

**Maturing in Christ**  
Book Three

ORDER OF LESSONS

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*INSTRUCTIONS:*

1. Look up the passage as stated and answer the questions to the best of your ability.
2. At the end of each section briefly review the entire section of questions and try to state in a sentence or two the main idea or underlying principle that you have learned from this section. Then write your principle at the top of each section in the rectangular box.
3. If you have trouble coming up with the principle, first try your best to come up with something on your own. After this, feel free to check the answer key at the back of your book if you need help. (But don't cheat and look ahead!)
4. Please try to complete each lesson prior to the meeting when that lesson will be covered, so there will be more time for discussion.

## Lesson 1

### Fellowship (Koinonia)

- Read 1 John 1:6-10

#### Principle #1

1. List three hindrances to fellowship with God:
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
2. What is the prerequisite for fellowship with other believers according to verse 7? Why is this so?

#### Principle #2

1. Read the "one another" passages in John's epistles. What do these verses say is a vital ingredient for fellowship to take place?

I John 1:7

I John 3:11

I John 3:23

I John 4:7

I John 4:11

I John 4:12

II John 5

- Read I Peter 1:22 and 4:8
  2. What should our love for fellow believers be like?
  3. How do you grow to love another believer the way Peter says is necessary?

- Read II Corinthians 1:8-11

**Principle #3**

1. What did the apostle Paul not want the Corinthian believers to be unaware of?
2. Why was it important to Paul for them to be aware of these things?
3. Having shared these matters, what did Paul now need from the Corinthian believers?
4. Is it difficult for you to share with others what you are personally facing in your life and to ask for prayer? Explain.
5. What kind of concerns do we need to share with fellow believers if we are to develop close personal relationships and build each other up in Christ?

*Note: Koinonia (Greek word for fellowship) is used 36 times in the New Testament. A study of these verses shows that koinonia involves mutual sharing and participation. This sharing is rooted in our common bond we have in knowing Christ.*

- Read Hebrews 10:24-25

**Principle #4**

1. What is our responsibility when we meet with other believers according to verse 25?
2. In what ways did the believers need to be encouraged according to verses 24 and 25?

- Read I Thessalonians 2:11-12

3. In what manner did Paul and Silas encourage the Thessalonian believers?
4. What was the purpose of Paul's encouragement?

- Read Acts 11:22-23

5. What did Barnabas do when he arrived at Antioch and saw God's work in the lives of the believers there?

- Read I Corinthians 16:17-18

6. What does Paul say these three men did for him?

- Read Philemon 1:7,20

7. What did Philemon do for the saints (verse 7), and what does Paul want Philemon to do for him (verse 20)?

Note: The Greek word for “refresh” (*anapauo*) used here in Philemon is the same word that is translated as “rest” in Matthew 11:28 when Jesus says, “I will give you rest.” In Matthew 11, Jesus is speaking about a spiritual rest that He offers. Paul also refers to a spiritual rest when he says in I Corinthians 16:17-18 that his spirit was refreshed (see also II Corinthians 7:13, where Titus’ spirit was refreshed by the Corinthians).

In Philemon 1:7, 20, where Paul talks about the heart being refreshed, the Greek word for “heart” is “*splanchna*,” a deep emotional term that can be literally translated, “inner parts of the body,” i.e., emotions.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Paul is asking for emotional refreshment from Philemon.

The word “refresh” (*anapauo*) can therefore have the dual meaning of giving both **spiritual refreshment** (I Corinthians 16 and II Corinthians 7), and **emotional refreshment** (as used in Philemon).

8. What do you think is the difference between spiritual refreshment and emotional refreshment?

9. How can we refresh one another? Be specific.

10. Have you ever been refreshed by anyone? If so, what did that person do?

 **Application Point**

So far we've seen that if true biblical fellowship (koinonia) is to take place we need to be walking closely with Christ and be vulnerable enough to share, and ask for prayer. We also need to pray with others, and seek to encourage and refresh them in their walk with the Lord. Think of one person you feel God wants you to fellowship with by loving them deeply. (Example: husband, wife, friend, relative, neighbor, etc.). Make an effort this week to fellowship with that person. Write down their name at the end of this lesson and what part you feel God wants you to play in their life.

If you are studying this material in a small group or discipleship group setting, take time now to mutually share what is going on in your lives. Share what God is doing (or maybe what you are not doing), and what you would like Him to do. Take time to pray for each other, and continue to do so and hold one another accountable as your group meets in the future.

- ***There are three rules for prayer requests:***

1. They must be personal (about you or people close to you).
2. They must be kept confidential within the group.
3. They must not be so personal as to embarrass others.

**Homework:**

4. Write down here the name of the person(s) you feel God wants you to fellowship with better than you have been. State what you feel God wants you to do and how you intend to go about it. Make an effort to reach out to one person before your next group meeting.
5. Read through Acts 2:42-47 and Acts 4:32. What impresses you about the early church's koinonia?

<sup>1</sup> Edwin C. Deibler, "Philemon", in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, SP Publications, 1983, 1985), 2:772. "Splancha" is also used in Philippians 2:1, and is translated as "bowels" by the KJV.

## Lesson 2

# Effective Prayer

*A tavern was being built in a town that until recently had been dry. A group of Christians in a certain church opposed this and began an all-night prayer meeting, asking God to intervene.*

*Lightning struck the tavern building, and it burned to the ground. The owner brought a lawsuit against the church, claiming they were responsible. The Christians hired a lawyer, claiming they were not responsible. The judge said, "No matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not."<sup>1</sup>*

*Most Christians say that they believe in prayer, that prayer is important and that it makes a difference. Nevertheless, many Christians will admit that they do not pray very much, or nearly as much as they should. Why? Perhaps it is because at times when they have prayed, their prayers have not been answered (at least not in the way they wanted them answered), and they have become disillusioned with prayer.*

*The truth is that most Christians do not know how to pray effectively. This lesson will address the keys to effective prayer, focusing on prayer as an extension of our Christian lifestyle and attitudes.*

- Read Psalm 66:18 and I John 3:22

### Principle #1

1. What do these Scriptures teach us about receiving answers to prayer?

- Read John 15:7
  2. What is the promise in this verse?
  3. How would allowing Jesus' words or the words of Scripture to remain in us, change or affect the way we pray?

**Note:** *To remain (NIV) or abide (NAS, KJV) in Christ can mean, first, to accept Jesus as Savior (John 6:54). Second, it can mean to continue or persevere in believing (John 8:31, I John 2:19). Third, it can also mean believing, loving obedience (John 15:9-10).<sup>2</sup> The latter emphasis, that of loving obedience, seems to be a necessary ingredient when it comes to the matter of effective prayer.*

4. What do you think the prayer-obedience cycle is illustrating about prayer? (For a more detailed description of the prayer-obedience cycle, see Appendix 1)

- Read Matthew 6:14-15 and I Peter 3:7

5. According to these two passages, what may hinder the effectiveness of our prayer?

6. Before bringing personal requests to God in prayer, what should we always talk with Him about first?

- Read Hebrews 11:1,6 and James 1:5-8

**Principle #2**

1. What kind of attitude must we have when we bring our requests to God in prayer?

2. What do these passages say about the man without faith?

3. Based on your study thus far, write out in two or three sentences the kind of person and prayer life God desires from His children. Personalize it for yourself, i.e., what does God want from you?
- Read James 5:15
4. What is the prayer of faith? Write your own definition, keeping in mind that it may not always be God's will to answer yes to our prayer.
  5. From your personal experience, what is usually the number one hindrance to believing that God can answer your prayers?
  6. Do you think if you primarily prayed specific prayers rather than general prayers, that your faith in the effectiveness of prayer would increase? Explain?
  7. Take a moment and write down a concern you have which you have difficulty believing God can or will answer if you bring it before Him in prayer. What is hindering you from praying in faith? What does God's Word say about this?
  8. God may answer our prayers with one of three responses: Yes, No, or Wait. When can we be 100% sure that God will respond to our prayer by saying "Yes"?
  9. A believer's prayer life will become more effective as he/she learns more of God's promises. Why do you think this is so?

10. It is important that we pray God's promises back to Him. List some promises and the corresponding Scripture passages that you can begin praying back to God.

Promise

Scripture Reference

a.

b.

Example of praying a promise back to God: "Lord, I thank You that You promise to work all things together for good for those that love You. I thank You now that You will bring good out of the trial I am experiencing." (Romans 8:28)

**Briefly read the following passages. Next to each Scripture reference, write down the key ingredient to effective prayer as mentioned in the passage.**

John 14:13-14

1 John 5:14-15

Luke 22:42

Luke 18:1-5

James 1:6

James 4:3

James 4:2

*Note: The words "in My name" or in the "name of Jesus" are found only in John, chapters 14-16 and Ephesians 5:20. Attaching the words, "in Jesus' name" to the end of prayers does not make certain we've prayed an effective prayer.*

*Praying in Jesus' name involves several elements. First, it means approaching God and gaining access to Him solely on the basis of what Christ has done (His death, resurrection and ascension). Secondly, since a name was designed to reflect the essential character of an individual, then to pray in Christ's name is to pray in a manner consistent with all we know Him to be. Third, to pray in Jesus' name means to pray as He*

*would under the same circumstances. To ask in another person's name means to ask as though you were that person.<sup>4</sup>*

- When praying in Jesus' name we should always ask ourselves, "Is this what Jesus would pray for?"
- Key Question: Is there ever a time when we should stop persisting in prayer? If so, how will we know we are to do so?

### **Application Point**

Write in your own words a concise definition of effective prayer. Afterwards, list how you may have not been praying effectively, and what you need to change regarding your lifestyle or the content of your prayer.

Definition of an effective prayer:

### **Homework:**

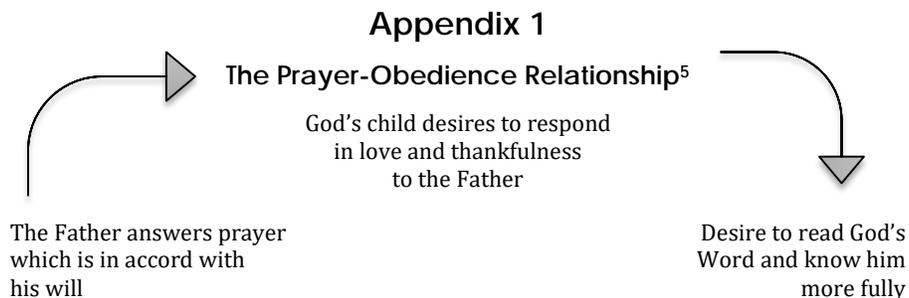
- Begin incorporating into your prayer life what you learned today. Buy a prayer journal or notebook and organize it by days of the week. Divide your requests into days. For example:

Monday - Family

Tuesday - Church ministry  
Wednesday - Extended family  
Thursday - Salvation of friends  
Friday - Personal needs and spiritual goals  
Saturday - Christian friends  
Sunday - Miscellaneous



- Start small and then add to your list as you gain more consistency and take more time for prayer. After each request leave space for God's answer (Yes, No or Wait). Remember to pray specifically and look for answers. Plan to show your journal or notebook at your next group meeting and share how it has helped you.



The child is enabled to pray in terms of God's thoughts: according to his will

Child helped by the Holy Spirit to understand God's Word

The child begins to understand what the Father might want in a particular situation

Desire to please God increases

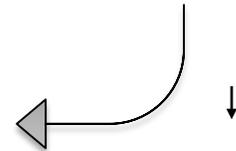
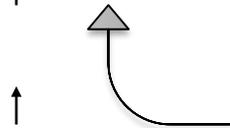
The child begins to think like the Father, thinking his thoughts after him

Spirit helps child to live according to the Father's will

↑ The child begins to think about life as God thinks about life, and events and decisions are evaluated from God's point of view

↓ In the obedient child's life an atmosphere encouraging fellowship with the Father and Christ develops ↓

The Holy Spirit lives comfortably in the child and through the Spirit the child grows in understanding of the mind of God



<sup>1</sup>Michael P. Green, ed., Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 275.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin A. Blum, "John" in the Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy D. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, SP Publications, 1983), 2:325

<sup>3</sup>W. Bingham Hunter, The God Who Hears, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), p. 103

<sup>4</sup>C. Samuel Storms, Reaching God's Ear, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1988), p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>Hunter, The God Who Hears, p. 214

### Lesson 3

## Looking Intently Into God' Word (Part 1)

*But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.*

- Read James 1:25

**Principle #1**

1. Oftentimes people say they read the Bible and get nothing out of it. What does this verse have to say to those people?
2. In your own words, write down what you think it means to look “intently” into Scripture. How can we do this?
3. What lessons can we learn from this exercise as it relates to our study of Scripture?
4. What is the danger of trying to interpret a passage before looking intently at it?

*Looking intently into Scripture is the first step in Bible study and is what is called “observing” the text. First we need to make observations to see what the Scriptures say before we come up with deductions.*

**Before you go on to Principle #2**, turn in your Bible to the book of Ephesians. Read through 2:8-10 twice, and then record five observations from these verses. An observation answers the question, “What does the text say?” To give you a

better idea of what an observation is, see the sample observations of Ephesians 2:1-2. Afterward, record your observations of Ephesians 2:8-10 in the box prepared for you, on page 24. (Don't list the questions until Principle #2)

**\*\*Example:**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Observations (2:1-2)</b> What does the text say?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questions (2:1-2)</b> Who, What, Where, When, Why, &amp; How?</p>
<p>1. Before we were saved we were dead in sin. (v. 1)</p>	<p>1. What does it mean to be dead in sin? (v. 1)</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Observations (2:1-2)</b> What does the text say?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Questions (2:1-2)</b> Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>1.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>2.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>3.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>4.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>5.</p>

***When making observations, look for three main things:***

1. Grammar

a. Verb tense (past, present, future) – Greek also has a perfect tense<sup>1</sup>

b. Mood:

1. Imperative (command) – Do it
  - a. Example – “Follow Me” Matthew 4:19
2. Subjective (possibility) – Might or might not happen
  - a. Example – “that the world may know” John 14:31
3. Indicative (reality) – Is happening, has happened, or will happen
  - a. Example – “Christ died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3)

2. Specific Structural Terms:

- a. Contrast (but, nevertheless, otherwise)
- b. Purpose (therefore, so that, in order that)
- c. Comparison (just as, likewise, so also)
- d. Reason (because, for, since)
- e. Result (that, thus, then)

3. Figures of Speech:

- a. Simile (I am like...)
  1. Example – “They will soar on wings like eagles” (Isaiah 40:31)
- b. Metaphor (I am...)
  1. “I am the bread of life”<sup>2</sup> (John 6:48)

**Principle #2**

Once you observed the text, it's time to interpret it. Observation answers the question, “What does the text say?” Interpretation answers the question, “What does it mean?”

The best way to find this out is to first ask interpretive questions. Six questions you should bombard the passage you are studying with are: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

**Take five minutes and reread Ephesians 2:8-10.** Bombard the passage with questions and write down your questions in the box next to where you made

your observations. Write down at least six questions. Look back at the sample questions from Ephesians 2:1-2 provided for you on page 23 to give you a better idea of what you should be doing in this exercise.

1. Why do you think it is important to ask questions that relate to the passage? How will this help you interpret the passage?
2. Share some of the questions you wrote down in the exercise. Which question is most important for you to answer in order to better understand this passage?
3. One way Scripture can come alive is by crawling into the skin of the person writing the Scripture. This can be done by asking questions. (Example: How is Paul thinking and feeling while he's in prison?)

### Principle #3

There are two major rules (there are other rules, but for our purposes these two will suffice) to guide us when it comes to interpreting a passage. These are:

1. Interpret the passage or verse in light of its context.
2. Interpret the unclear by the clear.

#### **Rule #1: Be aware of and understand the immediate context.**

The verses which precede or follow the passage you are studying make up the context. For instance, to determine the context of Philippians 4:13 you need to become familiar with what Paul is discussing in Philippians 4:10-12. Many Christians take Philippians 4:13 to mean that if they rely on Christ and obey Him

that they can do anything (like running a 4 minute mile). But is this what the verse is teaching?

- Take a minute to read Philippians 4:10-20, focusing on verses 10-12. In light of the entire context (vv. 10-20) and in particular the preceding verses (10-12), what do you think Paul is saying in verse 13?

### **Rule #2: Interpret the unclear by the clear.**

Certain verses in Scripture are very clear, such as Ephesians 2:9, which says we are not saved by works. It is clear from Ephesians 2:8-9 that only faith in Christ saves, not faith plus works.

Other verses are unclear, such as 1 Corinthians 15:2, "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the work I preached to you. Otherwise you have believed in vain." This verse is interpreted by some to say that you are saved in faith plus living a life of obedience ("if you hold firmly"), and that if you do not obey Christ you will lose your salvation. This is a difficult verse and must be interpreted in light of clearer verses such as Ephesians 2:8-9, as well as verses like Romans 8:38-39. Most likely 1 Corinthians 15:2 is saying that the proof that someone is a Christian is that he/she will continue to hold to "the faith" (i.e., those who leave the faith never really had the faith – "apostates") and that he will affirm the bodily resurrection of Christ (cf. 15:4, 12-57).

- Look closely again at Ephesians 2:10. Some may use this verse to teach salvation by works. How can verses 8 and 9 help you interpret verse 10? Record again in the box labeled INTERPRETATION what you feel Ephesians 2:10 means and what it does not mean in light of verses 8-9.

### **INTERPRETATION** (What does the text mean?)

Rule #1: Interpret in context

Rule #2: Interpret the unclear by the clear

### **Summary**

1. We need to take a close look when we read the Bible – observation.
2. We need to ask questions to help us interpret Scripture.
3. We need to interpret Scripture in its context, and interpret unclear passages by clearer ones.

### Homework

Read and study Philippians 4:4-9. Use the following page to record your observations, questions and interpretations.

Make sure you read through the passage at least three times. Memorize your favorite verse from this passage. Plan to return to your next group meeting to share your observations, questions and interpretations.

### **Passage being studied – Philippians 4:4-9**

<sup>1</sup>The perfect tense in Greek means, “accomplished at a point in time in the past with continuing results.” Example – in Ephesians 2:8 “saved is in the perfect tense, thus meaning a person is saved at a point in time in the past (when one trusts Christ) and continues to be saved.

<sup>2</sup>Jesus is using bread as a metaphor to illustrate His point that He is the source of life and people can only find life in Him. For more information about figures of speech see E.W. Bullinger, Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968).

## Lesson 4

### Looking Intently Into God’ Word (Part 2)

Principle #1

Dr. Howard Hendricks, professor and chairman of the Center for Christian Leadership at Dallas Theological Seminary has said, "Interpretation without application is abortion." Dr. Hendricks' point is clear. If we study Scripture and even interpret it accurately, but do not apply it, then we have short-circuited what God intended for us. As James 1:25 says, "Only when we look intently into God's Word and then **do** it, will we receive a blessing."

Application must be viewed as a two-step process. First, we need to look for general principles that all believers should apply. For example, the general application from Ephesians 2:10 is that "believers are called to live a life of good works." But secondly and most importantly, we need to take those general principles and apply them to our lives in a specific way. A specific application of Ephesians 2:10 then is, "I need to live a life of good works." Specifically, I need to share the gospel with neighbors, help with the nursery, etc.

1. Take a few minutes and closely look again at Ephesians 2:8-10. Write down two general and two specific applications from this passage in the boxes. Afterwards, share your findings with your group.

### **Applications from Ephesians 2:8-10**

Two GENERAL Applications:

(Example: Believers should produce good works.)

1.

2.

Two SPECIFIC Applications

(Example: I need to do good works for the Lord.)

- 1.
- 2.

2. In order to truly benefit from Bible study, we need to discover practical applications that are already stated in the text. Seven such practical applications to look for are:

- **Sins to avoid** – Example: “flee immorality” – 2 Timothy 2:22
- **Commands to obey** – Example: “be filled with the Spirit” – Ephesians 5:18
- **Promises to claim** – Example: “Christ will never leave us” – Hebrews 13:5
- **Examples to follow** – Example: “Job’s example of accepting good and bad” – Job 2:10
- **Errors to avoid** – Example: “Not being misled that the day of the Lord has already come” – 2 Thessalonians 2:2; i.e., I need to avoid errors in my thinking and my theology.
- **Truths to embrace** – Example: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” – Romans 3:23 i.e., I must embrace the truth that I am a sinner.
- Also, “God allows all things to work together for good to those who love Him” – Romans 8:28 i.e., I must embrace the truth that God is sovereign and is in control.
- **Characteristics to build** – Example: “Adding qualities such as goodness, self control, etc., to your life” 2 Peter 1:5-7; also Galatians 5:22-23.

3. Read again Philippians 4:4-7. Look for applications and then list as many as you can find in the boxes. These will be discussed in your discipleship group.

Sins to Avoid:	Commands to Obey:
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Promises to Claim:	Examples to Follow:
Errors to Avoid:	Truths to Embrace:
Characteristics to Build:	

**Principle #2**

**Once we find applications from the text** (Example: I should not worry about anything - Philippians 4:6), it is necessary to ask ourselves three hard questions. These are:

- Am I doing this?
- If not, why not?
- How can I begin to apply this in my life, or improve on applying this?

Look again at the applications you listed in the boxes for Philippians 4:4-7. Take a few minutes to evaluate whether or not you are applying these to you life on a daily basis. With a different color pen, place a 'Y' in the box beside the applications, which you are presently applying. Place an 'N' beside the applications which you are not applying. Place an 'I' beside the applications which you are consciously trying to apply, but need to improve on.

**Principle #3**

Lastly and most importantly, we need to consciously practice and apply what we have learned. In other words, "just do it and keep on doing it." No one truly learns how to drive a car by reading a driver's manual. In the same way, believers do not become godly simply by acquiring Bible knowledge. Godliness only comes through continual obedience and trust in God.

Obedience begins with a decision such as, "Today/This week I will..." James 1:22 says that only by doing God's Word will we be blessed.

- Look back at the applications from Philippians 4:4-7 where you placed an 'N' or an 'I'. State below one item which you will choose to try to apply to life, and how you plan to incorporate this change into you life.

Today, I have decided I want to \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to do this by \_\_\_\_\_

***Example:** I plan to become more thankful by making it a habit to give thanks to God for something before requesting anything from Him.)*

### Summary

1. Once we understand what Scripture says and means, we need to look to see how we can apply it to our lives. Seven areas to look for are:

***Sins to avoid***

***Commands to obey***

***Promises to claim***

***Examples to follow***

***Errors to avoid***

***Truths to embrace***

***Characteristics to build***

2. We need to evaluate whether or not we are applying God's Word.

3. We need to make a conscious decision to apply God's Word.

### Application – Philippians 4:8-9

Step #1: Look for applications

Sins to Avoid:	Commands to Obey:
Promises to Claim:	Examples to Follow:
Errors to Avoid:	Truths to Embrace:
Characteristics to Build:	

Step #2: Evaluate

- Place a 'Y' beside the applications which you are presently applying.
- Place an 'N' beside the applications which you are not applying
- Place an 'I' beside the applications which you are trying to apply, but need to improve on.

Step #3: Decision Time (*Just do it*)

Today, I have decided to: \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to do this by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Lesson 5

### Stewardship

Stewardship is a very important subject in the Bible. Believers are called to be good stewards, yet few understand what this means, or to what areas this applies. This lesson will begin by first looking into what it means to be a steward, and then focusing on two areas in which God calls us to be good stewards.

- Read Genesis 24:1-14 and Luke 16:1-8

#### Principle #1

1. What title does the servant ascribe to Abraham, and in Luke 16, what title does the steward ascribe to the rich man? Based on this answer, what other word might you use to describe the servant and the steward?
  2. In both the story about Abraham's servant and the steward in Luke 16 ("manager," NIV), what is the steward's responsibility?
  3. Whose interest and profit is the steward to have ambition for? Is there any hint that Abraham's servant was motivated by self-interest and expected it?
  4. How did the steward of Luke 16 fail his master?
  5. Notice in both Genesis 24 and Luke 16 the steward is never referred to by his own personal name. What is the significance of this, and what does it teach us about stewardship?
  6. Based on Genesis 24:1-14 and Luke 16:1-8, how would you define a steward and describe his responsibility?
- Read I Corinthians 4:1-2
7. In these two verses Paul says believers are stewards of God ("entrusted with secret things of God," NIV). Review your answer for Question #6. Based on this answer, how would you define what it means for a believer to be a steward? Also, what is the believer's responsibility as a steward?

Definition:

Responsibility :

Now that we've seen what it means to be a steward, it's time to focus on some areas in which God expects us to be good stewards.

- Read Matthew 25:14-30

Principle #2

1. Why did the master give different amounts to each of his three slaves? What truth does this tell us about how God might deal with us today?

**Note:** The word "talent" has to do with money. The talents were of silver. (The Greek word "*argyron*" means silver money.) A talent weighed between 58 - 80 pounds. Each talent was worth a considerable amount of money.<sup>1</sup>

2. Notice that the slaves are entrusted with their master's possessions. As slaves or stewards of God, how should we view our money and possessions? What does this say about ownership?
3. What is the responsibility of each slave? Similarly, how do you think God wants us to handle the money He has entrusted to us?

4. Compare II Corinthians 9:6 with Matthew 25:21 and 23. How does verse 6 tie in with what you have learned thus far about stewardship and what it means to be a steward?
  
5. Keeping in mind what you have learned about stewardship, why does God love a cheerful giver?
  
6. What test determines whether we are being a good steward of our money, or a poor steward?
  
7. Are you being a good steward of your money? Why or why not?

- Read I Peter 4:10

**Principle #3**

1. This verse is speaking about spiritual gifts (cf. I Corinthians 12:7). Why do you think Peter says we are to each view our gift(s) as a stewardship (NAS - as good stewards)?
  
2. What might prevent believers from being good stewards of their spiritual gifts?

Note: Both temporary and permanent spiritual gifts are listed in the Bible (I Corinthians 12 and 14; Ephesians 4; Romans 12). Some “sign gifts” and “foundational gifts” have ceased.

Two full lessons are devoted to spiritual gifts in Book IV: Ministering For Christ. A thorough discussion of both the temporary and permanent gifts, as well as how believers can know what their gifts may be, will be addressed in Book IV.

3. Is it possible to use our spiritual gifts, yet still not be good stewards of them? If so, how?
  
4. Do you know what your spiritual gifts are, and are you using them? If not, why not?
  
5. Although I Peter 4:10 is primarily speaking about spiritual gifts, do you think this principle of stewardship could also apply to the natural talents God has given us? If so, how should we view our talents as a stewardship from God?

### **Application Point**

- What did you learn about stewardship in this lesson?
- In what way has this lesson caused you to think differently about what God has entrusted you with?
- How do you intend to become a better steward as a result of this study?

### **Homework**

1. Study II Corinthians 9:6-11. Follow the three-step process and prepare to discuss your work and how you have been applying this passage at your next group meeting.

Step #1: Look for Applications:

Sins to Avoid:	Commands to Obey:
Promises to Claim:	Examples to Follow:
Errors to Avoid:	Truths to Embrace
Characteristics to Build:	

Step #2: Evaluate

Place a 'Y' beside the applications that you are presently applying.

Place a 'N' beside the applications that you are not applying.

Place an 'I' beside the applications that you are trying to apply, but need to improve on.

Step #3: Decision Time (*Just Do It*)

Today, \_\_\_\_\_, I have decided to . . .

This week, \_\_\_\_\_, I have decided to . . .

1 Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., "Matthew," The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton: Victor Books, SP Publications, 1983), 2:80.

## Lesson 6

# Fasting

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that few Christians practice. Perhaps this is because there is not a clear understanding in regard to what the Bible teaches about this subject. Many wonder if God wants them to fast, and if so, why?

This lesson will address three questions in regard to fasting:

- 1) Does God want believers to fast?
  - 2) Are there any biblical requirements in regard to fasting?
  - 3) How is a believer to fast?
- Read Matthew 6:1-18

Principle #1

1. In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus teaches on the subjects of giving, prayer and fasting. Make a list of the verses in which Jesus uses the word "when."
  
2. What do you think Jesus is implying by using the word "when"?
  
  
- Read Matthew 9:14-15
  
3. Why does Jesus say His followers are not fasting?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Who is the bridegroom? See Isaiah 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Hosea 2:16-20.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Based on your answer to #4, what do you think Jesus is saying in Matthew 9:15? What is He claiming about Himself?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Read Matthew 25:1-13
  
  
6. Matthew 25:1-13 is the only other place in Matthew where the word "bridegroom" is mentioned. In this parable, what do you think the words below represent?
  - a. The five foolish virgins:
  - b. The five wise virgins:
  - c. The bridegroom and his return:
  - d. The wedding feast (for help see Revelation 19:7-10):

- Reread Matthew 9:15

7. Some Christians believe that the words “taken away” in Matthew 9:15 refer only to the three-day time period between Jesus’ death and resurrection. The implication then is that Jesus expects His disciples to fast during those three days. Based on your study in Matthew 25:1-13, what time period do you think the words “taken away” refer to?

It is true that after Jesus ascended, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us. In this sense, God is among us since the Spirit is our Helper, and the one who guides us into all truth. However in II Corinthians 5:6-8, Paul says that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord, and that we are to prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. Paul’s point is that Christians should have homesickness in their hearts.

For this reason, Jesus expected His disciples to fast after He ascended to heaven. Until our bridegroom returns, we as believers who are the bride of Christ, should long to be in His presence because we desire to see Him face to face. Fasting can serve as a time whereby we make a sacrifice in order to spend time with the Lord.

After Jesus’ ascension, we read of Jesus’ followers fasting (Acts 13:1-3). It therefore seems clear that Jesus expected His disciples to fast after His ascension and to continue to do so until His return.

### Principle #2

There are many commands in the New Testament to pray. Some examples are:

**Matthew 5:44** Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

**I Thessalonians 5:17** Pray continually.

**James 5:16** Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other.

Surprisingly there are no commands in the New Testament to fast. Jesus assumes we will fast but does not command it (see Appendix 2 for all the New Testament passages that mention fasting), nor does He command how often a person is to fast (e.g., - once a week) or when he is to fast (e.g., - Wednesdays or lunch hours, etc.)

- Read Acts 6:4 and James 5:16
  1. Some Christians seem to think that in order for prayer to be effective and for us to clearly hear from God, that fasting is necessary. But is this true? What do Acts 6:4 and James 5:16 seem to say about this, or not say about this?
  
- Read II Samuel 12:15-23; Ezra 8:21-23; Nehemiah 1:1-4; Esther 4:1-3
  2. What do each of these passages have in common which might point to why the people fasted?
  
- Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Acts 13:1-3.
  3. What unique circumstances were Jesus (Matthew 4) and the church leaders (Acts 13) facing when they decided to embark upon a fast and what was the result of their fasting?
  
- Read John 13:1-30
  4. The events of the evening described in John 13 were leading up to a time of crisis if ever there was one. Jesus predicted His betrayal and soon was to be arrested (John 18) in the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus prayed three times (Matthew 26:36-46). Interestingly, in John 13 Jesus and His disciples are not fasting, instead they are feasting. What does this each you about the New Testament practice of fasting?

- Read Matthew 6:16-18

Principle #3

**Note:** People “disfigured” their faces by not washing and not shaving, by putting ashes on one’s head to signify self-denigration or by omitting the normal use of olive oil. Washing and anointing with olive oil were normal steps in hygiene.

1. Why do you think Jesus condemns the practice of disfiguring one’s face when fasting?
2. What is the hypocrite truly seeking to acquire?
3. Is it wrong if you are seen when fasting? Explain.
4. What practical steps can you take to ensure that you will not be noticed when you are fasting?
5. Do you find yourself struggling with a desire for applause from men, when you know that this passage teaches that our desire should be to receive applause from God? Explain.

6. Think again about some of the subjects you've studied in Book 3 (Prayer, Bible Study, Giving, Fasting). According to Jesus' words in Matthew 6, how can we act like a hypocrite while pursuing these spiritual disciplines? Be as specific as possible.

#### Principle #4

1. Although the literal meaning of the word "fast" is to be without nourishment and to not have eaten<sup>1</sup>, do you think it is a legitimate application of the word to include the idea of fasting from other things (e.g., TV, recreational activities, etc.)?

*Ole Hallesby in his classic book, Prayer, states this in regard to fasting:<sup>2</sup>*

*"Fasting is not confined to abstinence from eating and drinking. Fasting really means voluntary abstinence for a time from various necessities of life, such as food, drink, sleep, rest, association with people and so forth.*

*The purpose of such abstinence for a longer or shorter period of time is to loosen to some degree the ties, which bind us to the world of material things and our surroundings as a whole, in order that we may concentrate all our spiritual powers upon the unseen and eternal things.*

*Fasting in the Christian sense does not involve looking upon the necessities of life, which we have mentioned, as unclean or unholy. On the contrary, we have learned from the apostle that nothing is unclean of itself (Romans 14:14) and that food has been created by God to be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:3). Fasting implies merely that our souls at certain times need to concentrate more strongly on the one thing needful than at other times, and for that reason we renounce for the time being those things which, in themselves, may be both permissible and profitable."*

2. What item do you think has the biggest stronghold in your spiritual life, which if you fasted from periodically would greatly enhance your walk with God?

- |                               |                                  |                                      |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> food | <input type="checkbox"/> reading | <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV   | <input type="checkbox"/> a hobby |                                      |

Rev. David Wilkerson, author of *The Cross and the Switchblade*, tells in his book how he got interested in pursuing a ministry to the inner city youth in New York. Although he had been enjoying a successful pastorate, David was spiritually restless and discontent. February 9, 1958, the night he decided to sell his television set, was an important date in his life. He writes,

*"It was late, Gwen and the children were asleep, and I was sitting in front of the set watching the "Late Show." The story somehow involved a dance routine in which a lot of chorus girls marched across the set in just-visible costumes. I remember thinking suddenly how dull it all was.*

*"You're getting old, David," I warned myself.*

*But try as I would, I could not get my mind back on the threadbare little story and the girl—which one was it?—whose destiny on the stage was supposed to be a matter of palpitating interest to every viewer.*

*I got up and turned the knob and watched the young girls disappear into a little dot in the center of the screen. I left the living room and went into my office and sat down in the brown leather swivel chair.*

*"How much time do I spend in front of that screen each night?" I wondered. "A couple of hours, at least. What would happen, Lord, if I sold that TV set and spent that time praying?" I was the only one in the family who ever watched TV anyway.*

*What would happen if I spent two hours every single night in prayer? It was an exhilarating idea. Substitute prayer for television, and see what happened.*

*Right away I thought of objections to the idea. I was tired at night. I needed the relaxation and change of pace. Television was part of our culture; it wasn't good for a minister to be out of touch with what people were seeing and talking about.*

*I got up from my chair and turned out the lights and stood at my window looking out over the moonlit hills. Then I put another fleece before the Lord, one which was destined to change my life. I made it pretty hard on God, it seemed to me, because I really didn't want to give up television.*

*"Jesus," I said, "I need some help deciding this thing, so here's what I'm asking of You. I'm going to put an ad for that set in the paper. If You're behind this idea, let a buyer appear right away. Let him appear within an hour . . . within half an hour . . . after the paper gets on the streets."*

*When I told Gwen about my decision next morning, she was unimpressed. "Half an hour!" she said. "Sounds to me, Dave Wilkerson, like you don't want to do all that praying."*

*Gwen had a point, but I put the ad in the paper anyhow. It was a comical scene in our living room after the paper appeared. I sat on the sofa with the television set looking at me from one side, the children and Gwen looking at me from another, and my eyes on a great big alarm clock beside the telephone.*

*Twenty-nine minutes passed, by the clock.*

*"Well, Gwen," I said, "it looks like you're right. I guess I won't have to . . ."*

*The telephone rang.*

*I picked it up slowly, looking at Gwen.*

*"You have a TV set for sale?" a man's voice asked.*

*"That's right. An RCA in good condition. Nineteen-inch screen, two years old."*

*"How much do you want for it?"*

*One hundred dollars," I said quickly. I hadn't thought about what to ask for it until that moment.*

*"I'll take it," the man said, just like that.*

*"You don't even want to look at it?"*

*"No. Have it ready in fifteen minutes. I'll bring the money.""<sup>3</sup>*

Out of the times of prayer that followed, David Wilkerson was led by God to reach out to the teenage gang members of New York City. This tremendous ministry all began with a commitment to fast from television.

## Appendix 1

### Fasting in the Old Testament: *New American Standard Version*

#### **FAST**

II Samuel	12:23	Jeremiah	14:12
I Kings	21:9		36:6
	21:12		36:9
II Chronicles	20:3	Joel	1:14
Ezra	8:21		2:15
Esther	4:16	Jonah	3:5
Isaiah	58:4	Zechariah	8:19
	58:5		
	58:6		

#### **FASTED**

Judges	20:26
I Samuel	7:6
	31:13
II Samuel	1:12
	12:16
I Chronicles	10:12
Ezra	8:23
Isaiah	58:3
Zechariah	7:5
	Joel

#### **FASTING**

Nehemiah	1:4
	9:1
Esther	4:3
	9:31
Psalms	35:13
	69:10
	109:24
Daniel	6:18
	9:3
	Joel

## Appendix 2

## Fasting in the Old Testament

<u>FAST</u>		<u>FASTED</u>	
Matthew	6:16	Matthew	4:2
	6:17	Acts	13:3
	9:14		
Mark	2:18		
	2:19		
	2:20		
Luke	5:33		
	5:34		
	5:35		
	18:12		
Acts	27:9		

### Other Words to Describe Fasting in N.T.

Luke 4:2 He ate nothing

Acts 9:9 He neither ate nor drank

<u>FASTING</u>		<u>FASTINGS</u>	
Matthew	6:16	Luke	2:37
	6:18		
Mark	2:18		
Acts	13:2		
	14:23		

### Excursus on "Fasting and Prayer"

The word "fasting" was most likely not part of Jesus' original statements in Matthew 17:21 and Mark 9:29. This is also true in I Corinthians 7:5 and Acts 10:30. Note the KJV says fasting and prayer, but NAS and NIV just say prayer.

Perhaps the word "fasting" was added to the original text by some scribes to support asceticism and the church's growing interest in the practice of fasting after the 1st century.

### Summary

1. Jesus assumes we will fast.
2. We have freedom in fasting -- fasting is an optional (though anticipated) discipline usually practiced during a time of crisis or felt need.
3. We should not fast to be seen by men.
4. We may at times need to fast from things other than food.

### **Application Point**

During the next two weeks I am making a commitment to:

- Fast one meal a week
- Fast one day a week
- Fast from some other thing (not food) to make more time for prayer
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup>Fasting from food does not necessarily include fasting from drink. It would be unwise to fast an entire day or more from drink. If you choose to embark on a fast from food, it is recommended that you at least drink water, or water and fruit juices. Fruit and vegetable juices will provide the energy you need to continue your fast.

<sup>2</sup>Ole Halleby, Prayer, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1931), p. 113

<sup>3</sup>David Wilkerson, The Cross and The Switchblade, (New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), pp. 11-12

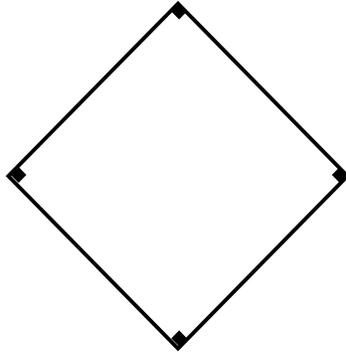
### **NOW THAT YOU'VE COMPLETED BOOK III**

CONGRATULATIONS! Upon the completion of Lesson 7 "Worship," you will have finished Book III: Maturing in Christ. Hopefully you have enjoyed your discipleship group and have grown in the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fellowship and Bible study. Although at times you've probably been stretched from doing the homework, I trust that you met the challenge and prospered from it.

Although you have come a long way in your spiritual development, there is more room to grow, and much more to learn if you want to become the kind of disciple Christ expects of you. Now is not the time to stop! There is one last book in this series. It is Book IV: Ministering for Christ and corresponds to home plate in the baseball diamond.

### **Book 2: Growing in Christ**

**Book 3:  
Maturing in Christ**



**Book 1:  
Getting to Know Christ**

**Book 4:  
Ministering For Christ**

If you want to hit a home run and become a reproducing disciple, using your spiritual gifts and having a ministry you can call your own, then you need to recommit to your group and continue with Book IV.

Book IV will train you in the areas of evangelism and discipleship. Other subjects addressed are spiritual gifts, counseling and vision. There will be much study of Scripture with a heavy emphasis on practically applying what you learn. The homework will challenge you not only to study, but to get involved in the lives of others.

There is one requirement that is needed for you to qualify for Book IV. You must be involved in some kind of ministry at your church. This need not be a lengthy time commitment -- it may be teaching Sunday School or sitting in the Nursery once a month. What you are doing isn't important as long as you are regularly doing it. Hopefully by the time you complete Book IV you will know whether or not the ministry you are presently serving in is the right one for you. If you are not serving in any area at this time, talk to your group leader or call your pastor to inquire as to what you can get involved in now.

As with Book III, there are 7 lessons in Book IV, and you will be expected to attend at least 5 of your group meetings. At this time you need to think and pray about whether you want to continue and recommit to your group and study Book IV.

Please plan to make a decision by your next group meeting. The group will then discuss what date you will begin meeting again to study Book IV. You can confirm your decision by signing below:

Yes, I \_\_\_\_\_ will recommit to my discipleship group to study Book IV: Ministering for Christ. I understand that I am expected to attend at least 5 of the 7 meetings, and must finish the lessons in my workbook that are discussed at the meetings, which I was not able to attend.

No, I \_\_\_\_\_ cannot recommit to my discipleship group to study Book IV: Ministering for Christ. Now is not a good time for me to move on.

## Lesson 7

### Worship

*Worship is a subject that every Christian seems to have an opinion on. People throughout the world have different tastes in music and different ways of expressing their devotion to God. Most likely in your church there are some who would like the music to be more contemporary, while others wish it were more traditional. Some would like the worship time to be more spirited and others would like it to be more solemn.*

*This lesson does not attempt to address which style of music or worship is most appropriate. It does not focus on the form of worship, but rather it seeks to address the function of worship. What is worship and why worship? These are two questions this lesson will attempt to answer from a biblical perspective, so that you may understand worship better and become a better worshiper. First, let's see what the Bible says worship is.*

#### Principle #1

- Read Psalm 95:6

1. What is involved in true worship according to this verse?<sup>1</sup>

- Read Matthew 4:8-10

2. What was Satan looking for from Jesus? How do you think Satan would define worship?

- Read Matthew 2:7-11

3. How did the magi demonstrate their adoration for the baby Jesus?

**Note:** The Greek word translated worship in verse 11 is *proskuneo*. In classical literature this word was used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet, the hem of his garment, the ground, etc.

4. Bowing down and kneeling before God is not a normal practice for Christians in the U.S.A. whether in church or at home. Why do you think this is so and what might hinder you from getting on your knees before God?

2. Our current English word “*worship*” is derived from the Old English “*weorthscipe*” which means worthship, i.e., to ascribe worth or dignity or merit to someone. Taking this definition into consideration, when you sing

in church or pray (in church or at home) what should be your motive and mindset?

- Read Psalm 96:2 and Psalm 100:4

6. In these verses the NIV says we are to “praise” His name. The NAS and KJV say we are to “bless” His name. When you evaluate the quality of your worship, do you do so by considering whether you truly blessed God, or do you normally assume your worship was good if you ended up being blessed? Explain.

7. When you pray or when you hear someone else pray, is the content of those prayers primarily man-centered (God, do this for me or them. . . , etc.) or God-centered (God, I thank You and praise You. . . , etc.)?

8. When you sing (in congregational singing, in choir, or as a soloist) in church, who are you to view as your audience if you are truly worshiping? Who do you think that the average Christian, perhaps yourself included, views as the audience?

9. How would you define God-centered worship in contrast to man-centered worship?

God-centered:

Man-centered:

10. Based on your study thus far, in your own words, how would you define true worship? Be brief yet be thorough.

True worship is:

- Read Matthew 6:16-18

Principle #2

### Descriptive Praise Psalms

- Read Psalm 111

1. In verse 1 the psalmist gives a call to praise God. As you carefully study verses 2-10, why is he praising God? -- for what is he praising God?

### Declarative Praise Psalms

- Read Psalm 116

2. In this psalm, the psalmist is praising God and explains why he loves God. What reasons does he give in this psalm for his praise?

3. What differences do you see between Psalm 111 and Psalm 116?

- Read Psalm 147:1-6 and Psalm 40:1-5

4. Psalm 147 is a descriptive praise psalm and Psalm 40 is a declarative praise psalm. What differences do you notice?

Descriptive Praise Psalms - Give a call to praise and praise God for His actions and His being as a whole. The primary focus is on who God is.

Declarative Praise Psalms - Praise God for a specific deed that God has done; usually it is a specific act of deliverance.

\* See appendix 1 for a list of various descriptive and declarative praise psalms.

- Read I Timothy 1:15-17
- 5. A New Testament counterpart to the declarative praise psalm is I Timothy 1:15-17. What does Paul praise God for in these verses?
- 6. Based on what you've learned in your study of the descriptive and declarative praise psalms, state some reasons why we should worship God.
- Read Psalm 13

### Principle #3

1. This is a psalm written by David. It is a prayer; it is worship. What elements in this psalm strike you as being odd, as not being what we normally classify as worship?
- Read Psalm 44
  - 2. It is true that we are to offer thanksgiving in our prayers (Philippians 4:6), but what is the psalmist bringing before God in this Psalm (note verses 9-19)?

Psalms 13 and 44 are examples of **Lament Psalms**. These are Psalms of disorientation and of complaint. Many of the Psalms are Lament Psalms. They are usually characterized by these elements:<sup>2</sup>

1. Cry — the psalmist usually began by turning to God and pouring out his heart in a short address.
2. Lament — here the psalmist fully expresses his lamentable state. He states what his enemies have done, what difficulty he is in, and what God has or has not done.
3. Statement of confidence/trust — turning from his complaint<sup>3</sup>, the psalmist declares his full confidence in the Lord.
4. Petition — the psalmist requests that God intervene on his behalf and rescue him.
5. Vow of praise or expression of praise — the psalmist concludes his lament by fully expressing his praise to God for answering his prayer.

Note: These five parts are not present in every Lament Psalm and are not always in the same order.

- Reread Psalm 13

3. Try to outline Psalm 13, listing 4 elements of the Lament Psalm with their corresponding verses.

vv. 1-2 \_\_\_\_\_ v. 5a \_\_\_\_\_

vv. 3-4 \_\_\_\_\_ vv. 5b-6 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Most likely you have heard more than once this statement from a pastor or worship leader in your church: "Put your problems away and worship." Is this a biblical statement or not? Explain.

5. Do you have a proper place for struggle with God in your praise<sup>4</sup>? Do you feel the freedom to cry out in lament toward God and with God, or is that for you what a good Christian is not supposed to do?

6. Why would God want us to be honest and to bring our struggles to Him, even if they are laments directed toward Him?
7. For some reason Christians tend to consider it noble when another admits that he has sinned, but are uncomfortable when another admits that he struggles and experiences doubts. Should struggle and doubt be considered a normal part of the Christian life or an abnormal part? Explain.

### **Summary**

1. Worship is a time to humble ourselves before God and to acknowledge Him as our Lord. It is a time to praise Him and bless Him.
2. We should worship God because of who He is and because of what He has done (in the world, and specifically in our lives).
3. We should be honest with God in our worship and express our struggles to Him.

### **Application Point**

1. What kind of worshiper do you think you most oftentimes are?  
\_\_\_\_ Man-centered  
\_\_\_\_ God-centered
2. How can you improve in your worship, at home and at church?  
at home -  
at church -
3. What can you specifically praise God for today?
4. How can you be more genuine with God in your worship?

## Appendix 1

- *Descriptive Praise Psalms*: Psalm 29; 36; 105; 111; 113; 117; 135; 136; 146; 147
- *Declarative Praise Psalms*: Psalm 18; 21; 30; 32; 34; 40; 41; 66; 106; 116; 138
- *Lament Psalms*: Psalm 6; 13; 39; 44; 54; 57; 74; 137; 143 (Psalms 44, 74 and 137 are National Laments)

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word translated “worship” in Psalm 95:6 is *shachah*. This word means to bow down, to do or pay homage. It is a humble acknowledgment, a bowing low before God who is a holy God.
- <sup>2</sup> Allen P. Ross in “Psalms”, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 2 vols. (Wheaton: Victor Books, SP Publications, 1983), 1:785.
- <sup>3</sup> It is true that Philippians 2:14 says, “Do everything without complaining or arguing.” The Greek word here (*gongusmos*) means complaint or displeasure expressed in murmuring or secret talk, or whisperings about someone. Apparently the Philippians were doing things that generated inward and outward feelings of unfriendliness toward one another. Paul says they should not be characterized by complaining, a kind of grumbling action that promotes ill will instead of harmony and good will.<sup>5</sup>

This Greek word (*gongusmos*) was also used in the Septuagint for the murmuring of Israel against God (Exodus 16-17). In this setting the community grumbled against Moses and Aaron as well, but it was rooted in displeasure toward God. The grumblers lacked faith and like the Philippians, their grumbling was affecting the entire community, and in particular was undermining the leaders. Their grumbling eventually resulted in making and worshiping the golden calf (Exodus 32).

This grumbling is sinful, and is not the same as a lament in the Lament Psalms. The one who laments is not one who would like to abandon faith and whose attitude is not characterized by an independence that wants to forsake God and bring divisions to the church. Instead, the lamenter is expressing dependence while at the same time expressing doubt. He wants to believe, but is having a hard time doing so. He is not a “complainer” or a “whiner” but is a true worshiper who does not understand what God is doing and does not like what it appears God is doing. He is struggling with God because he loves God. He may be questioning God but is

not cursing God. In the end, the one who laments will reaffirm his confidence in God even if God has not fully answered him to his satisfaction yet.

<sup>4</sup>The purpose of lament in our praise is not to tell God off. It is to honestly bring our struggle to Him about life and even about our disappointment with Him so that we communicate with Him about those things. Rather than gossip about others, we should bring our frustrations to God. Rather than stuff and deny our pain, we should bring it before God so He can change us. Only as we do so will we truly end with confidence in God and with praise toward Him, as the majority of the Lament Psalms do. For a perfect example of this, read the book of Habakkuk, in particular comparing the first verses of chapter 1 with the last verses of chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald F. Hawthorne, Philippians, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1983), p. 101.

## **Book Three: List of Principles**

### ***Lesson #1: Fellowship (Koinonia)***

- Principle 1: We must be walking closely with Christ in order to experience true fellowship with God and with other believers.
- Principle 2: True biblical fellowship is characterized by a sincere and deep love for one another.
- Principle 3: We achieve fellowship with other believers by mutually sharing our personal concerns of a spiritual nature with one another.
- Principle 4: The goal of fellowship is for believers to be encouraged and refreshed in their walk with the Lord.

### ***Lesson #2: Effective Prayer***

- Principle 1: To be effective in prayer we need to live right before God.
- Principle 2: We must believe that God can answer prayer, and then pray specifically

so that our faith in the effectiveness of prayer might increase.

### ***Lesson #3: Looking Intently Into God's Word (Part I)***

- Principle 1: We need to take a close look when we read the Bible.
- Principle 2: We need to ask questions to help us interpret Scripture.
- Principle 3: We need to interpret Scripture in its context, and interpret unclear passages by comparing them with clearer ones.

### ***Lesson #4: Looking Intently Into God's Word (Part II)***

- Principle 1: Once we understand what the Scripture says and means, we need to apply it to our lives.
- Principle 2: We need to evaluate whether or not we are applying the Word.
- Principle 3: We need to make a conscious decision to apply God's Word.

### ***Lesson #5: Stewardship***

- Principle 1: A steward is a slave who pursue his master's interests and profit, and not his own self-interest.
- Principle 2: We are to be good stewards of our money and material possessions.
- Principle 3: We are to be good stewards of our spiritual gifts and our natural talents.

### ***Lesson #6: Fasting***

- Principle 1: Jesus assumes believers will fast.
- Principle 2: We have freedom in fasting.
- Principle 3: We should not fast to be seen by men.
- Principle 4: At times we need to fast from things other than food.

### ***Lesson #7: Worship***

- Principle 1: Worship is an act of humbling yourself before God, whereby you acknowledge His majesty and praise Him so that He is blessed and exalted.
- Principle 2: We are to worship God because of who He is and what He has done.

- Principle 3: We should be truthful and genuine before God in our worship.