conduct. Forget it!
5. \_\_\_\_ She'd fixed her one problem long ago and didn't worry anymore about things. She did as she wanted.
6. \_\_\_\_ He knew he'd soon do another insensitive thing that he'd regret, reminding him of his continual need.
7. \_\_\_\_ For the first time in his life, he was connecting the burden he felt not with circumstances but himself.
8. \_\_\_\_ He felt burdened pretty much all the time, wishing others would get out of his way, leave him alone.
9. \_\_\_\_ She always remembered to examine herself first, where she often found attitudes she must put off.
10. \_\_\_\_ The coach harped on players to work on themselves, worry about their own weaknesses, not others'.
11. \_\_\_\_ The coach griped constantly about the referees, blaming every setback and loss on unfair treatment.
12. \_\_\_\_ In retrospect, he could see how he was a victim of his parents' projections and siblings' rivalries.
13. \_\_\_\_ Looking back over his life, he clearly saw his huge missteps, for which he saw others' huge grace.
14. \_\_\_\_ Their performance hadn't gone as planned, and he could see how the others had messed it up.
15. \_\_\_\_ They fought often, blaming one another for problems, never apologizing, always finding fault.
16. \_\_\_\_ They attributed their relationship's strength to their ability to see their issue rather than the other's.
17. \_\_\_\_ She found the workplace imbued with grace, each concerned with their own faults rather than others'.
18. \_\_\_\_ She hated coming to work. Everyone seemed to carry a chip on their shoulder against everyone else.
19. \_\_\_\_ He apologized profusely for what he assumed was his own mistake, even though it may not have been.
20. \_\_\_\_ He argued with the customer before checking out the customer's complaint. They were always wrong.
21. \_\_\_\_ She gathered the team, beginning by pointing out each member's latest error and how it hurt the team.
22. \_\_\_\_ His humility led him first to share his own missteps and wrong attitudes without addressing others'.
23. \_\_\_\_ She properly credited the success to God's mercy and provision, knowing she'd nearly blown it.
24. \_\_\_\_ He looked in the mirror frequently, thinking how fortunate his wife was to marry a perfect husband.
25. \_\_\_\_ Every day, he wondered why his wife married and tolerated such a lout as him, though he kept trying.

1C 2N 3C 4N 5N 6C 7C 8N 9C 10C 11N 12N 13C 14C 15N 16C 17C 18N 19C 20N 21N 22C 23C 24N 25C



# Confession

Confession, though, must follow conviction. Conviction that produces no response reveals a hardened heart, an absence of conscience, making conviction purposeless. Genuine conviction, the kind the Spirit imparts, compels confession. Romans 10:9 says that one must confess Jesus as Lord, with one's mouth, while believing his resurrection in one's heart, for God to save. The proclamation response, the witness declaring one's own unrighteousness in favor of God's righteousness, is critical to the process. One does not go from conviction straight forward to God's glory. To join our holy God in his kingdom of heaven, our transformation must occur along the way, a key step in which is confession. Conviction is inward, while confession is outward. Both must occur for God to restore and heal.

The Bible is replete with confession. Psalm 32:5 has the writer acknowledging sin to the Lord, refusing to conceal it, and confessing transgressions, so that the Lord can forgive. Psalm 38:18 records the writer's confession of iniquity, trouble over the writer's own sin. Proverbs 28:13 states that whoever conceals sin fails to prosper, while whoever confesses sin while renouncing it finds mercy. Daniel 9:20 records that even the righteous prophet confessed his sins and those of his people to the Lord in earnest prayer. John's baptism ministry was one of confession and repentance, as Mark 1:5 records. Acts 19:17-19 recounts how many who believed the good news of Jesus Christ in Paul's preaching promptly confessed their sins as deep as sorcery.

Confession has such great effect advancing one's spiritual journey because it disrupts and destroys pride, conceit, and arrogance. Confession lowers one to proper levels, down from imagined heights to realistic depths. It fosters humility, gentleness, sensitivity, and awareness. Show me a confessing soul, and I will know a friend. May the Lord bless us with a confessing mouth and penitent heart. See if the following exercises help you recognize confession and how to pursue, promote, and preserve it.

# Remembering Confession

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 John 1:9

**If we confess our sins,**

**he is faithful and just**

**and will forgive us our sins**

**and purify us**

**from all unrighteousness.**

# Principles of Confession

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had long ago confessed Christ, in confirmation programs in church as a youth and young adult. She wasn't sure, though, that she had carried her confession into her adult life. What did her confession mean? What gift did her confession bestow on her that she should recall daily, draw strength from, and live out? She kept trying to remember her confession and confirmation, looking for an answer as to what, today, in adult life, she should take as its evidence and reward.

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2. He had confessed Christ at a revival one summer when he was in college, and he had since then dedicated his life to sharing Christ. He hadn't entered the pastorate, not sensing God's call, but he had become a leader in campus groups and, after marrying, Bible study groups and service events. In his more-reflective moments, he could maybe see some positive influence he might have had on others. His wife's sudden and very generous exclamation of his large impact on the local body of Christ embarrassed but also pleased him. Whether his wife's assertion was true or not, he had made Christ's proclamation his pursuit.

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3. She stopped her prayer group just before they were to begin. She had for some time harbored regrets over her conduct on a specific matter. Those regrets had just crystalized into a need to confess. She sensed that she could not pray unless she first cleared the matter with God, and that to do so she needed to confide in others and thus confess. And so, she did, heartened at her group's willingness to listen without judgment and then to pray as they always did. Perhaps God then especially heard her prayers.

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4. He at first shared with his accountability partner a vague expression of regret. But after a little more back and forth, he realized that he needed to be specific, or his confession simply wouldn't be what he intended it to be, a full disclosure with accompanying commitment not to repeat the error again.

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# Example Principles of Confession

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She had long ago confessed Christ, indeed in confirmation programs in church as a youth and young adult. She wasn't sure, though, that she had carried her confession into her adult life. What did her confession mean? What gift did her confession bestow on her that she should recall daily, draw strength from, and live out? She kept trying to remember her confession and confirmation, looking for an answer as to what, today, in adult life, she should take as its evidence and reward. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Timothy 6:12 says, "Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when **you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**" The principle is that the assurance and joy of eternal life finds its root in our confession of the Lord Jesus Christ.*
2. He had confessed Christ at a revival one summer when he was in college, and he had since then dedicated his life to sharing Christ. He hadn't entered the pastorate, not sensing God's call, but he had become a leader in campus groups and, after marrying, Bible study groups and service events. In his more-reflective moments, he could maybe see some positive influence he might have had on others. His wife's sudden and very generous exclamation of his large impact on the local body of Christ embarrassed but also pleased him. Whether his wife's assertion was true or not, he had made Christ's proclamation his pursuit. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Corinthians 9:13 states, "Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, **others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.**" The principle is that our confession of the gospel, which begins with a conviction of our need for Jesus Christ, encourages others with whom we share that confession.*
3. She stopped her prayer group just before they were to begin. She had for some time harbored regrets over her conduct on a specific matter. Those regrets had just crystalized into a need to confess. She sensed that she could not pray unless she first cleared the matter with God, and that to do so she needed to confide in others and thus confess. And so she did, heartened at her group's willingness to listen without judgment and then to pray as they always did. Perhaps God then especially heard her prayers. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *James 5:16 states, "Therefore **confess your sins to each other** and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." The principle is that confessing sins to others promotes purity, prayer, and prayer's effectiveness.*
4. He at first shared with his accountability partner a vague expression of regret. But after a little more back and forth, he realized that he needed to be specific, or his confession simply wouldn't be what he intended it to be, a full disclosure with accompanying commitment not to repeat the error again. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Leviticus 5:5 says, "[W]hen anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must **confess in what way they have sinned.**" The principle is that awareness of sin must spur confession of that sin. Conviction alone is not enough. Confession must follow.*

# Evidence of Confession

Sort the examples of confession (C) from the non-examples of (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ The couple sat together, each admitting where they had fallen short leading up to their argument.
2. \_\_\_\_ Their argument continued across several days, neither willing to admit their own responsibility.
3. \_\_\_\_ Reflection showed him that he had first accepted Christ out of emotion. Now, he spoke his need.
4. \_\_\_\_ The energetic music and joyous celebration led her forward, though she said nothing of why.
5. \_\_\_\_ The youth was glad to tell the elders all that he had done in his service and studies, proving his merit.
6. \_\_\_\_ The youth stood before the elders, speaking genuinely of discovering his fallenness, his deep regret.
7. \_\_\_\_ Rather than brag, the job candidate had done something remarkable, which was to share her stumbles.
8. \_\_\_\_ The job candidate had no answer for the interview team's question of a time she made a mistake.
9. \_\_\_\_ The trip had not accomplished its mission, and the leader, rather than blame, took responsibility.
10. \_\_\_\_ The church's annual report shared some positive developments but, more so, professed need for Christ.
11. \_\_\_\_ The church's annual report glowed of all that the leadership, staff, and members had done that year.
12. \_\_\_\_ The client dumped a box of jumbled records on the accountant's desk while grumbling about fees.
13. \_\_\_\_ The client admitted to the accountant the client had not kept up, had made a mess, and would do better.
14. \_\_\_\_ The young man kept denying that he had violated probation, when the officer had video evidence.
15. \_\_\_\_ The probation officer knew the violation but was pleased to see him report it so openly and promptly.
16. \_\_\_\_ The pastor listened to the member go on and on about the situation without any sense of remorse.
17. \_\_\_\_ The driver burst out with denials and accusations as soon as the officer reached the driver's window.
18. \_\_\_\_ The driver's first words were to thank the officer and acknowledge the issue her driving had created.
19. \_\_\_\_ He didn't like her rebuke but quickly admitted he was entirely to blame for not taking out the garbage.
20. \_\_\_\_ He had simply forgotten, and who could blame him? He had more-important matters on his mind!
21. \_\_\_\_ The youth could have blamed his little sister but said instead he should have been watching out for her.
22. \_\_\_\_ His little sister was clearly to blame, he explained to their mother, for not watching out for herself.
23. \_\_\_\_ The player's faith taught him to admit error rather than deny and cover it, and so he took the blame.
24. \_\_\_\_ It hadn't been his best game, but he tried harder than anyone, and so as captain, he called others out.
25. \_\_\_\_ He worked hard for his family, whom he thought should appreciate it rather than note his absence.

1C 2N 3C 4N 5N 6C 7C 8N 9C 10C 11N 12N 13C 14N 15C 16N 17N 18C 19C 20N 21C 22N 23C 24N 25N

# Crucifixion

We preach Christ crucified, 1 Corinthians 1:23 says, a stumbling block to the Israelites and foolishness to the world. In crucifixion, the perfect Son of God endured full payment for our sins, complete separation from his holy Father, to become the new human, giving new and eternal life to those who follow him. Following Christ means joining with him in crucifixion, not the tortuous form he endured, but putting off the old sinful self, as Colossians 3:5 says, putting to death the earthly nature. Romans 6:5-7 puts it even more clearly that we die with Christ, our old self crucified with him to free us from that deadly sinful nature and to accept and enjoy eternal life.

The crucifixion through which we must go does not focus on ritual denial, self-flagellation, or similar ascetic justification. For once again, Christ bore crucifixion to free us from the legalist's enslavement. We must instead embrace all of Christ, including his sacrifice, seeing in his passion, in the horrible cross, God's utter love for us and thus our very freedom. Only in appreciation of this most-expensive gift do we stand any prospect of discovering our own crucifixion, putting off the desires that enslave us. Crucifixion is thus a necessary process but one that a follower of Christ must understand on God's clear terms, not the world's contrary terms.

For many, crucifixion of the self with Christ is a most-difficult process and goal to understand. That difficulty makes more valuable than ever plain exercises in it, the effort to recognize the forms that it may take. Crucifixion is a most-difficult concept to illustrate in everyday life. God will reward your effort to do so. If you want a breakthrough, then discover what God's word means that we must crucify our old self in union with Christ. See if the following exercises help you recognize crucifixion and how to pursue, promote, and preserve it.

# Remembering Crucifixion

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Colossians 3:5

**Put to death, therefore,**

**whatever belongs to your**

**earthly nature: sexual immorality,**

**impurity, lust, evil desires,**

**and greed, which is idolatry.**

# Principles of Crucifixion

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She could feel herself heading down a slippery slope, and she didn't like the looks of what was at its bottom. She hadn't denied herself anything, any pleasure, in her still-young life, but she felt increasingly dissolute. In fact, she had some serious mental and physical health issues arising out of her several serious indulgences, issues that in the worst cases, like suicide or the unfortunate advance of a certain disease she'd contracted, would be fatal. We all die, she thought, but where was she headed in the near term and far?

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2. His old life, he feared, would in the end get the best of him, taking him to the worst of places. He'd made the big turn, accepted Jesus for relief from all he'd done, but he still walked in that old body, burdened, he felt, by its old desires. How could he possibly enter God's eternal kingdom, when he would walk in that old body right up until its weary end?

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3. She felt as if her body still ruled her, still held full sway over her past, present, and future, even though she understood and fully accepted the salvation of her Lord Jesus Christ. Her head understood the promise of grace, but her desires had so ruled her, and still seemed to work on her, that her heart couldn't fully embrace her salvation. She needed a word, a confirmation, an explanation, one from the Bible on which she could rely, that she could repeat and incorporate and take to heart.

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4. This Christian thing was still new to him, a proposition that he was only now beginning to explore. His family had raised him in another faith, another tradition, one that had nothing to do with sacrifice, salvation, and eternal life in God's grace. What was that central thing that Christ's awful death did? How did Christ's death affect him? He needed to hear more.

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# Example Principles of Crucifixion

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She could feel herself heading down a slippery slope, and she didn't like the looks of what was at its bottom. She hadn't denied herself anything, any pleasure, in her still-young life, but she felt increasingly dissolute. In fact, she had some serious mental and physical health issues arising out of her several serious indulgences, issues that in the worst cases, like suicide or the unfortunate advance of a certain disease she'd contracted, would be fatal. We all die, she thought, but where was she headed in the near term and far? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Romans 8:13 says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but **if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.**" The principle is that the Spirit helps us assume the crucified stance of Christ, without whom we cannot defeat the sinful nature to rescue ourselves.*
2. His old life, he feared, would in the end get the best of him, taking him to the worst of places. He'd made the big turn, accepted Jesus for relief from all he'd done, but he still walked in that old body, burdened, he felt, by its old desires. How could he possibly enter God's eternal kingdom, when he would walk in that old body right up until its weary end? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Ephesians 2:15-16 states, "His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and **in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.**" The principle is that Christ's crucifixion reconciles our fallen and saved states to God.*
3. She felt as if her body still ruled her, still held full sway over her past, present, and future, even though she understood and fully accepted the salvation of her Lord Jesus Christ. Her head understood the promise of grace, but her desires had so ruled her, and still seemed to work on her, that her heart couldn't fully embrace her salvation. She needed a word, a confirmation, an explanation, one from the Bible on which she could rely, that she could repeat and incorporate and take to heart. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Romans 6:5-7 states, "**For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.**" The principle is that our unity with Christ in his crucifixion, crucifying the old self, unifies us with Christ in resurrection, setting us free from sin.*
4. This Christian thing was still new to him, a proposition that he was only now beginning to explore. His family had raised him in another faith, another tradition, one that had nothing to do with sacrifice, salvation, and eternal life in God's grace. What was that central thing that Christ's awful death did? How did Christ's death affect him? He needed to hear more. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *1 Peter 3:18 says, "**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.**" The principle is that Christ's crucifixion revealed his life in the Spirit and brought us back to God.*

# Evidence of Crucifixion

Sort the examples of the influence of crucifixion (C) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ His freedom took years to reach his heart, but his conversion and salvation lifted a heavy sin burden.
2. \_\_\_\_ His burden never lifted, his sinful desire instead lurking like a gnawing cancer, sure to win out.
3. \_\_\_\_ She no longer felt subject to every whim of desire, knowing Christ's crucifixion crucified her old self.
4. \_\_\_\_ Christ died, sure, but to what effect? she wondered, seeing nothing good could come from a dead man.
5. \_\_\_\_ Her addiction raged, pulling her down in hopelessness, for she knew she'd never be able to resist.
6. \_\_\_\_ Her addiction still tore at her soul, but somewhere in her heart she knew to crucify that old desire.
7. \_\_\_\_ Every day, he felt his spirit a little more in his destiny's control, a little less controlled by his appetites.
8. \_\_\_\_ Every day was a new battle in a war that he could see he was losing to his insatiable desires.
9. \_\_\_\_ She'd been under the spell of her bizarre fetishes for so long that she saw no return from them.
10. \_\_\_\_ Only recently had she realized the crucifixion's power to free her from every anxiety, every awful pull.
11. \_\_\_\_ Each time he wanted another swig of beer or whiskey, he'd slip another sip from his ever-ready flask.
12. \_\_\_\_ Any time he wanted another drink, he would remember Christ's strength enduring the cross.
13. \_\_\_\_ The more he succumbed to his addiction, the stronger it got, until he saw no way out but suicide.
14. \_\_\_\_ She once relied on will power to control her addiction, but it hadn't worked. She now relied on Christ.
15. \_\_\_\_ Whether he remained sober or lapsed, he knew Christ had completed his victory, won his new self.
16. \_\_\_\_ With each relapse, he felt his resolve to remain sober weaken, spiraling down until enslaved again.
17. \_\_\_\_ The month-long program in self-discipline did little to quell his desire, and he was back at it in a week.
18. \_\_\_\_ He was so glad as a young adult not to be under the sway of growing desire but to follow Christ.
19. \_\_\_\_ As he matured into an adult, his desires grew with his strength and stature, until he was dissolute.
20. \_\_\_\_ She imagined faith as an unfulfilled life without getting all she'd wanted but found greater life instead.
21. \_\_\_\_ She refused to listen to her aunt about the freedom and contentment she'd find in a crucified Christ.
22. \_\_\_\_ His friends must be right that embracing religion meant not getting to do what one wanted.
23. \_\_\_\_ His friends thought his faith meant constant denial when instead it meant constant freedom.
24. \_\_\_\_ He only realized later how enslaved he had been to the lusts that he had pursued until his salvation.
25. \_\_\_\_ Rejecting salvation, he turned anew to the things that led him from friends, family, and fulfillment.

1C 2N 3C 4N 5N 6C 7C 8N 9N 10C 11N 12C 13N 14C 15C 16N 17N 18C 19N 20C 21N 22N 23C 24C 25C

# Salvation

Salvation is not just a New Testament promise. The Old Testament has nearly twice as many references to salvation as the New Testament, with both Old and New Testament replete with such references. From humankind's fall at the Bible's very start, God's rescue of humankind is the Bible's story. When God promptly killed one of his own creatures to clothe Adam and Eve in animal skin, covering their shame, God intimated humankind's blood rescue in Jesus Christ. In no fewer than twenty-four different Psalms, the writers define, hope for, look for, wait for, long for, rely on, and rejoice in God's salvation. Sin has separated us from God and cast us into a pit of despair, out of which salvation is the only ladder.

Anyone with life experience knows the need for rescue. From God, we need escape from pain, danger, disease, despair, and insatiable desire. We need protection from enemies, redemption from sins, and avenging from wrongs. We then face the ultimate need of relief from death, for if death is our inevitable end, then all else fails with it. The Bible illustrates these and other needs, records our call and longing, and in the New Testament supplies God's triumphant answer. Salvation is God's cosmic covenant, that offer of eternal life that orders and supplies meaning to all. God sent his Son Jesus, whose name means *he saves*, out of a love so deep that he would sacrifice himself for us.

Salvation may seem like a moment of confession and acceptance, not anything hard to recognize, and perhaps not even worthy of exercises. But salvation is not a formula and instead a revelation: God is love. Salvation works itself out day by day in the lives of Jesus's followers, just as surely as conviction, confession, crucifixion, and the other processes and steps studied in this Part III. See if the following exercises help you recognize salvation and how to pursue and encourage it.

# Remembering Salvation

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Philippians 2:12

**Continue to**

**work out**

**your salvation**

**with fear**

**and trembling.**

# Principles of Salvation

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She had accepted Christ at a youth camp and never really turned away. Yet she also didn't genuinely know what her salvation required of her today. She had the confidence of eternal life, which supplied relief when she thought, rarely, of her ultimate demise. Beyond that, though, what was she to do with this salvation? Wasn't it supposed to affect her life in other ways than that small bit of relief over a, she hoped, distant demise?

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2. Others were walking forward at the altar call, but he didn't know that he should. Logically, he understood the offer that the preacher had just made. He had joined his friend in this rare trip to church when he was visiting, out of respect and to spend more time with his friend. He hadn't come to church expecting to answer an altar call. But if not now, then when?

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3. They hated Christians for that very reason that they claimed you had to be one of them to live in their eternal kingdom. How awful is that?! The world has many fine religions, all offering the same thing, pretty much the same way. Christians were just blind, trapped by their own culture. She listened to the talk quietly, and when it finished, spoke quietly to anyone who would listen: God's offer of his Son Christ is the most-inclusive possible offer and an offer utterly distinct from any other religion.

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4. He almost stuttered admitting to his distant relatives, whom he hadn't seen in years, that he had indeed become a Christian. One of them had asked, and when he acknowledged it, he had expected derision. But to his surprise, the cousin who asked said that she respected his commitment and wanted to hear more about it including why he made it and what it had done for him. He felt himself exhale in relief. Then he felt his excitement rise at getting to share what it had meant for him.

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# Example Principles of Salvation

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She had accepted Christ at a youth camp and never really turned away. Yet she also didn't genuinely know what her salvation required of her today. She had the confidence of eternal life, which supplied relief when she thought, rarely, of her ultimate demise. Beyond that, though, what was she to do with this salvation? Wasn't it supposed to affect her life in other ways than that small bit of relief over a, she hoped, distant demise? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Philippians 2:12 says, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling**, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."* The principle is that salvation is a process requiring the most-serious work in utter devotion.
2. Others were walking forward at the altar call, but he didn't know that he should. Logically, he understood the offer that the preacher had just made. He had joined his friend in this rare trip to church when he was visiting, out of respect and to spend more time with his friend. He hadn't come to church expecting to answer an altar call. But if not now, then when? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Hebrews 2:3 states, "[H]ow shall we escape if we ignore so **great a salvation**? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him."* The principle is that salvation through Jesus Christ requires attention followed by a response, action. Simply hearing the call does not save us. Responding to the call saves.
3. They hated Christians for that very reason that they claimed you had to be one of them to live in their eternal kingdom. How awful is that?! The world has many fine religions, all offering the same thing, pretty much the same way. Christians were just blind, trapped by their own culture. She listened to the talk quietly, and when it finished, spoke quietly to anyone who would listen: God's offer of his Son Christ is the most-inclusive possible offer and an offer utterly distinct from any other religion. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Acts 4:12 recounts Peter preaching, "**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.**"* The principle is that Jesus is the only way into God's kingdom, into eternal life.
4. He almost stuttered admitting to his distant relatives, whom he hadn't seen in years, that he had indeed become a Christian. One of them had asked, and when he acknowledged it, he had expected derision. But to his surprise, the cousin who asked said that she respected his commitment and wanted to hear more about it including why he made it and what it had done for him. He felt himself exhale in relief. Then he felt his excitement rise at getting to share what it had meant for him. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 1:16 says, "**For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes....**"* The principle is that the gospel has no shame but instead power for all who believe.

# Evidence of Salvation

Sort the examples of salvation (S) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ Saying he was a broken mess in need of the risen Savior was far easier than he expected, and a relief.
2. \_\_\_\_ He rehearsed the so-called confession to himself a time or two, and it just didn't make sense to him.
3. \_\_\_\_ She barely thought of death anymore, after letting Jesus into her heart, when it had been a great fear.
4. \_\_\_\_ Her preoccupation with death grew until she had joined a suicide society and attended its meetings.
5. \_\_\_\_ Seeing no way out of her life other than its meaningless end, poisoned her attitude toward everything.
6. \_\_\_\_ As his illness progressed, he sometimes caught himself fearing a fatal end, until remembering his faith.
7. \_\_\_\_ Friends remembered that the nearer he came to death, the more joyous he had become, sharing faith.
8. \_\_\_\_ The memorial was somber, not a celebration but a wake, the family having no sense of the beyond.
9. \_\_\_\_ Seeing at the somber gathering the family did not know Christ, one guest spoke quietly of her faith.
10. \_\_\_\_ Surprisingly, the scientist, who had no religious education, argued materialism was the whole thing.
11. \_\_\_\_ Another scientist, though, an ardent Christ follower, explained the limits of science and materialism.
12. \_\_\_\_ The Christian pastor spoke eloquently at the all-faiths conference of God's offer of eternal life.
13. \_\_\_\_ Buddhist, Muslim, and Hindu practitioners listened politely but spoke in contradiction of that offer.
14. \_\_\_\_ The immigrant youth spoke boldly in his new high school of the endless cycle of reincarnation.
15. \_\_\_\_ Another immigrant youth offered a more-hopeful truth that Jesus offered eternal life of one's own.
16. \_\_\_\_ He knew nothing existed beyond his mortal life and so grabbed all the gusto he could, against others.
17. \_\_\_\_ Knowing that God would judge his every word and action, though in Christ's grace, he lived humbly.
18. \_\_\_\_ He lived in a world of confusion, not having any sense of his beginning or end, and so not caring.
19. \_\_\_\_ Her cumulative pain across her life felt as if it had reached her breaking point, consigning her to hell.
20. \_\_\_\_ She so badly looked forward to going home or to Christ's return, given all the pain she had endured.
21. \_\_\_\_ He knew he had committed such a bad act that God could never forgive but would send him to hell.
22. \_\_\_\_ He knew that although he had done an incredibly awful thing, he now had God's assurance of grace.
23. \_\_\_\_ She thought no one, especially God, could forgive, but Christ's crucifixion convinced her otherwise.
24. \_\_\_\_ He looked back across his life, realizing that he had fallen so far short that he had only one awful end.
25. \_\_\_\_ He lived day to day for himself, knowing that he was so far unlike those good people he had no hope.

1S 2N 3S 4N 5N 6S 7S 8N 9S 10N 11S 12S 13N 14N 15S 16N 17S 18N 19N 20S 21N 22S 23S 24N 25N

# Adoption

Our adoption as God's children is a central promise of the Bible. Galatians 4:28 calls us children of God's promise. First John 3:1 tells us to see the great love God has for us to call us his children. Jesus in Luke 20:36 calls his redeemed God's children who, like the angels, will never die. All those whom God's Spirit leads, Romans 8:14 tells us, are the children of God. This adoption is the consequence of our conviction, confession, crucifixion with Christ, and salvation through him.

Because God has adopted us, the Bible makes clear that we receive an inheritance. Ephesians 1:13-14 assures that the Holy Spirit whom we have received is God's deposit ensuring our inheritance, our redemption as God's possession. Colossians 1:12 reassures that as God's children, we share in the holy inheritance in his kingdom of light. Hebrews 9:15 calls that inheritance our eternal reward under the new covenant, God's new promise. First Peter 1:4 assures us that this heavenly inheritance never fades or spoils. Another meaning we draw from God adopting us into his family is that we are brothers and sisters of his Son Jesus Christ, as Matthew 25:40 assures. Romans 8:29 describes Jesus as only the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Realizing our exalted status as children of God involves a process, a continual working out, like the other processes this Part III describes. How much does this adoption mean? How should it affect our attitudes and actions? What loving obedience do we owe our Father for his own love in adopting us through his Son? We cannot be the same as his children, but our transformation must occur through time. See if the following exercises help you recognize adoption and how it should affect our daily lives.



# Remembering Adoption

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Ephesians 1:5

**[H]e predestined us for adoption**

**to sonship**

**through Jesus Christ**

**in accordance with**

**his pleasure and will.**

# Principles of Adoption

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She felt as if two paths appeared before her, one leading upward to God's mountain garden, his glorious kingdom, and the other leading downward into nothingness. She wanted to grasp the former and avoid the latter, but she didn't have a clear sense of how to do so, of what word or promise or premise gave her the right to choose the upward path. She wished she had a mentor or friend, a resource or program, that could help her find the upward path.

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2. He knew and trusted God's promise. His confession of Christ, and Christ's perfect sacrifice for him, gave him that glorious entry into God's kingdom. Yet he didn't feel at all glorious. His body was anything but healthy, instead constantly reminding him of pain, disease, and even death. How could he possibly enter God's kingdom in such a debilitated condition? He didn't have the words to express his desperation to God in prayer, didn't have a way of thinking about this seeming contradiction between his obviously fallen state, the brokenness of his natural body, and his coming glory walking into the presence of God.

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3. The couple had enjoyed attending the church, their first-ever foray into an organized spiritual community. They had read and dabbled with faith at home, without ever clarifying what they believed, surely not making any public commitment. The church, though, felt like family. And so, they met with an outreach director about the possibility of joining. Why, they wanted to know, did the church feel like family? What would joining the church mean? How would they then relate to God?

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4. He had labored long and joyfully in service to less-fortunate believers. His service had included prison ministry, care ministry, even stewardship training and job development. Recently, though, he had hit something of a wall, wondering whether he should continue. Health concerns had slowed him, and he didn't know how long he could continue or, at this point, even if he should. He even wondered what difference his continued service would make. He knew the impact on others, but now seemed a time to be thinking about himself, ordering his own life and thoughts in right relationship to his Father.

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# Example Principles of Adoption

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She felt as if two paths appeared before her, one leading upward to God's mountain garden, his glorious kingdom, and the other leading downward into nothingness. She wanted to grasp the former and avoid the latter, but she didn't have a clear sense of how to do so, of what word or promise or premise gave her the right to choose the upward path. She wished she had a mentor or friend, a resource or program, that could help her find the upward path. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 8:15* says, "*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, **the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'***" The principle is that the Spirit makes us children of God, able to call out to our Father.
2. He knew and trusted God's promise. His confession of Christ, and Christ's perfect sacrifice for him, gave him that glorious entry into God's kingdom. Yet he didn't feel at all glorious. His body was anything but healthy, instead constantly reminding him of pain, disease, and even death. How could he possibly enter God's kingdom in such a debilitated condition? He didn't have the words to express his desperation to God in prayer, didn't have a way of thinking about this seeming contradiction between his obviously fallen state, the brokenness of his natural body, and his coming glory walking into the presence of God. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 8:23* states, "*Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as **we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.***" The principle is that our adoption redeems our bodies.
3. The couple had enjoyed attending the church, their first-ever foray into an organized spiritual community. They had read and dabbled with faith at home, without ever clarifying what they believed, surely not making any public commitment. The church, though, felt like family. And so, they met with an outreach director about the possibility of joining. Why, they wanted to know, did the church feel like family? What would joining the church mean? How would they then relate to God? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Galatians 4:5* states, "*But when the set time had fully come, **God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.***" The principle is that God's offer of Jesus Christ is to bring us to God as his children.
4. He had labored long and joyfully in service to less-fortunate believers. His service had included prison ministry, care ministry, even stewardship training and job development. Recently, though, he had hit something of a wall, wondering whether he should continue. Health concerns had slowed him, and he didn't know how long he could continue or, at this point, even if he should. He even wondered what difference his continued service would make. He knew the impact on others, but now seemed a time to be thinking about himself, ordering his own life and thoughts in right relationship to his Father. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Matthew 25:34* says, "*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; **take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.***" The principle is that our adoption as children of God, and our service to the needful brothers and sisters of Christ, gives us God's kingdom as our inheritance.

# Evidence of Adoption

Sort the examples of God's adoption (A) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ Her own family was a bit of a mess—a big mess—but thankfully, she was a member of God's family.
2. \_\_\_\_ He had no patience with family, indeed anyone, his family having been such a disaster growing up.
3. \_\_\_\_ Her sisters had no use for her because she wasn't pretty or rich, but her church family loved her.
4. \_\_\_\_ Without family anywhere near her, she always felt alone, even abandoned, around the holidays.
5. \_\_\_\_ His father's physical abuse of him as a child made him hate even the thought of a father or family.
6. \_\_\_\_ Although he'd been abused as a child, his faith had restored his trust in family, indeed in the Father.
7. \_\_\_\_ He didn't worry much about what he had or didn't have here because he knew his coming inheritance.
8. \_\_\_\_ That she had no wealthy family to leave her an inheritance, unlike her sorority sisters, devastated her.
9. \_\_\_\_ He planned to leave his children what he could of his small accounts, but his faith had left them better.
10. \_\_\_\_ His fear was he was exhausting his savings on his own care rather than passing something to his kids.
11. \_\_\_\_ As much as she appreciated her parents' setting up a trust for her, she valued heaven's reward more.
12. \_\_\_\_ He invited some of his church family to Thanksgiving rather than feeling sorry he had no family.
13. \_\_\_\_ To him, growing up without faith, God was only a distant taskmaster to whom he could not relate.
14. \_\_\_\_ She hated her father for abusing her mother and so had no patience for a faith treating God as Father.
15. \_\_\_\_ She was so thankful that God the Father gave his Son for her in love, taking place of her awful father.
16. \_\_\_\_ He'd never had a parental role model, coming from where he did, and so joined a gang for family.
17. \_\_\_\_ His friends joined gangs, which he could understand, but his mom's faith led him to a church family.
18. \_\_\_\_ He wanted to be the best father that he could so his kids would never need an imaginary God Father.
19. \_\_\_\_ She loved her natural brothers and sisters and so had no sense anyone else could ever be like family.
20. \_\_\_\_ She had never felt as close to her own brothers and sisters as she did to her faith family. Thank God.
21. \_\_\_\_ He was in awe when he learned that his confession of faith made him a brother of Jesus Christ.
22. \_\_\_\_ He knew the only real thing was the natural world, what he saw, so cared nothing for another kingdom.
23. \_\_\_\_ This world, she knew, could not be everything because God was so much greater, with a place for her.
24. \_\_\_\_ His whole world came apart along with his illness and disability, so he had nothing for which to live.
25. \_\_\_\_ He held close to heart that Christ had made a place for him, a room, a mansion, as a brother in heaven.

1A 2N 3A 4N 5N 6A 7A 8N 9A 10N 11A 12A 13N 14N 15A 16N 17A 18N 19N 20A 21A 22N 23A 24N 25A

# Creation

Yes, God created all things in the beginning, as Genesis records. Yet God's salvation through Jesus Christ makes all things new, the old having passed away. Those things made new include our old self made new. We, too, are new creations. Our old order, born in sin to die in sin, is no longer the order. The new order of things is that though we are still born in sin, God gives us an offer that he would make us anew. As Lamentations 3:22-24 assures us, God makes all things new with each dawn, out of compassion, that we would not be consumed. God will bring to the earth a New Jerusalem, the Holy City, the City of God, where he will dwell with us, who are his people.

Christ is the vehicle, the author of this new creation. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 explains, for anyone in Christ, a new creation has come. Colossians 3:9-10 says that we have taken off our old self for a new self that God renews in knowledge in his own image. First John 3:2 reassures that we will indeed be like him, like Christ. Ephesians 4:22-24 says that we are to put off the old self and take on the new self, created after the likeness of God. Creation is thus still at work in and through Christ, in each of us who follow him, accepting his salvation.

What this new creation looks like in our daily walks may be hard to discern, something too profound for pedestrian illustration. Yet we must see glimpses of it in what we say and do each day, how we live out our walk with the good Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps these profound concepts like our new creation are the ones that most need exploration, study, and illustration, if we are to embrace them for the truth that they are and to live in and through them as God desires, offers, and commands. See if the following exercises help you recognize what the new creation may look like and how to pursue and embrace it.

# Remembering Creation

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Therefore, if anyone**

**is in Christ,**

**the new creation has come:**

**the old has gone,**

**the new is here!**

# Principles of Creation

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. He so badly needed a fresh start, when the things that he had done to himself and others were not the sort of things from which one just turns. Those things corrupted him, haunted him, stalked him, and held him captive, so much so that he needed more than a new start. He needed a new self, a new person. And of course, that was impossible. He was who he was and would always be, unless something supernatural was available to him, which he did not know and so seriously doubted.

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2. She could see her decay in the mirror, feel it in her bones, and see its general course and ultimate effect in her increasing disability. Oddly, though, she did not feel any despair, although she knew frankly the condition of her body, without illusions. She instead felt increasing joy, increasing courage, increasing anticipation, and increasing confidence. Her spirit often soared on the wings of God's great eagle. In her spirit, she danced with Jesus, sang to him in the Spirit.

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3. She had made the good confession, finally, firmly, after all those years of sodden living. As soon as she made that confession, she felt as if she needed a new verse, a new Bible witness for this new stage of spiritual life. All the verses and principles of conviction, confession, and salvation still meant the same to her, but she had stepped into them in such a way that she now realized that the Christian faith must have another oar for her on which to pull, another rock on which for her to stand against the shifting sand. What was this new life into which she was entering?

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4. An environmental engineer even while a faithful Christian, he looked around at the natural environment, seeing its decay even while sensing his own decay. Yet he also saw the spectacular sunshine, vistas, and variety of life, sensing in it the continuing designs and creation of an even more-spectacular God. What was God's plan for all creation? He knew his own salvation, but how would God treat the environment, the natural creation, about which he had learned to care so deeply?

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# Example Principles of Creation

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. He so badly needed a fresh start, when the things that he had done to himself and others were not the sort of things from which one just turns. Those things corrupted him, haunted him, stalked him, and held him captive, so much so that he needed more than a new start. He needed a new self, a new person. And of course, that was impossible. He was who he was and would always be, unless something supernatural was available to him, which he did not know and so seriously doubted. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Isaiah 43:18-19* says, “**Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.**” The principle is that God made a new way to new life through Jesus.
2. She could see her decay in the mirror, feel it in her bones, and see its general course and ultimate effect in her increasing disability. Oddly, though, she did not feel any despair, although she knew frankly the condition of her body, without illusions. She instead felt increasing joy, increasing courage, increasing anticipation, and increasing confidence. Her spirit often soared on the wings of God’s great eagle. In her spirit, she danced with Jesus, sang to him in the Spirit. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Corinthians 4:16-17* states, “**Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**” The principle is that though we appear to be heading toward our demise, God is making us anew inside each day toward eternity.
3. She had made the good confession, finally, firmly, after all those years of sodden living. As soon as she made that confession, she felt as if she needed a new verse, a new Bible witness for this new stage of spiritual life. All the verses and principles of conviction, confession, and salvation still meant the same to her, but she had stepped into them in such a way that she now realized that the Christian faith must have another oar for her on which to pull, another rock on which for her to stand against the shifting sand. What was this new life into which she was entering? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Corinthians 5:17* states, “**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!**” The principle is that Christ makes us anew on our salvation.
4. An environmental engineer even while a faithful Christian, he looked around at the natural environment, seeing its decay even while sensing his own decay. Yet he also saw the spectacular sunshine, vistas, and variety of life, sensing in it the continuing designs and creation of an even more-spectacular God. What was God’s plan for all creation? He knew his own salvation, but how would God treat the environment, the natural creation, about which he had learned to care so deeply? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Romans 8:19-21* says, “**For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.**” The principle is that God is remaking the old, decaying creation into new freedom as God’s children.



# Evidence of Creation

Sort the examples of new creation (C) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ She'd never felt more alive than now, the old pit of guilt in her stomach gone, kingdom glory ahead.
2. \_\_\_\_ Her past ate at her like a cancer, though somehow worse, because it left her without even respect.
3. \_\_\_\_ Although his body remained broken, torn down from years of self-abuse, he was finally free, new.
4. \_\_\_\_ His body bore the scars of an irredeemable past, he felt, from which he could never recover.
5. \_\_\_\_ Everyone knew her past and, she assumed, held it against her, causing her to hide and stoop.
6. \_\_\_\_ Nothing from her past mattered anymore; she stood straight, no longer burdened and broken.
7. \_\_\_\_ Without any effort of his own, only confession, he could feel the Lord's life welling up within him.
8. \_\_\_\_ Her life had been an utter waste, she felt, lived solely for herself, and with nothing to show for it.
9. \_\_\_\_ She knew not how such joy could come from such awful events, but in God's grace it had for her.
10. \_\_\_\_ He had expected to have a great career, family, and retirement, but now he had no hope of anything.
11. \_\_\_\_ He had seen no possibility, no purpose nor path, and yet God had made a miracle way for him.
12. \_\_\_\_ At the time, she had despaired; looking back, she saw God opening new doors the whole way.
13. \_\_\_\_ One early mistake, and his life was over, consigned to the trash heap, with nothing for which to live.
14. \_\_\_\_ His day ended as probably the worst day of his life, leaving him expecting even worse the next day.
15. \_\_\_\_ He went to bed in desperate prayer but awoke at peace and with as clear a purpose as he had ever felt.
16. \_\_\_\_ They'd made a good start but descended into a sort of death spiral from which they could not get out.
17. \_\_\_\_ They'd had nothing, no comfort, no provision, but with God at work in them, they had everything.
18. \_\_\_\_ She'd found a husband based on looks, only to discover how deceiving looks were, destroying her life.
19. \_\_\_\_ She could never trust him again, never regain her sense of composure, never face the public again.
20. \_\_\_\_ His misconduct had crushed her, yet somehow, in faith, they had recovered to be stronger than ever.
21. \_\_\_\_ His physical healing had been incomplete at best, but God had shown himself present at every step.
22. \_\_\_\_ None of the treatments had worked, leaving him nearly as sick as before, and feeling lost and alone.
23. \_\_\_\_ The doctors had seen no hope, but through miracles that they could not explain, God had healed her.
24. \_\_\_\_ She had somehow recovered, against all odds, but now had a dread of being struck dead at anytime.
25. \_\_\_\_ The disease was supposed to end his usefulness, but God instead gave him a ministry he never had.

1C 2N 3C 4N 5N 6C 7C 8N 9C 10N 11C 12C 13N 14N 15C 16N 17C 18N 19N 20C 21C 22N 23C 24N 25C

# Sanctification

Sanctification, meaning to set apart a thing for its intended purpose, must be among the clearest of Christian processes. Although one's salvation may come the moment of confession and belief in resurrection, as Romans 10:9 indicates, we do not see ourselves as complete at that moment. We instead recognize that the Spirit continues to work on us, indeed commences his work on us at that moment. We must discover more of God's will for us, indeed to first discover God's will for us, having just embraced salvation and received his Spirit. Second Thessalonians 2:13 describes the Spirit's sanctifying work in us, while 2 Timothy 2:21 refers to God preparing us to do the good work he designates as ours.

Colossians 3:5 suggests that sanctification also involves putting to death earthly things like sexual immorality, evil desires, and idolatry. Hebrews 9:14 refers to a cleansing of our consciences. Hebrews 12:10 refers to God disciplining us for our good so that we can share in his holiness. First Corinthians 6:11 refers to sanctification as a washing and justification. First John 1:9 refers to a purifying of our unrighteousness. First Thessalonians 5:23 says that sanctification must work us through and through. Philippians 1:6 says that he who began this good work in us carries it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. What a marvelous process.

Illustrations of sanctification should thus be easy and many. Our interest in them may be in just how varied and frequent they are. Certainly, though, we must recognize evidence of sanctification if we are to welcome and embrace that holy process. The Spirit may work in us unseen, but the evidence of his work should be apparent. We know Christians by their fruit. The Spirit's fruit, Galatians 5:22-23 tells us, includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. See if the following exercises help you recognize this evidence of sanctification to welcome and embrace it.

# Remembering Sanctification

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## 1 Corinthians 6:11

**[Y]ou were washed,**

**you were sanctified,**

**you were justified in the name**

**of the Lord Jesus Christ**

**and by the Spirit of our God.**

# Principles of Sanctification

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. He had only been a Christian five years, but looking back across those five years, he could see small and large changes in what he said, what he did, where he went, and with whom he traveled. His friendships, hangouts, and pastimes had changed. He still felt as if he had only made a start on his pilgrimage, but even his language had changed. All these things had changed not because of outward rules or even conscious decision but because of interior changes, changes in his spirit. How, he wondered, was this change happening?

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2. She wished her husband were a professing Christian, but she didn't fret over it, certainly didn't press him on it. When others would question or express concern, which happened only rarely, she would deflect the concern. He had no problem with her faith or her substantial involvement in church. Just the opposite: he supported her in all she did. She felt that God had not called her to treat her husband any differently on the subject, although from time to time she wished she had a confirmation, perhaps from God's word.

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3. The group members realized that they had different ideas about what work or process went on that brought about salvation and what that salvation should produce. None of the members were disagreeable about their disagreement. They just weren't sure and so found themselves speculating about it. After conjecturing for a while, a couple of the members opened their Bibles, while a couple others began searching for answers on their cellphones. What was the organizing concept or principle, and where did it lead, they wondered?

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4. The couple couldn't put their fingers on it, but they had the sense when with their Christian friends that they were secure, among brothers and sisters, safe. They agreed that although they had many friends whose faith they did not know or whom they knew were not Jesus followers, and they liked those friends, they had a subtly different feeling about how best to relate to them, perhaps a feeling of being somewhat apart, maybe even a little on guard. Yes, that was it: they agreed that they felt some hidden need to guard the truth that they held. They opened their cellphones, searching for biblical confirmation.

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# Example Principles of Sanctification

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. He had only been a Christian five years, but looking back across those five years, he could see small and large changes in what he said, what he did, where he went, and with whom he traveled. His friendships, hangouts, and pastimes had changed. He still felt as if he had only made a start on his pilgrimage, but even his language had changed. All these things had changed not because of outward rules or even conscious decision but because of interior changes, changes in his spirit. How, he wondered, was this change happening? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Thessalonians 5:23* says, “**May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**” The principle is that God sets apart, purifies, and prepares us for his ministry and Christ’s return.
2. She wished her husband were a professing Christian, but she didn’t fret over it, certainly didn’t press him on it. When others would question or express concern, which happened only rarely, she would deflect the concern. He had no problem with her faith or her substantial involvement in church. Just the opposite: he supported her in all she did. She felt that God had not called her to treat her husband any differently on the subject, although from time to time she wished she had a confirmation, perhaps from God’s word. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Corinthians 7:14* states, “**For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband.**” The principle is that marital relationship extends God’s sanctification from the unbelieving spouse to the believing spouse.
3. The group members realized that they had different ideas about what work or process went on that brought about salvation and what that salvation should produce. None of the members were disagreeable about their disagreement. They just weren’t sure and so found themselves speculating about it. After conjecturing for a while, a couple of the members opened their Bibles, while a couple others began searching for answers on their cellphones. What was the organizing concept or principle, and where did it lead, they wondered? EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Peter 1:1-2* states, “**To God’s elect, ... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.**” The principle is that God’s Spirit sanctifies us for the Father’s election to obedience to the Son Jesus Christ.
4. The couple couldn’t put their fingers on it, but they had the sense when with their Christian friends that they were secure, among brothers and sisters, safe. They agreed that although they had many friends whose faith they did not know or whom they knew were not Jesus followers, and they liked those friends, they had a subtly different feeling about how best to relate to them, perhaps a feeling of being somewhat apart, maybe even a little on guard. Yes, that was it: they agreed that they felt some hidden need to guard the truth that they held. They opened their cellphones, searching for biblical confirmation. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *2 Thessalonians 2:13* says, “**But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters loved by the Lord, because God chose you as firstfruits to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.**” The principle is that the Spirit sanctifies us for salvation, as God’s chosen ones.

# Evidence of Sanctification

Sort the examples of sanctification (S) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ They let membership in the cannabis club lapse after sensing conflict with their new Christian walk.
2. \_\_\_\_ Faith intrigued them, and they wanted it, but they weren't ready to give up their party lifestyle for it.
3. \_\_\_\_ He'd been angry at everything his whole young life until he got into God's word, when slowly it lifted.
4. \_\_\_\_ He realized that his anger was holding him back, keeping him from promotion, but he couldn't help it.
5. \_\_\_\_ She wanted to be joyful, or at least hopeful, like her Christian friends, but she just didn't see or feel it.
6. \_\_\_\_ She was no better off than any of her non-Christian friends, but she had a secret joy unlike them.
7. \_\_\_\_ He used to cut every corner, so long as no one was looking, but now he obeyed the Lord in all things.
8. \_\_\_\_ As long as he didn't get caught, he figured what was the harm in cutting corners, taking advantage?
9. \_\_\_\_ They felt a belonging at church that they didn't feel anywhere else, even among their family members.
10. \_\_\_\_ She knew she was rough around the edges but also knew God was working to refine and prepare her.
11. \_\_\_\_ She didn't fit in, and she knew she never would fit in. She didn't have the upbringing or education.
12. \_\_\_\_ He didn't have money for seminary or time for much study and so felt he'd never be a true Christian.
13. \_\_\_\_ He didn't worry his job and family kept him from some church activities so long as he had the Spirit.
14. \_\_\_\_ She worried that she lacked the purity, desire, intelligence, and focus to ensure her faith could save her.
15. \_\_\_\_ He knew he didn't have the self-discipline of his Christian friends and so despaired of even trying.
16. \_\_\_\_ He wasn't a reader and didn't have the academic skills of his friends, but he trusted the Spirit's work.
17. \_\_\_\_ The Bible confused and intimidated her, and she had no one to explain it to her, so refused to open it.
18. \_\_\_\_ The Bible was daunting, but she discovered the Spirit could lead her to verses and insight nonetheless.
19. \_\_\_\_ He trusted the Spirit to continue his work in him, knowing that he had a lot of work to do but would.
20. \_\_\_\_ He had "confessed" Jesus, but he had not believed it then, and nothing moved him to do so now.
21. \_\_\_\_ Her confession was weak, she knew, but rather than weaken further, she felt God making it strong.
22. \_\_\_\_ He had no desire to be among so-called *chosen ones*; he would always remain just like everyone else.
23. \_\_\_\_ She didn't like the thought of in-groups and out-groups, and so rejected any such affinity or faith.
24. \_\_\_\_ She loved Christ for cleansing not just her but anyone, for never treating anyone as an outsider.
25. \_\_\_\_ He most appreciated that he could feel clean, purified by Christ's blood, prepared in his Spirit.

1S 2N 3S 4N 5N 6S 7S 8N 9S 10S 11N 12N 13S 14N 15N 16S 17N 18S 19S 20N 21S 22N 23N 24S 25S

# Communion

We do not merely receive salvation, looking forward from a distance to eternal life in Jesus Christ. Rather, once saved, once believing, once professing, we commune in Jesus Christ. We daily receive his life. His life is our food and drink, from which we never go hungry or thirsty. His supply of value, meaning, purpose, comfort, and assurance have no end. They are resources we cannot exhaust. John 4 records Jesus telling the woman drawing from the well that if she would come to him, he would give her living water with which she would never thirst. John 6:53-58 records Jesus saying that unless we draw life from him, we will have no life. He is our lone source of sustenance, our lone hope for enduring life.

Christians may see communion primarily as a church ritual that Jesus himself clearly sanctioned, urging his followers to take communion to remember him. Yet other gospel accounts, like the one about the woman at Jacob's well, show that communion extends far beyond ritual to the source of life himself. We break bread and eat, we drink in community with other followers, to remind ourselves to continually draw on him, continually turn to him, always rely on him. And we do so, 1 Corinthians 11:28 reminds us, only after first examining ourselves. When we commune with Christ, we take account of ourselves, desiring that we remain worthy of his broken body and poured-out blood.

Other than in the sacrament of communion itself, we may find it hard to see communion illustrated in daily life. Yet communion is there, we certainly desire and hope. We search for signs of it in ourselves and hope to see signs of it in others. See if the following exercises help you recognize communion as it may occur among devoted Christians around you, and how to pursue, preserve, and promote it.

# Remembering Communion

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## John 6:35

**I am the bread of life.**

**Whoever comes to me**

**will never go hungry,**

**and whoever believes in me**

**will never be thirsty.**



# Principles of Communion

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She watched her Christian friends quietly bow their heads and say a brief prayer of thanks before eating. She'd seen it dozens of times before, thinking it was only a ritual that their religion required. Yet this time, she caught something in the words or demeanor of her friends that she hadn't previously noticed. This practice, at least their practice, was not only ritual, she realized. It was something more, something worthy and profound.

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2. He looked up at the cross behind the empty pulpit, as he waited for his father's memorial service to begin. He hadn't been in a church in years and probably wouldn't be in one ever again. Yet for a moment, as he stared at the huge wooden cross, something or someone touched him deep in his heart. He started to shrug it off but couldn't. He looked away from the cross, but it was still there. Something hard and mean was breaking deep within him, and he started to weep, sitting alone in the pew, waiting for the memorial service. He wept not for his departed father but for himself.

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3. She had once been an explorer, interested in every culture, every tradition, every religion, everything other than her own tradition, her own faith, the one in which her parents had raised her. Gradually, though, as she went full circle through every alternative worldview, perspective, lifestyle, and belief, she began to focus on the one in which her parents had raised her. Only then did she see how different it was, how it answered every important question in life. Only then did she begin to draw on those answers, and as she drew, she realized that they were the only stuff of true life.

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4. He had come to faith like a bolt out of the blue. That bolt struck him like nothing else. And when it had sundered him to the core, he found in that core new and eternal life. From that moment on, he drew on nothing and no one other than Jesus Christ. Everything else, including himself, paled in significance. Everything else was dead, and only the Son was life.

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# Example Principles of Communion

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She watched her Christian friends quietly bow their heads and say a brief prayer of thanks before eating. She'd seen it dozens of times before, thinking it was only a ritual that their religion required. Yet this time, she caught something in the words or demeanor of her friends that she hadn't previously noticed. This practice, at least their practice, was not only ritual, she realized. It was something more, something worthy and profound.

EXAMPLE ANSWER: *1 Corinthians 10:16 says, "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?"*

*The principle is that as we break bread and drink Christ's cup, we share in the body and blood of Christ, drawing close to Christ and drawing from Christ as believers.*

2. He looked up at the cross behind the empty pulpit, as he waited for his father's memorial service to begin. He hadn't been in a church in years and probably wouldn't be in one ever again. Yet for a moment, as he stared at the huge wooden cross, something or someone touched him deep in his heart. He started to shrug it off but couldn't. He looked away from the cross, but it was still there. Something hard and mean was breaking deep within him, and he started to weep, sitting alone in the pew, waiting for the memorial service. He wept not for his departed father but for himself. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *Isaiah 53:5 states, "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."* The principle is that Christ's crucifixion was our punishment bringing us peace and healing.

3. She had once been an explorer, interested in every culture, every tradition, every religion, everything other than her own tradition, her own faith, the one in which her parents had raised her. Gradually, though, as she went full circle through every alternative worldview, perspective, lifestyle, and belief, she began to focus on the one in which her parents had raised her. Only then did she see how different it was, how it answered every important question in life. Only then did she begin to draw on those answers, and as she drew, she realized that they were the only stuff of true life. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 6:35 records Jesus saying, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."* The principle is that our true sustenance, the provision we most need for life, comes only from Christ.

4. He had come to faith like a bolt out of the blue. That bolt struck him like nothing else. And when it had sundered him to the core, he found in that core new and eternal life. From that moment on, he drew on nothing and no one other than Jesus Christ. Everything else, including himself, paled in significance. Everything else was dead, and only the Son was life. EXAMPLE ANSWER: *John 6:53-55 records Jesus saying, "Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink."* The principle is that drawing from the broken body and poured-out blood of Christ is the one source of true and eternal life.

# Evidence of Communion

Sort the examples of communion in Christ (C) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ With every buffet, every challenge, every offense, she simply turned again to Christ who fed her.
2. \_\_\_\_ She had no safe harbor, no peaceful place to dwell against onslaughts, and so she drank her pain away.
3. \_\_\_\_ The Word of God had become his source, his foundation, his life, the sole rock on which he stood.
4. \_\_\_\_ His mind was driving him crazy, running him ragged, with nothing about which to think but nonsense.
5. \_\_\_\_ She thought studying philosophy would give her ground on which to hold, but it did the opposite.
6. \_\_\_\_ Christ, to her, wasn't someone to admire but instead her source of life, as she drank and ate of him.
7. \_\_\_\_ He knew now that without Christ, he was dead, life over, but with Christ sustaining him, he had life.
8. \_\_\_\_ He knew enough of Christ to admire him, just as he did Buddha and others, though relying on himself.
9. \_\_\_\_ She never took communion because she didn't trust it and didn't want to get too crazy into religion.
10. \_\_\_\_ They always took communion together, unless one of them was sick, to confirm they were his body.
11. \_\_\_\_ He was glad to have finally taken communion with his parents, celebrating his participation in Christ.
12. \_\_\_\_ His sister went up for communion every time while he waited for her, anxious to get home for football.
13. \_\_\_\_ He loved passing the bread and cup, sensing a connection with the disciples who had first done so.
14. \_\_\_\_ Her crystals meant everything to her, especially when she could feel their power coursing in her veins.
15. \_\_\_\_ She didn't light candles, chant meditations, or even sing in the choir, but she gladly took communion.
16. \_\_\_\_ She lit candles, chanted meditations, and sang in the choir but wasn't going to drink anyone's blood!
17. \_\_\_\_ He had tattoos of all the things that mattered to him but couldn't see why anyone would want a cross.
18. \_\_\_\_ He wore a cross around his neck to remind him that Jesus let others break his body to nourish his soul.
19. \_\_\_\_ She knew that Jesus pouring out his blood had ended all sacrifice, paying every wrong, giving her life.
20. \_\_\_\_ The crucifixion horrified her; she might have been a Christian, she figured, if it weren't for that.
21. \_\_\_\_ She never felt closer to Jesus, more alive, than meditating on his broken body and poured-out blood.
22. \_\_\_\_ He bowed his head anyway, though no one else had, and thought for a moment of his beloved Jesus.
23. \_\_\_\_ No one offered to say grace, so he skipped it, not wanting to distract anyone, ready to have some fun.
24. \_\_\_\_ He had no way he could turn, no method he could follow, to rid himself of bitterness for his enemy.
25. \_\_\_\_ He looked across the sanctuary as they all took communion, and seeing his antagonist, forgave him.

1C 2N 3C 4N 5N 6C 7C 8N 9N 10C 11C 12N 13C 14N 15C 16N 17N 18C 19C 20N 21C 22C 23N 24N 25C

# Redemption

To redeem, a legal term, is to pay a penalty to take back what is rightfully one's own. And so, God pays our penalty, the penalty for our sin, to take us back as his own, God having made us for him, in his image. We know how God takes us back, through the sacrifice of his Son, and why he takes us back, because he loves us, as John 3:16 states. Ephesians 1:7 says Christ's blood redeemed us, so that the riches of God's grace may extend to forgive us. Galatians 3:13 says that Christ redeemed us from the law's curse by becoming the curse for us, crucified on a pole. Isaiah 44:22 says that the Lord sweeps away our offenses "like a cloud, our sins like the morning mist." Psalm 103:12 says he sweeps our sins as far away as the east is from the west.

We know the value of God's rescue because we know the depths to which sin carries us, the brokenness of this world, and our corruption within it. Galatians 1:4 says that Christ rescues us in our sins from the present evil age, for we know the age is indeed evil. As Colossians 1:13 says, Christ rescued us from a dominion of darkness, for we know that the world's domain is indeed dark. First Peter 1:18 says that Christ rescues us from the empty way of life handed down to us from our ancestors, for we indeed know of our empty way of life. Luke 21:25-28 records Jesus saying that when we see signs of the end times, we should stand and lift our heads to see our redemption drawing near.

Redemption may be hard to see and illustrate in our daily lives, although redemption should permeate our Christian walk. To know that God redeems us should make a difference that we can feel and that others can see. Redemption is our reward, God's promise fulfilled. We must embrace redemption as our own, trusting and believing God, and letting it transform our life. Others should see redemption in us and desire to have the same life. See if the following exercises help you recognize signs of redemption and how to live out redemption in the daily circumstances of life.

# Remembering Redemption

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## Job 19:25

**I know that**

**my redeemer lives**

**and that in the end**

**he will stand**

**on the earth.**

# Principles of Redemption

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She felt as if she stood on a precipice, a thousand-foot fall at her feet. She had lived a nightmare life, stained by her own transgressions, compounded by the transgressions of others. At any moment, her sins and the world's utter corruption would cast her down, so that she would fall to her demise down an awful canyon, into a bottomless pit. She dreamt this nightmare in a hundred different versions, night after night. Then in one dream, she met Jesus Christ, who pulled her off the precipice.

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2. For the past decade or more, ever since gaining a sense of his brokenness, he had tried to pay for all his wrongs. He had tried to be perfect, tried to make amends, tried always to do right. But all his effort went for naught. He found only that he could never pay back what he owed. Every effort, every day, just piled up more figurative debt that he owed. He could not make good what was constantly going wrong, no matter how much money or time he had. He needed something or someone else to pay his insurmountable debt.

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3. She tried to recall her old life, all the beauty she had wasted, all the people she had let down. But she couldn't remember much if anything of it, not since she had accepted Jesus Christ. She had lived so deeply into his love that she felt cleansed, whole, free of her enslavement, without remaining guilt. He had performed a miracle that until she met him, she had not thought possible. She imagined herself in a long white dress, spotless, more beautiful than she'd ever been.

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4. He knew he talked too much, but he just couldn't keep inside the good news that he had to share about his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His talk, though, wasn't just religious language. No, his talk was about himself, about the desperate situation in which he had been when Christ rescued him. He knew that people couldn't really believe his story because it was so extraordinary, but it was true. He embellished nothing, just told others who he was and how Jesus brought him back. He told this story not out of pride or satisfaction but that others would receive the same grace and have a similar story.

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# Example Principles of Redemption

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She felt as if she stood on a precipice, a thousand-foot fall at her feet. She had lived a nightmare life, stained by her own transgressions, compounded by the transgressions of others. At any moment, her sins and the world's utter corruption would cast her down, falling to her demise down an awful canyon, into a bottomless pit. She dreamt this nightmare in a hundred different versions, night after night. Then in one dream, she met Jesus Christ, who pulled her off the precipice. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Ephesians 1:7-8 says, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." The principle is that Christ's blood brings us back from the brink, redeeming us into God's kingdom.*
2. For the past decade or more, ever since gaining a sense of his brokenness, he had tried to pay for all his wrongs. He had tried to be perfect, tried to make amends, tried always to do right. But all his effort went for naught. He found only that he could never pay back what he owed. Every effort, every day, just piled up more figurative debt that he owed. He could not make good what was constantly going wrong, no matter how much money or time he had. He needed something or someone else to pay his insurmountable debt. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *1 Peter 1:18-19 states, "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." The principle is that Christ, who broke no law, paid what we owe for breaking the law, when nothing we have could pay.*
3. She tried to recall her old life, all the beauty she had wasted, all the people she had let down. But she couldn't remember much if anything of it, not since she had accepted Jesus Christ. She had lived so deeply into his love that she felt cleansed, whole, free of her enslavement, without remaining guilt. He had performed a miracle that until she met him she had not thought possible. She imagined herself in a long white dress, spotless, more beautiful than she'd ever been. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Isaiah 44:22 states, "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." The principle is that Christ invites our return to him for his having redeemed us from judgment for our sin.*
4. He knew he talked too much, but he just couldn't keep inside the good news that he had to share about his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. His talk, though, wasn't just religious language. No, his talk was about himself, about the desperate situation in which he had been when Christ rescued him. He knew that people couldn't really believe his story because it was so extraordinary, but it was true. He embellished nothing, just told others who he was and how Jesus brought him back. He told this story not out of pride or satisfaction but that others would receive the same grace and have a similar story. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Psalms 107:2-3 says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story—those he redeemed from the hand of the foe, those he gathered from the lands, from east and west, from north and south." The principle is that we whom Christ has redeemed should tell our redemption story.*

# Evidence of Redemption

Sort the examples of evidence of redemption (R) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ The Lord had truly restored her, brought her back from certain death, and by a miracle grace.
2. \_\_\_\_ She didn't know what people could possibly draw from religion but was sure she didn't need it.
3. \_\_\_\_ His life had looked good outwardly, but he'd been a wreck; now, he had the Lord's assurance inside.
4. \_\_\_\_ He had wrecked his family, business, and health. He had no way back from his end and no hope.
5. \_\_\_\_ She realized she had built a business empire on the poor backs of broken workers to her eternal shame.
6. \_\_\_\_ Though she had wronged many, she sensed the Lord's work in her and through her, turning it to good.
7. \_\_\_\_ He had lived an average life, nothing worth acclaim, yet he still saw the Lord's glory rising over him.
8. \_\_\_\_ To his last days, he continued to strive to achieve something memorable, to pull himself out of the pit.
9. \_\_\_\_ His family lived frankly dissolute lives, anyone could see, but the Lord had pulled him out of it.
10. \_\_\_\_ She was no different than her blood relatives, she knew, consigned to live out their dreary lives.
11. \_\_\_\_ Each day she sensed the Spirit at work taking the messes she made and turning them to glory.
12. \_\_\_\_ They'd had an awful argument, but both said the next day that the Lord would turn even that to good.
13. \_\_\_\_ This argument had been the last straw, they were sure, down a long path toward hate and divorce.
14. \_\_\_\_ The business partners saw no way back from this rupture between them, nothing anyone could repair.
15. \_\_\_\_ The pastor counseled the competing leaders that the Lord could restore anything, and they agreed.
16. \_\_\_\_ The group leaders saw no way forward through their differences and insisted one of them quit.
17. \_\_\_\_ Though family relationships were broken, each knew the Lord's ability to bring them together again.
18. \_\_\_\_ She and her mother hadn't spoken in years. Both saw no way they could ever resume a relationship.
19. \_\_\_\_ He'd had the severe disability since birth and had known all his life he'd never amount to anything.
20. \_\_\_\_ Though disabled from birth, she saw that the Lord had given her an incredible ministry out of it.
21. \_\_\_\_ His service injury ruined his career plans, but out of those ashes God had given him every blessing.
22. \_\_\_\_ Nothing but pain could ever come from what had happened to her as a youth, she knew and despaired.
23. \_\_\_\_ She had done the worst thing she could do and suffered miserably for it but still saw God at work in it.
24. \_\_\_\_ The visiting pastor had made one last bedside appeal, but he had been too sure of his terrible end.
25. \_\_\_\_ To everyone's amazement, he had sat up in bed at the very last with a vision of the rescuing Lord.

1R 2N 3R 4N 5N 6R 7R 8N 9R 10N 11R 12R 13N 14N 15R 16N 17R 18N 19N 20R 21R 22N 23R 24N 25R



# Resurrection

Christians know that God resurrected Jesus, bringing him back to life from the crucified and dead. Resurrection defines the Christian. Romans 10:9 shares that our salvation is in declaring Jesus as Lord while believing that God raised him from the dead. And what is salvation but relief from death? Resurrection is not only of Jesus but also for those who confess, believe, and profess. Resurrection is such a core doctrine that in 1 Corinthians 15:14, Paul writes that without it, our preaching is useless and our faith dead. Jesus got up and walked from his tomb after being dead three days. We, too, will rise in resurrection, our bodies restored to unending, incorruptible life.

Resurrection will be glorious because it will be into the presence of the Lord, the Lord who is love and who rewards. Luke 14:14 records Jesus saying that those of us who care for the poor who cannot repay receive our reward at the resurrection of the righteous. Yet resurrection is not just living again, eternally, in the future. Resurrection also has its impact in our present lives. Romans 6:11 says that because Christ died and rose to live in God, we too live our lives dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. Romans 6:5 even makes the promise conditional, that if we have been united with him in a death like his, then God will also unite us in resurrection with him. We embrace Christ in his crucifixion and resurrection, and in so doing, we too receive resurrection.

Others should thus see in the Christian, evidence of faith in the resurrection. One may find hard walking through life toward a natural death, while showing confidence in the resurrection. Yet God desires that perspective and trust from us. We should express our hope in our words and actions, our attitudes and relationships. We should die with Christ in full confidence that our death is, like his, to glorious resurrection. See if the following exercises help you recognize evidence of resurrection and encourage you to reflect that evidence.

# Remembering Resurrection

Read each flashcard aloud in order. Then cover up the flashcards while trying to recall each aloud accurately. The moment that you hesitate on any card, show the card again, reading it aloud. Then cover up the flashcard again, trying to recall accurately. Repeat the process until you have the verse memorized. Repeat the memorization in three days, one week, two weeks, one month, two months, and six months, and you should remember the verse for life.

## John 11:25-26

**I am the resurrection and the life.**

**The one who believes in me**

**will live, even though they die;**

**and whoever lives by believing**

**in me will never die.**

# Principles of Resurrection

Identify a principle from God's word addressing each situation. Example answers are on the next page:

1. She felt as if she had little for which to live in this life on earth. She had no family and few friends. Her work wasn't of any obvious value, not the sort of thing of which others would be proud. No one noticed her because she didn't seek or deserve notice. She wasn't a global missionary and wasn't going to find a cure for cancer. Yet because she knew that she had the most-glorious end in Christ, she walked through this ordinary life with an extraordinary joy.

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2. He was visiting his friend in the hospital again, probably for the last time, they both felt. He and his friend had spoken a time or two about faith, but this time his friend asked him to tell him what he believed about death, what his Christian faith taught him about what happens next. His friend's question was not doctrinal, technical, but an obvious desire for hope. He knew what to say because he knew the truth.

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3. Raised by academic parents and trained as a scientist, she hadn't believed in anything supernatural, certainly not something so bizarre as a God-man rising from the dead. Yet several things had happened to her and around her recently that she could not explain by anything other than supernatural events. These things and other reflections had convinced her of a spiritual realm. She only wondered how that spiritual realm might relate to this God-man rising from the dead.

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4. He was changing, he could see and feel. His step had a new bounce. His demeanor had a bursting-forth kind of joy that almost made him giggle like a schoolgirl. His newfound joy wasn't because of good health or recent success. He knew exactly its source in his growing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who wouldn't want to shout?

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# Example Principles of Resurrection

Here are example verses and principles addressing the scenarios on the prior page.

1. She felt as if she had little for which to live in this life on earth. She had no family and few friends. Her work wasn't of any obvious value, not the sort of thing of which others would be proud. No one noticed her because she didn't seek or deserve notice. She wasn't a global missionary and wasn't going to find a cure for cancer. Yet because she knew that she had the most-glorious end in Christ, she walked through this ordinary life with an extraordinary joy. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *1 Peter 1:3-4 says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy **he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.**" The principle is that our hope of eternal life is in Jesus's resurrection.*
2. He was visiting his friend in the hospital again, probably for the last time, they both felt. He and his friend had spoken a time or two about faith, but this time his friend asked him to tell him what he believed about death, what his Christian faith taught him about what happens next. His friend's question was not doctrinal, technical, but an obvious desire for hope. He knew what to say because he knew the truth. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *1 Thessalonians 4:14 states, "**For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.**" The principle is that when we hold to Jesus to our end, God resurrects us with Jesus.*
3. Raised by academic parents and trained as a scientist, she hadn't believed in anything supernatural, certainly not something so bizarre as a God-man rising from the dead. Yet several things had happened to her and around her recently that she could not explain by anything other than supernatural events. These things and other reflections had convinced her of a spiritual realm. She only wondered how that spiritual realm might relate to this God-man rising from the dead. **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Romans 8:11 says, "**And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.**" The principle is that God's Spirit living in us gives us eternal life.*
4. He was changing, he could see and feel. His step had a new bounce. His demeanor had a bursting-forth kind of joy that almost made him giggle like a schoolgirl. His newfound joy wasn't because of good health or recent success. He knew exactly its source in his growing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who wouldn't want to shout? **EXAMPLE ANSWER:** *Isaiah 26:19 says, "**But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise—let those who dwell in the dust wake up and shout for joy—your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.**" The principle is that we should rejoice because of our coming resurrection.*

# Evidence of Resurrection

Sort the examples of evidence of hope in resurrection (R) from the non-examples (N):

1. \_\_\_\_ She rose each morning shaking off the bad dreams and anxiety, thinking only of her coming joy.
2. \_\_\_\_ She had nothing here or hereafter for which to live, having wasted every opportunity by bad choices.
3. \_\_\_\_ He had made every mistake a person could make, he figured, but he held tightly to a risen Lord.
4. \_\_\_\_ He scoffed at the silly miracles Christians believed, especially that thing about dead people rising.
5. \_\_\_\_ She supposed someday, science would discover how to reverse aging, but no one could raise the dead.
6. \_\_\_\_ She examined the evidence as close as one could, convincing her that Jesus walked from the grave.
7. \_\_\_\_ He hadn't investigated the question because he didn't need to do so. He knew that Jesus rose, on faith.
8. \_\_\_\_ He had always been something of a mystic, but really, he knew religion was all fantasy, no fact.
9. \_\_\_\_ She hadn't been at all religious, but God had drawn her to the unmistakable fact of Christ rising.
10. \_\_\_\_ She had always been religious, but when it came right down to it, she didn't believe Christ rose.
11. \_\_\_\_ As a youth, he had a great fear of death, but after accepting Christ, he no longer feared death at all.
12. \_\_\_\_ The memorial service was unlike any she'd ever attended, everyone celebrating a joyous going home.
13. \_\_\_\_ The memorial service was somber, sad, depressing her for weeks afterward, leaving her with no hope.
14. \_\_\_\_ He hated working these dead-end jobs because he only had a little longer to enjoy his only life.
15. \_\_\_\_ He didn't mind doing menial jobs but enjoyed them, because he had more time to think of heaven.
16. \_\_\_\_ He didn't even like to think of heaven, of living forever in a boring place under the thumb of God.
17. \_\_\_\_ She loved to read of heaven, God's royal kingdom, knowing that Christ had prepared a place for her.
18. \_\_\_\_ Whenever she thought of her faith-filled parents, she celebrated that she would someday join them.
19. \_\_\_\_ He hated that his child was sick, that he might never see him again, that life was brutish and short.
20. \_\_\_\_ She really wondered what meaning life could even have, given that it ended in permanent nothingness.
21. \_\_\_\_ Her life after salvation bore the light of Christ, suffusing her every little act with eternal significance.
22. \_\_\_\_ Counseling was his passion because he was able to share the hope that he held for new life.
23. \_\_\_\_ He was into death, wearing skull tattoos, killing himself with drugs. He had nothing for which to live.
24. \_\_\_\_ People wondered why he was so happy all the time, with little reason, so he always said so: Christ.
25. \_\_\_\_ People wondered why she was so grumpy all the time. Why not? What hope had anyone for life?

1R 2N 3R 4N 5N 6E 7E 8N 9R 10N 11R 12R 13N 14N 15R 16N 17R 18R 19N 20N 21R 22R 23N 24R 25N

# Conclusion

If one were to have completed the exercises in this book, then one would have reflected at least briefly on well over one thousand applications of Bible verses and principles to everyday circumstances. Disciples are those who follow Jesus Christ. To follow Christ, to walk with him in relationship, means to do as he says, for as Amos 3:3 says, two cannot walk together unless they agree. We want to walk with Jesus both to know him and that he knows us. Just calling his name is not enough to enter his kingdom, Matthew 7:21-23 records Jesus saying. He must also know us.

We walk, though, in a world quite different from the one in which Jesus's twelve disciples walked. The images and idioms Jesus used to communicate his will in his public ministry on earth are unlike the images and idioms we encounter today. We do not pull our donkeys out of wells or own millstones with which to grind grain. Few of us own vineyards or even fields. Jesus taught in terms of shepherds, lantern tenders, well owners, and kings. Our roles are instead accountants, pilots, and coders, navigating virtual worlds. When the Bible tells us to do something, those actions sometimes takes translation from ancient to modern circumstances. Modern middle-class Americans face the same spiritual issues as ancient Middle Easterners, just in different social and technological contexts.

The above exercises may have helped you in that translation. You have, though, a greater helper. Christ left us in part so that his Father could send us his helper Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit draw the Bible's verses to your mind and show you their application. Let God's word plumb your mind, will, and emotions. Stay in God's word, and not idly but for its application. Draw fruitfully from God's word so that your actions in this crazy world align to it. Seek, know, and do his will. And teach others to do likewise. The world needs more of God's word, not just floating across the airwaves but in hearts, minds, and actions.

# About the Authors

Nelson Miller is an ardent Christ follower who cares for his wife, daughter, and grandson and, in his spare time, practices and teaches law while directing the operations of a church. Roger Sellon follows the passion of Christ, caring for his wife, adult children, and grandchildren and, in his spare time, serves in prison, care, and prayer ministries, as a retired psychologist.

# Other Books

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