

Growing in Christ
Book Two

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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

Evangelism

Matthew 4:19 *And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."*

- Read Revelation 20:11-15

Principle #1

1. Verses 11-13 speak of the *reality* of judgment. If a person is saved by faith and not by works, why do you think the dead are judged according to their deeds?
2. Verses 14-15 speak of the *finality* of judgment. According to verse 15, is the "second death" and annihilation or a separation? Is this eternal or temporary?
3. Is there any indication from this passage that an unbeliever will get a second chance?
4. After reading this passage, why do you think Christians should tell others about Christ?

"After spending a thousand years in hell, the wicked will be as it were, only setting out into torment." –Jonathan Edwards

- Read Matthew 9:35-38

Principle #2

1. What was Jesus' reaction when He encountered the crowds?
2. Why did He feel this way?
3. What do you think it means to be a "sheep without a shepherd?"
4. Is it true of all non-Christians? Why or why not?
5. Do you think many people in our society today are aimless and disillusioned, like sheep without a shepherd? What evidence is there that this is true?
6. What did Jesus ask His disciples to pray for? (vv. 37-38)
7. How did the disciples respond to Jesus' request? (Matthew 10:1,5)
8. Based on this passage (Matt. 9:35-38) what should motivate Christians to share their faith with non-Christians?

- Read Matthew 28:18-20

Principle #3

1. What did Jesus tell His followers to do?
2. Do you think this is a command for all believers or just the eleven disciples He was talking to?
3. Read verse 19 again. What in this verse may clue us that Jesus command is for believers today?
4. What is true of us if we have no desire or are making no attempt to win others to Christ and to help them grow spiritually?
5. Is it enough just to feel compassion for lost people? What else must we do?
6. What two truths should comfort us as we make an effort to reach lost people with the gospel? (vv. 18, 20)
7. Based on this passage (Matt. 28:18-20) why should Christians share the gospel?

"If you aim for nothing, you'll hit every time." –Joe Aldrich

- Read Matthew 4:19

Principle #4

1. What do you think it means to be a fisher of men? According to this verse, can anyone (even those who don't feel 'super gifted') be a fisher of men?

2. Take a minute and think about fishing. Write down some advice you would give to a young boy who is going fishing for the first time, and who really wants to catch some fish.

What he should do	What he should not do

3. What spiritual insights can we learn from this exercise as it relates to sharing our faith?

4. Effective evangelism involves our walk (a godly lifestyle) and our talk (our spoken word). At some point we must verbally share our faith in order to truly influence an unbeliever. However timing is crucial. Which of the two (walk or talk) do you think should be emphasized more, depending on the nature of your relationship? Check one for each.

	Walk	Talk	Equal Mix
1. A close relationship			
2. A typical relationship			
3. A casual relationship or acquaintance			

5. An example of this truth (walk vs. talk) is found in the relationship of a Christian wife and her unbelieving husband. What do these verses say her emphasis should be if she wants to see her husband come to know Christ? Why do you think this is so?
6. Would she use the exact same strategy with a friend or acquaintance? Explain.

Fisherman's List

List the names of three people who you can begin praying for to come to know Christ, and with whom you'd like to share the gospel with sometime (even if you are afraid). Indicate which strategy you think needs to be emphasized (walk, talk, equal mix) at this time. Then, using the suggested ideas below list what you can begin doing now for one of these three in your attempt to reach them for Christ.

Name	Walk	Talk	Equal Mix
1.			
2.			
3.			

Next step for one of above three persons (see below for ideas)

Name: _____

Next Step: _____

Suggested Ideas

Walk:

1. Do a favor for them
 - a. Shovel snow
 - b. Lend a helping hand
 - c. Babysit
2. Send a card
 - a. Birthday, Holiday, Sympathy, Get Well, Other: _____
3. Do something social with them
 - a. Invite them to your home
 - b. Go to sporting or community event
 - c. Take them out to eat
 - d. Other: _____

Talk:

1. Share your story of how you came to know Christ
2. Share what God is doing in your life
3. Try to initiate a conversation about "spiritual things"
 - a. Use this opportunity to find out where they are spiritually (what they believe)
 - b. Tell them what you believe
4. Give a gospel tract
5. Ask if your find would like to take a few minutes to read through a tract with you (i.e. *Life's Most Important Question*) that's helped others learn how they can be sure they will go to heaven
6. Invite them to church or evangelistic event

For Your Review

- There are three reasons why we should witness for Christ:
 1. People are eternally lost without Christ
 2. People without Christ are like sheep without a shepherd
 3. Christ commands us to be a witness
- There are two ways we can influence others for Christ:
 1. By our **walk** (befriending and serving them)
 2. By our **talk** (tactfully sharing our story or the gospel with them)

Homework:

- Pray for people you listed earlier in the lesson and take the next step with one of them
- Read through the booklet *Life's Most Important Question*. Become familiar with it and then role-play with someone you know is a Christian, sharing the tract with them as if they were an un-believer.

Lesson 2

God's Loving Sovereignty

- Read Daniel 4:28-32

Principle #1

1. What was Nebuchadnezzar supposed to learn as a result of going insane?
2. Does verse 32 indicate that Nebuchadnezzar or any other ruler gains his ruler-ship through his own strength or strategy? If not, who gives it to them? What does this say about world leaders today, whether they are good or bad?

- Read Daniel 4:33-35

3. Write down three things Nebuchadnezzar says is true of God as stated in verses 34 and 35.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. According to verse 35, is God in absolute control of the universe, or are there some things He cannot do anything about?

5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- a. *Rabbi Kushber*: "God would like people to get what they deserve in life, but He cannot always arrange it"¹
- b. *Eli Wiesel, a survivor of the Holocaust*: "If that's who God is, why doesn't He resign and let someone more competent take His place?"²

- Read Romans 8:28

Principle #2

1. Does this verse say God causes "all things" to happen? What does it say God causes? (NASB)

2. Who is promise of this verse for?

- Read James 1:13

3. Can God cause or force anyone to sin? What will He **not** do according to this verse?

- Read Job 1:6-9

4. What was the cause of Job's suffering?

5. To what extent was God involved in Job's suffering? Share how you feel about this?

- Read Ephesians 1:11-12

6. Does verse 11 say God causes everything? What does it say?

7. What do you think God's purpose is? (see verse 12) How does this remind you of God's dealings with Nebuchadnezzar?

- Read Daniel 4:36-37

Principle #3

1. What does Nebuchadnezzar say about God's ways in verse 37?

2. How can this truth comfort us in difficult times?

3. Verse 29 explains what God's purpose is in verse 28. What is the purpose? Explain what you think this means?

4. In what way can "our sufferings" make us more like Christ?

5. Is there ever a value in suffering? If so, explain.

6. If God wasn't in absolute control, could you find comfort when difficult things happened to you or to others? Explain.

Personal Assessment

- In what ways has this lesson helped you?
 1. What have you learned about God and His ways?
 2. What have you learned that will help you the next time you face a trial or something unjust happens to you or in the world?

For Your Review

- God has absolute control over everything
- God sometimes allows certain things to happen, according to his purpose
- Because God is in control, we can be comforted in difficult times
- Sometimes, suffering is the best thing for us, because God uses it to make us more like Christ

Homework:

1. Memorize Romans 8:28-29
2. Thank God that He is in control of your life and nothing will happen without Him knowing about it or allowing it

¹Harold S Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, New York: Schocken, 1981, P.43

²As quoted by Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988, P.179

Lesson 3

Spiritual Warfare

Every believer in Christ has three enemies. These are the Devil, the World, and the Flesh. This lesson will discuss what we can do to prevent these three enemies from hindering our relationship with the Lord. Let's begin first by briefly studying about Satan.

Basic facts about Satan:

1. He is a created being, he is not an impersonal force (Ezekiel 28:15)
 2. He is a fallen angel (Ezekiel 28:12-14) and was the highest created angel (Ezekiel 28:12)
 3. He is condemned to the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:10)
 4. He is not omnipresent (present everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful), nor omniscient (all-knowing)
 5. He can only do what God allows him to do (Job 1-2)
- Read 1 Peter 5:8

Principle #1

1. According to this passage, Satan is our adversary. What does this mean?
 2. What does Satan want to do to believers? How do you think he can do this? (See 1 Thess. 3:5)
- Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-14

3. In 1 Peter, Satan is likened to a roaring lion, looking for food to devour. However, he is shrewd and cunning and can destroy us in a number of ways. According to this passage, how does Satan disguise himself?

4. How do you think Satan deceives unbelievers and how can he deceive believers?

5. Does Satan want what's best for us? (See John 8:44) What two things does Jesus say is true about Satan in John 8:44?

- Read Ephesians 4:26-27

6. According to this passage, what is one way in which Satan can gain a foothold in our lives? How can we prevent him from doing so?

- Read 1 Peter 5:6-7

Principle #2

1. In verse 8 we saw that Satan is out to devour us. According to these verses, what kind of attitude should we have?

2. How do you think a prideful attitude can hinder us in our fight against the devil?

- Read 1 Peter 5:9

3. In this verse, we are told to *resist* the devil. This means to “take a stand against him.” How can we do this?
4. It’s not enough just to resist the devil. What else must we do?
5. How do we submit to God? Share a true story when you did this.
6. Although we are not to be ignorant to Satan’s schemes, is it possible to focus too much on Satan? If so, how?
7. What is the promise in this verse?

Satan is not our only enemy. Another enemy of the believer is the world. The “world” (kosmos) is used three ways in the bible. It can denote:

1. The material earth (Acts 17:24)
 2. The inhabitants of the earth (John 3:16)
 3. The Satanic System- This refers to a society hostile to God (1 John 2:15, James 4:40). This Satanic System referred to as the “world” in Scripture is our second enemy.
- Read 1 John 2:15-17

Principle #3

1. Verse 15 tells us we are not to love the world. Why?
2. Verse 16 mentions three things that characterize the world. What do you think each of these refer to?
 - a. Cravings of a sinful man:
 - b. Lust of the eyes:
 - c. Boastful pride of life:
3. Where do you see these three prominent in society?
4. According to verse 17, what are the different outcomes for the worldly man vs. the godly man?

- Read James 4:4

5. Why do you think friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Isn't James going a bit too far in making this statement?
6. Is the last part of the verse 4 saying that Christians can be enemies of God? If so, how is this possible?

- Read John 17:14-16, 18

Principle #4

Main Issue: If we are not to love the world, nor be friends of the world, does this mean we cannot be friends with non-believers?

1. In these verses Jesus is praying for His disciples. What does He say is true of His disciples in verse 14? How does this truth apply to us?

2. What is Jesus' prayer for them?

3. According to verse 18, what is our mission?

- Read Matthew 5:14-16

4. What does Jesus say believers are according to verse 14?

5. Since we are the "light of the world," what is our responsibility?

Note: Although we are sent to reach the world, we still must heed the admonition of 1 Corinthians 15:22 which says, "bad company corrupts good morals"

- Read Galatians 5:16-18

Principle #5

Satan and the world are not our only enemies. We have one more enemy and that is the sinful nature (flesh, NASB). As Christians we have God's Spirit that lives within us, but we are still sinners and have a sinful nature, which wants us to disobey God. We need to daily gain victory over our sinful nature.

1. What two things are working against each other in the life of a believer?
2. Our sinful nature does not want us to do what the Spirit wants. Note the contrast between the acts of the sinful nature in verses 19-21 and the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-23.
3. What is the key to defeating the desires of the sinful nature? (See verse 16)

Note: Although Christians are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17), we still have a disposition towards evil. This is the sinful nature (flesh). The flesh can't make us sin because we now have the capacity to overcome sin. However, the sinful nature prompts us to sin and then we make the choice. This will be a constant and daily struggle until we die.

A Case Study

Susie is sitting the waiting room of the doctor's office. She is on a busy schedule and is getting tired of waiting. Her appointment was for 9:30 and now it is 9:45. She's beginning to get anxious. In the past during times like this she has gotten frustrated and lost her temper, ruining her whole day. Susie is a Christian and knows she should be patient, but patience is not one of her virtues.

What's the problem? The flesh is warring against the Spirit in Susie's life. In the past the flesh has always had its way in Susie's life and is prompting Susie to sin again. At this point Susie has a choice. She could succumb to the flesh and storm out of the office or depend on the Spirit by trusting Him to give her patience. She does not have to sin but she can only have victory by relying on the Spirit who indwells her.

4. When you find yourself experiencing a frustrating time like Susie's, is it important that you rely on the Spirit? How can you do this?

Who is responsible when we sin?

_____ Devil

_____ Others who tempt us

_____ Demons

_____ People who frustrate me

_____ Circumstances

_____ Ourselves

Personal Assessment

Areas in Which I am allowing Satan, the world, or the flesh to hinds my testimony:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What I need to do or what God wants me to do to overcome these hindrances:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Homework:

- Memorize 1 Peter 5:8 and Galatians 5:16
- Read Acts 19:11-20. According to this passage what should believers do if they have been involved in any kind of occult activity prior to becoming a Christian? Read also Proverbs 28:13. In addition to confessing our sins, what must we do if we are to truly have victory?
- Think through how you can be a light in your world
- Review this lesson and begin applying what you've learned

Lesson 4

Following Jesus

- Read Matthew 28:18-20

Principle #1

Definition of a "disciple": A follower, learner

In the New Testament all Christians are considered "disciples" (Luke 14:26-27)

1. According to verses 19 and 20, what two things does Jesus say are necessary in making disciples?
2. It is not necessary to be baptized to get to heaven because we are saved only by our faith in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8-9). Yet, do you think it is important to be baptized in order to fully obey Jesus? Why or why not?
3. The example of the New Testament believers makes it clear that believers are expected to be baptized. Briefly look up the following verses in Acts: 2:41, 8:12, 8:34-38, 9:18, 10:44-48, 16:14-15, 16:32-33, 18:8, 19:4-5

*"...The idea of an unbaptized Christian is not found in the New Testament"¹
- F.F. Bruce*

- Read Romans 6:3-4

4. Baptism is a symbol, what does it symbolize?

- The literal meaning of the word “baptize” is to “dip, immerse.”²
- The word “baptize” is also used figuratively in the New Testament. In these cases it can mean, “to identify” (2 Corinthians 10:2).
- The act of baptism then is a step believers take to publicly identify themselves as Christians, indicating that they have died to the old life and are now living a new life as a servant of Christ.

5. Does God still want you to get baptized after you trusted Christ as Savior, if you were baptized as a baby or some other time *before* you came to know Christ? (See Acts 19:1-5)

6. Based on the verses previously studied, what act of obedience does Jesus expect of His disciples?

- Read Luke 14:25-26

Principle #2

1. Is Jesus really saying that His disciples must literally hate their parents and relatives? (See Ephesians 6:1-2) What do the verses say? (See Ephesians 5:25)

2. What then does Jesus mean by “hate” in these verses in Luke? (See Matthew 10:37)

Note: Jesus is using the term “disciple in this context to refer to a committed follower of His. True, not all Christians love Jesus more than their family, but God expects this of all who sincerely desire to follow Christ.

3. Think of the person (relative, friend) whom you love the most in this life. Christ is asking you to love Him more than that person. Are you at the point where you can honestly say that you love Jesus more than anyone else? If not, why not? If so, explain.
4. Does Jesus have the right to ask this of us? What has He done for us that sets Him apart from earthly kings (dictators) who demand total loyalty?
5. In what practical ways can we show Jesus that we love Him more than our husbands, wives, children, parents, friends, or even more than our hobbies, etc.? List a few below:

- Read Luke 14:27

Principle #3

1. Discipleship in this context implies a "master-pupil" relationship. What does Jesus say is required of His disciples and what do you think this means? What sacrifice does Jesus ask of His followers in this verse?

Roman rule was held together by the popular perceptions that any challenge to her authority was doomed. It was this imperative that any serious challenge to Rome's rule be met not only victoriously but also be turned into a public demonstration. Consequently, the rebel had required him as his last act to publicly submit to the authority against which he had previously rebelled. This was done by having him carry the instrument of his judgment through the city to a public place while wearing a sign, which said that he had been a rebel. But as all could see, he was now submissive. To "take up his cross" was thus a figure of speech easily understood by anyone in the Roman Empire to mean, "to submit to the authority against which one had previously rebelled."³

- Read Luke 9:23

2. List the three things Jesus asks of those who follow Him. Then try to define what they mean.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. Is it possible to “deny yourself” yet not follow Jesus? If so, what is Jesus asking for?

- Read Luke 9:24

4. What blessing does Jesus say will come to those who do what He asks in verse 23?

5. According to these verses, is it possible to be a closet Christian (a secret follower of Jesus) and be truly fulfilled in your relationship with the Lord? Explain.

Lesson 5

Promises of God

Introduction to the lesson:

The promises of God's Word can be real source of comfort for us, not only in difficult times, but also when we need guidance. Unfortunately, some believers have become disillusioned with God due to their failure to properly understand the Scriptures. This has led them to mistakenly claim a promise from God which was not there.

A true story is told of a father whose son was a pilot during World War II. This father was confident that his son would return home safely from the war. The basis of his confidence was Psalm 91:7, which says, "A thousand may fall at you side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you." This man understood this verse as a promise from God tat his son would not be killed. He believed that God would protect his son no matter what. Yet, the young man did die in battle and apparently the news had a devastating effect on his father.¹

This lesson will touch on three principles relating to the promises of God. A grasp of these principles will enable you to discern what God has and has not promised from His Word, providing you with a proper biblical perspective on the important area.

- Read Proverbs 15:1

Principle #1

1. What appears to be the promise of this verse?
2. Does a gentle answer **always** turn away wrath when you are talking to an angry person?

3. If the truth of this verse does not **always** bear out in our experience, what are we to conclude about this verse?

- Read Proverbs 22:6

4. What is the apparent promise in this verse?

5. Does this mean that every child who is raised in a godly home and trained properly will go on to live a committed Christian lifestyle as an adult?

6. Do you think that the "apparent" promise of this verse is general true or always true?

- Read 3 John 2

7. Is this verse a promise that God always desires Christians to be healthy and wealthy?

8. Is this verse a promise from God or a prayer expressing John's desire for his friend?

As stated in the beginning part of this lesson, we need to be careful about what we claim as a promise, because when these “promises” fail to come true we can become very disillusioned. Charles Sell related the following in his book, *The House on the Rock*.

In Beaver Valley, Pennsylvania, Bill and Linda Barnhart believed with all their heart that God would heal Justin, their two-year-old son, when he became ill. No doctors were called. Even when his stomach swelled, they continued to believe. After he was listless, pale, and looking like a starving child of a prison camp, they trusted. Eventually they called someone, a funeral director; he called the coroner. Justin’s little abdomen contained a four-to-five pound tumor that had taken all his nourishment, literally starving him to death. The coroner called the police.

Found guilty of involuntary manslaughter and endangering the welfare of a child, Bill was fined and sentenced to fifty- nine months probation.

Later, Bill’s brother, Bob, was answering a reporter who had asked why medical help was not summoned. He opened his Bible and told the reporter that James 5:16 promises God will save the sick; Jeremiah 46:11 reads: ‘In vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.’ And then he said, “We feel that God wrote this Bible. Now how are you gonna walk up to the pearly gates when the time comes and say, ‘God, You didn’t mean Jeremiah 46:11. You didn’t mean all those Scriptures.’ If he didn’t mean it, why did He put it in the Bible?”²

Note: The problem isn’t that God didn’t mean everything, or that some parts of the Bible are untrue. The problem is that many believers misinterpret what Scripture actually teaches, thereby reaching faulty conclusions.

- Read 1 John 1:9

Principle #2

1. In this verse God promises to forgive our sins. Is there a condition that we must fulfill in order for the promise to apply to us? If so, what must we do?

- Read Psalm 84:11

2. What is the promise of this verse?

3. Is this promise true for those who live un-righteously? What is the condition?

Note: 1John 1:9 and Psalm 84:11 are examples of conditional promises. This is a promise in Scripture that will come true *if* the believer meets certain conditions.

- Read Hebrews 13:5

Principle #3

1. What does God promise in this verse?

2. Do you think this is true of all believers? Is there a condition that we need to meet?

- Read Romans 8:38-39

3. What is the promise here?

4. Is this a promise based upon any conditions the believer must meet, or is it unconditional?
- Read 1 Corinthians 10:13
5. What does God promise in this verse?
 6. Can we claim this promise every time we are tempted?
 7. These three passages (Hebrews 13:5, Romans 8:38-39, and 1 Corinthians 10:13) are all examples of "unconditional promises." What is the difference between an unconditional and conditional promise?
- Other examples of unconditional promises that excite us: Romans 8:28, John 14:3, and Philippians 4:19

There was a man named Steven Marsh, whose aunt willed him a family Bible and a few hundred dollars while he was still a relatively young man. He spent the money and threw the bible in the attic without opening it. For thirty years he lived in virtual poverty until one day, as he prepared to move in with his son, he came across the Bible once again. He opened it and found scattered throughout its pages five thousand dollars in cash (and this was when the dollar was really worth something.) All through the past thirty years he had suffered needlessly. If he had simply opened that Bible and appropriated the money, he could have lived much more comfortably.³

The same is true for Christians today. Many are disillusioned because they misunderstand what God has promised, but just as many Christians are discouraged because they don't grab hold of God's promises each day. By knowing what God has promised, we can be encouraged and live a fulfilling Christian life.

For Your Review

1. We must make sure that we are not claiming promises that are not promises.
2. Certain conditions must be met before we can claim other promises.
3. Some promises are unconditional. As believers we can always cling to them.

Application Point

Read the following promises and check each verse with unconditional, conditional, or not promises at all.

	Conditional	Unconditional	Not a Promise
1. Revelations 22:12			
2. James 1:5-8			
3. Proverbs 10:4			
4. Matthew 28:20			
5. Proverbs 16:7			
6. 1 John 3:2			
7. 1 John 5:14-15			

Homework

- For further study, read passages such as Jeremiah 29:11- 13 (read context verses 1-14), Deuteronomy 28:11-19 and 29:1, and Leviticus 25:1-4, 18-22
- Memorize one of the promises under the **Application Point**, which you feel is most necessary for you to cling to this coming week. Be prepared to share this at your next meeting.

¹Taken from Our Daily Bread, July 12, 1989

² Charles Sell, *The House on the Rock*, (Wheaton: Victor Books 1987), pp. 16-17

³ Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations*, (Rockville MD: Assurance Publishers, 1979), p. 509

Lesson 6

Knowing God's Will

Christians oftentimes want to know what God's will is for them in specific instances (i.e. whom they are to marry, what job to take, where to go to school, etc.) The following seven principles will explain what believers need to do in order to discern God's will in such situations.

- Read Psalms 119:105

Principle #1

1. What two things does this verse God's Word can do for us? Explain in your own words.
2. If it is true that God's Word can guide us, what kind of attitude should we have when it comes to studying the Scriptures?
3. If the Bible is God-breathed and is a sufficient guide for us, why then do you suppose many Christians still struggle and miss God's will too often?

Note: The book of Proverbs in the Old Testament is one of five "wisdom books" in the Bible. It contains observations about the way life works. Every Christian needs to know the book of Proverbs well. Since there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, one chapter could be read corresponding to each day of the month. (Example: On March 17th, read Proverbs Chapter 17.)

- Read Proverbs 11:14

Principle #2

1. According to this verse, before making a big decision, what should you do?
2. Does this verse indicate that it is wise to get advice from more than one person? Explain.

- Read Proverbs 12:15 and 13:10

3. If we are to have wisdom, what do we need to do?

Once we get advice from a number of wise counselors, the spiritual thing to do is listen and take their advice. Unfortunately, this is not always the case with some Christians, as Paul Little points out:

"I get very suspicious of people who come with very pious and spiritual language, telling me that God has led them to do some wild, outlandish thing, and nobody else has gotten the message. Undoubtedly, God may in rare instances guide us in a way that is totally contrary to the thinking of equally committed Christians, but I think it would be the rare exception rather than the rule."¹

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-12

Principle #3

1. Who is it that helps us understand God's Word?

- Read John 14:26

2. Who helps us to remember what God has said?

I John 14:26 is a promise to the eleven apostles that the Holy Spirit would help them to remember what Christ had taught and said. This would be crucial, since they would have the major responsibility for putting Christ's life and teaching into writing.²

This verse also has "... a legitimate secondary application which concerns Christians today. The Holy Spirit comes to live with us and be in us (John 14:17), too; and He helps us to call to mind, as we need them, the words of Scripture we have first learned. This blessed promise should not prompt us to think that we need not bother to learn what Scripture teaches, for the Spirit can scarcely enable us to remember what we have never read or heard."³

- Read Romans 8:14

3. If we are children of God, what does this verse say the Holy Spirit will do?

4. In the context (Romans 8:1-14), it is clear that the Holy Spirit is leading believers out of sinful behavior into holiness. How does this truth affect the way we should expect God's Spirit to lead us in decision making?

Special Issues Pertaining to the Spirit's Leading:

- Impressions

- Many Christians claim that God speaks to them in a "still, small voice." It is true that at times we may receive promptings from the Spirit. Such promptings are said to be thoughts that have been planted into our minds by the Spirit.

5. What might be some problems with looking for and relying on God's Spirit to lead us through impressions?
6. If we are receiving an impression, how can we be sure when it is not from God?

It is dangerous to place more importance for direction on impressions than on God's Word, or on advice from mature believers who know God's Word better than us. As John Wesley warned over 200 years ago, "Do not hastily ascribe things to God. Do not easily suppose dreams, voices, impressions, visions or revelations to be from God. They may be from Him. They may be from nature. They may be from the Devil."⁴

- Read 1 John 5:14-15

Principle #4

1. How can we have confidence when we pray to God?

2. If we pray for God's will to be done, do we need to wonder if our prayer will be answered?

Note: When we pray according to God's will, we need to be willing to do his will. When Christians make mistakes it's usually not because they don't know what is right, but because they are not willing to do what is right.

- Read James 1:5-8

3. If you lack wisdom, what should you do?

4. According to verse 6, what attitude does God want you to have when you pray

5. How do you think God gives us wisdom when we pray for it?

6. After we pray for wisdom we should not just sit and expect Him to sap us with some "spiritual word" from heaven. What should we do?

- Read Philippians 2:25 and 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Principle #5

1. What similarity do you see in these two verses?

Note: Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, once said, "The Lord gave you a lot of leading when He gave you a brain."

2. What do these verses tell us about finding and doing God's will?

Note: Expediency is required when there is no one obvious "right" choice. The wisest choice must be made, based on all factors. A pro/con chart will help greatly in this regard.

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:39

Principle #6

1. What does this verse teach us about decision making?
2. Does God ever ask us to do something we do not want to do? If so, does it natural follows that we will hate it if we obey God? Why or why not?

- Read 2 Corinthians 2:12-13

Principle #7

1. Why did Paul leave Troas?

- Read Philippians 4:7

2. How would you define the "peace of God which transcends all understanding"?

- Read Colossians 3:15

3. What do you think Paul means by this statement in this verse? Does it apply to knowing God's will?

Note: F.F. Bruce, famous New Testament scholar, says "rule" carried the idea of "arbitrate."⁵ In many extra biblical sources, the Greek word used here referred to the function of one who took it on himself to decide what is right in a contest. The sense here is, "Let the peace of Christ be umpire in your heart amidst the conflicts of life. Let it decide what is right. Let it be your counselor."⁶

4. If you have a lack of "inner peace" about something (i.e. a big decision, a current practice you are involved in, etc.) what should you do?

- Read 2 Corinthians 7:5 and John 14:27

5. Is it possible to have "inner peace" and still have concerns, conflicts, and fear? Explain.

Short Assignment: Case Studies

Read the case studies and choose one of the two to answer.

Case Study #1

Nancy is a junior in college, majoring in Pre-Med. She is an "A" student, and has always wanted to be a doctor. Lately, she has become involved in a campus Christian group. She became a Christian during her sophomore year and has really grown spiritually the past few months. She is good at sharing her faith and has led two of her friends to Christ in the past month. Recently the campus ministry's staff leader has challenged her to go into "fulltime" ministry, either for a local campus ministry group or for a mission organization serving the Lord overseas. Nancy is starting to get confused. Next month she takes her medical school entrance exams, and after that she'll need to decide soon where she wants to go to med school. At the same time the idea of being in the ministry is becoming more appealing. What should she do? She really wants to know what God's will is. What would you tell her to do to know God's will for her life?

Case Study #2

Jim and Bonnie are a committed Christian couple who feel God is leading them to open up a Christian bookstore in a small community as a ministry. Recently a Christian businessman who owns several stores in the town has discouraged them from doing so because he says the community is too small to support a Christian bookstore. Jim and Bonnie still are convinced God has “told” them to open this bookstore. What would you say to them?

Homework

Write down one area in your life in which you need wisdom from God to make the right decision. Review the seven principles, which were just addressed in this lesson.

- o Develop a strategy for how you plan to go about finding God’s will (example—Who you will ask for counsel, etc.)

7 Principles: (Refer to these when developing your strategy)

Principle #1: We need to look to God’s Word for wisdom.

Principle #2: We need to ask advice from wise counselors.

Principle #3: As we depend upon the Spirit, God will lead us in decision-making.

Principle #4: We need to pray for wisdom.

Principle #5: We should do what we think is best or necessary.

Principle #6: We may do what we desire (as long as it does not conflict with Scripture.)

Principle #7: We need to make sure we have God’s peace.

¹Paul Little quoted by Leslie and Bernice Flynn, *God’s Will: You Can Know It*, (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1979), p. 97.

²Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 656-7.

³D.A. Carson, *The Farewell Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1980) p. 74

⁴John Wesley, source unknown.

⁵F.F. Bruce and E.K. Simpson, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1957) p. 281

⁶R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), p. 110

Lesson 7

Final Review

True or False:

1. ____ Unbelievers will get a second chance to trust Christ after they die.
2. ____ Our TALK is more important than our WALK when trying to reach a close friend for Christ.
3. ____ Evangelism is a command, not an option.
4. ____ God causes all things.
5. ____ God allows some things to happen because He can't do anything about it.
6. ____ Sometimes suffering is the best thing for us.
7. ____ Scripture says we are to take the initiative to attack Satan and his demons.
8. ____ It is OK to have non-Christian friends, but we are not to be friends with the world.
9. ____ As long as we live on earth, there will be a struggle between our sinful nature and the Holy Spirit who lives within us.
10. ____ Even if we were baptized as a baby, God still wants us and expects us to be baptized after we trust Christ as our personal Savior.
11. ____ In order to be a committed disciple, Jesus wants us to love Him more than anyone else.
12. ____ The book of Proverbs is a collection of promises.
13. ____ Believers can only claim an unconditional promise when they are living obediently before God.
14. ____ Probably the most important thing we should do when we want to know God's will is for us to read God's Word and look there for answers.
15. ____ If we think we have received an impression from God (a still small voice

or a dream) which contradicts what wise Godly counselors have advised us, we should more often than not follow the impression rather than the counsel.

16. ____ In order for a person to have "inner peace" about a situation or decision, they must experience no feelings of concern or fear.

Fill in the Blank:

1. Effective evangelism involves our _____ (a god-ly lifestyle) and our _____ (our spoken word.)
2. If we are truly following Jesus we will be _____ of men.
3. We should tell others about Christ because unbelievers are like sheep without a _____.
4. In the book of Job we learn that God doesn't cause all things, but He _____ all things.
5. According to I Peter 5:8, Satan is prowling about like a _____.
6. We are not to be friends with the world. Instead, Jesus says we are to be the _____ of the world.
7. The word "disciple" means _____ or _____.
8. Jesus asks His disciples to take up their _____ daily.
9. An _____ promise can be claimed by believers at all times.
10. The sin of unresolved _____ can give the devil a foothold in our lives.
11. In order to know God's will for us, we need to do seven things:
 - A. _____ God's _____.
 - B. _____

- C. _____ on the Spirit.
- D. Get _____ from _____ counselors.
- E. Do what we _____ is best or necessary.
- F. Do what we _____ as long as it doesn't conflict with what God's revealed will in the Bible.
- G. Let the _____ of Christ rule in our hearts.

Personal Thought Questions:

1. Are you making an attempt to reach one person (unbeliever) for Christ? If so, how? If not, what's hindering you?
2. Have you been baptized since you came to know Christ in a personal way? If not, what is hindering you from being baptized?
3. At the end of Lesson 4 (Following Jesus), you filled out a personal assessment. Since then, do you feel you have grown spiritually? If so, what steps have you taken to become a more devoted follower?
4. Do you have a favorite promise in God's Word? If so, what is it?
5. Do you think you are in God's will right now? Is there an area of your life, which you are confused about? If so, what area is that?
6. Are you having a difficult time trusting God right now and believing that He is sovereign and in control. If so, what are you struggling with?
7. Are you resisting Satan and submitting to God? Explain how you are doing so, if you are.

Book Two: List of Principles:

Lesson #1: Evangelism

- Principle 1: We are to share the gospel because people are eternally lost without Christ.
- Principle 2: We are to share the gospel because without Christ, people are spiritually distressed and downcast.
- Principle 3: We are to share the gospel because Christ commands us to do so.
- Principle 4: We need a strategy that is tailored to each person we desire to witness to.

Lesson #2: God's Loving Sovereignty

- Principle 1: God is in control of all things.
- Principle 2: God doesn't cause all things — He allows certain things to happen according to His plan.
- Principle 3: We can receive comfort in difficult times by knowing that God is in control and that He does what is right.

Lesson #3: Spiritual Warfare

- Principle 1: We have an enemy who wants to devour our testimony.
- Principle 2: We can withstand Satan's attacks by submitting to God and resisting the devil.
- Principle 3: We are not to love the world or be friends with the world.
- Principle 4: We are to be the light of the world.
- Principle 5: Our sinful nature (flesh) constantly struggles against the Spirit to get us to do what we know we should not do.

Lesson #4: Following Jesus

- Principle 1: God expects His followers to be baptized.
- Principle 2: A committed disciple of Jesus Christ will love Him more than anyone else.
- Principle 3: A committed disciple must be willing to sacrifice his/her life for Christ.

Lesson #5: Promises of God

- Principle 1: What appears to be a promise may not be a promise at all.
- Principle 2: Some promises are “conditional,” we can only claim them if we meet the condition.
- Principle 3: Some promises are “unconditional” and can be claimed by believers at all times.

Lesson #6: Knowing God's Will

- Principle 1: We need to look to God's Word for wisdom.
- Principle 2: We need to ask for advice from wise counselors.
- Principle 3: As we depend on the Spirit, God will lead us in decision-making.
- Principle 4: We need to pray for wisdom.
- Principle 5: We should do what we think is best or necessary.
- Principle 6: We may do what we desire (as long as it doesn't conflict with Scripture.)
- Principle 7: We need to make sure we have God's peace.