

***THE PLEASURE OF
MY FATHER'S FELLOWSHIP***

***CULTIVATING A RICH FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN THE BELIEVER
AND HIS HEAVENLY FATHER***

MARTIN PURYEAR

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*DEDICATED TO MY EVERLASTING FATHER
THE ALMIGHTY GOD
WHO HAS GUIDED MY LIFE WITH HIS WONDERFUL COUNSEL
AND FLOODED MY SOUL WITH HIS PEACE*

*O GOD, YOU ARE MY GOD; I SHALL SEEK YOU EARNESTLY; MY SOUL
THIRSTS FOR YOU, MY FLESH YEARNs FOR YOU IN A DRY AND WEARY
LAND WHERE THERE IS NO WATER.*

PSALM 63:1

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SCHEDULE OF JOYFUL ASSIGNMENTS

PRELIMINARIES

- Week 1 Read "From Discipline to Delight" (12-13)
- Read "Foundation and Features" (14-16)
- Answer the question at the bottom of page 16 (under "Your Expectations")
- Week 2 Read "Those Who Stand to Benefit from *Your* Time in God's Word" (17-18)
- Read "A Word (or Two) to the Wise" (19-20)
- Read "First Things First" *and* do its assignment (21-22)
- Read "Contemplating the Scriptures" (23-25)

CONTEMPLATING THE SCRIPTURES

- Week 3 Read "Appendix A: The Unique Features of Our Reading Schedules (Appendices B, C, and D)" (56-57)
- Scan briefly "Appendix B: Daily Bible Reading Schedules (4)" (58-61)
- Read "Contemplating the Scriptures" *again* (23-25)
- Read Bible passages for Days 1-5 (from **one** of the groups: A, B, C, **or** D)
- A.** Matthew 1-5 (58)
 - B.** Mark 1-5 (59)
 - C.** Luke 1-5 (60)
 - D.** John 1-5 (61)
- Record one key thought each day in your journal
- At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

Week 4 Read Bible passages for Days 6-10 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Matthew 6-10 (58)
- B. Mark 6-10 (59)
- C. Luke 6-10 (60)
- D. John 6-10 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

PRAYING THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

Week 5 Read "Praying through the Scriptures" (26-28)

Read Bible passages for Days 11-15 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Matthew 11-15 (58)
- B. Mark 11-15 (59)
- C. Luke 11-15 (60)
- D. John 11-15 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

Week 6 Read "Praying through the Scriptures" *again* (26-28)

Read Bible passages for Days 16-20 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Matthew 16-20 (58)
- B. Mark 16 / Psalms 1-9 (59)
- C. Luke 16-20 (60)
- D. John 16-20 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

Each day, **as** you pray about that truth, write down your prayer under your key thought

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

Read "The Turning Point" (29-36)

Week 7 Read Bible passages for Days 21-25 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Matthew 21-25 (58)
- B. Psalms 10-20 (59)
- C. Luke 21-24 / Psalms 1-3 (60)
- D. John 21 / Psalms 1-9 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

Each day, **as** you pray about that truth, write down your prayer under your key thought

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

Read "Our Stewardship of God's Word" (37-39)

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

Week 8 Read Bible passages for Days 26-30 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Matthew 26-28 / Psalms 1-6 (58)
- B. Psalms 21-25 / Proverbs 1-2 (59)
- C. Psalms 4-15 (60)
- D. Psalms 10-20 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

Each day, **as** you pray about that truth, write down your prayer under your key thought

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

Read "Applying the Scriptures" (40-48)

Week 9 Read "Applying the Scriptures" *again* (40-48)

Write out your answers to "Application Assignment" (49). (These will be discussed in class.)

Read "Conclusion" (50)

Read Bible passages for Days 31-35 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Psalms 7-15 / Proverbs 1 (58)
- B. Proverbs 3-7 (59)
- C. Psalms 16-18 / Proverbs 1-3 (60)
- D. Psalms 21-22 / Proverbs 1-4 (61)

Record one key thought each day in your journal

Each day, **as** you pray about that truth, write down your prayer under your key thought

At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts to discuss with the group

PRACTICING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

From now on (starting with week 10):

- Read that week's Bible passages (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D).
- Record one key thought each day in your journal
- Each day, **as** you pray about that truth, write down your prayer under your key thought
- At the end of the week, *choose one* of that week's key thoughts and write an application for it.
- Come prepared to discuss with the group your chosen key thought and application.

Week 10 Read Bible passages for Days 36-40 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A.** Proverbs 2-6 (58)
- B.** Proverbs 8-12 (59)
- C.** Proverbs 4-8 (60)
- D.** Proverbs 5-9 (61)

Read "Appendix E: The Liability of Bible Study" (67)

Week 11 Read Bible passages for Days 41-45 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A.** Exodus 20-24 (58)
- B.** Exodus 20-24 (59)
- C.** Exodus 20-24 (60)
- D.** Exodus 20-24 (61)

Read "Appendix F: The Eternal Investment of Bible Study" (68-70)

Week 12 Read Bible passages for Days 46-50 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. 1st Thessalonians 1-5 (58)
- B. 1st Thessalonians 1-5 (59)
- C. 1st Thessalonians 1-5 (60)
- D. 1st Thessalonians 1-5 (61)

Read "Putting It All Together" (51-52)

Week 13 Read Bible passages for Days 51-55 (from your selected group: A, B, C, **or** D)

- A. Revelation 1-5 (58)
- B. Revelation 1-5 (59)
- C. Revelation 1-5 (60)
- D. Revelation 1-5 (61)

Read "A Challenge" (53-55)

Complete Appendix G: "Evaluation of the Course" (71-75). Please plan to **turn this in next week** at our last meeting.

FROM DISCIPLINE TO DELIGHT

AS THE DEER PANTS FOR THE WATER BROOKS, SO MY SOUL PANTS FOR YOU, O GOD. MY SOUL THIRSTS FOR GOD, FOR THE LIVING GOD. (PSALM 42:1-2A)

I STRETCH OUT MY HANDS TO YOU; MY SOUL LONGS FOR YOU, AS A PARCHED LAND. (PSALM 143:1)

Do these verses describe the longing of *your* soul?

My question is not, Do you spend time with God each day? The question is, Do you *hunger* and *thirst* for those times of fellowship with your heavenly Father? Or is it a *routine discipline* – a mere act of the will – that keeps you in His Presence?

I have a close friend with whom I meet each week. When Wednesday morning rolls around, no one has to drag me to the coffee shop. Not once have I had to rely upon sheer willpower to meet with this brother in the Lord. I look forward – with pleasure – to those times with him. We mentor each other with the Scriptures. We pray for each other. He tries to keep me in line; and I try to keep him in line. We laugh *with* each other. (And sometimes we laugh *at* each other.) It takes no discipline whatsoever (at least on my part) to meet with him. Our times together fly by. They are, to me, an oasis.

One day, as I was leaving the coffee shop, I found myself comparing those times of fellowship with this brother in Christ to my times of fellowship with my Father in heaven. And my conclusion troubled me. I realized I did not have that same depth of delight during my times with the Lord. Not that being in His Word and prayer were complete drudgery. It just seemed as though I were going through the motions too much of the time. Routine, religious motions. Often, the main reason I was sitting there with my Bible opened and my prayer list before me was because I knew that it was a beneficial thing to do. But once I honestly evaluated it, I realized that my “devotions” felt too much like a discipline.

Why was I so bothered by this? Because it had to do with the One Who has treated me with nothing but kindness.

The *Compassionate One* Who has – so mercifully – rescued me from the domain of eternal darkness, transferring me into His glorious kingdom of eternal Light.

The *Just One* Who has – so graciously – clothed me in the radiant, righteous robes of His beloved Son.

The *Holy One* Whose Spirit has – so powerfully – entered my life, setting up permanent residence within me.

The *Generous One* Who has – so lovingly – blessed me with unfathomable, priceless, eternal riches.

My wonderful Counselor.

My almighty God.

My everlasting Father.

And I had to *discipline* myself to make time for *Him*! Can you imagine *disciplining* yourself to make time for your fiancée / fiancé? Something was wrong. What happened to the longing I once had for my Savior?

O GOD, YOU ARE MY GOD; I SHALL SEEK YOU EARNESTLY; MY SOUL THIRSTS FOR YOU, MY FLESH YEARNS FOR YOU IN A DRY AND WEARY LAND WHERE THERE IS NO WATER. (PSALM 63:1)

What about you? Is your time with the God of all glory something you look forward to each day? Is His written Word a treasure of priceless wisdom to you, far surpassing anything Wall Street has to offer? Is your time of prayer before His Throne of mercy one of the highlights of your day?

Or has your fellowship with the Giver of abundant and eternal life become nothing more than a routine discipline? Perhaps you have a gnawing suspicion that “Surely, there has to be more to my walk with the Lord than what I normally experience”?

If that is your desire – to *crave* the pleasure of your Father's fellowship – perhaps this little study can help.

FOUNDATION AND FEATURES

FOUNDATION

The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship is built upon two basic beliefs:

First, as we meditate upon and pray through the Scriptures, our awareness of the Father's love for us will gradually grow. As this belief in *His* love for *us* increases, *our* love and reverence for *Him* will increase as well. We will love Him more and more as we learn of His perfect love for us.

WE HAVE COME TO KNOW AND HAVE BELIEVED THE LOVE WHICH GOD HAS FOR US. GOD IS LOVE, AND THE ONE WHO ABIDES IN LOVE ABIDES IN GOD, AND GOD ABIDES IN HIM. BY THIS, LOVE IS PERFECTED WITH US ... WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US. (1ST JOHN 4:16-17, 19)

Second, our love and reverence for Him will be displayed by a life of God-empowered obedience (not to *earn* His favor but because we *already have* His favor through faith in Christ Jesus).

HE WHO HAS MY COMMANDMENTS AND KEEPS THEM IS THE ONE WHO LOVES ME. (JOHN 14:21)

IF ANYONE LOVES ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORD; AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME TO HIM AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM. HE WHO DOES NOT LOVE ME DOES NOT KEEP MY WORDS; AND THE WORD WHICH YOU HEAR IS NOT MINE, BUT THE FATHER'S WHO SENT ME. (JOHN 14:23-24)

With this two-layer foundation in mind, let us now consider the unique features of this course.

FEATURES

You Will Invest Your Time in the Bible, Not in Books About the Bible

A disturbing trend exists in our churches today. Many believers – in their private devotions and in their discussion groups – have set the Word of God aside, focusing almost entirely on the latest, best-selling Christian “buzz books.” Although there is much merit in reading the spiritual insights of godly men and women, their books are meant to *supplement* our study of the Scriptures, *not replace* it. Our time will be given to the Bible itself rather than to books *about* the Bible.

You Will Receive an Overview of God's Entire Counsel

Many Christians have never read – not even once – through the entire Bible. We tend to visit our favorite books (such as Genesis and Psalms and Romans and Philippians) but avoid other books that seem irrelevant to us (such as Habakkuk and Zephaniah and Haggai). But the fact is, each of the Bible's 66 books has much to say about the unchanging character of God, His magnificent works of redemption, and the blessings promised to those who trust in Him. Because you will be encouraged to read through the *entire* Bible, you will receive an overview of God's *entire* counsel.

You Will Read Through the Bible at a Slower Pace

Reading through the Bible in one year *is* possible. Indeed, that is the resolution of many-a Christian on New Year's Eve. But to maintain that pace often discourages us from taking the extra time we need to really think about what we just read. To promote *meditation* upon God's priceless truths, this method will direct you to read only one (or two) chapters per day.

You Will Learn How to Meditate Upon What You Have Just Read

Many of us also have the tendency to read a passage of Scripture, check it off our "To Do" list, and then rush out the door without giving it any further thought. Within ten minutes the wonder of God's Word is lost in a maze of planning the errands we need to run ... and the appointments we need to keep ... and the people we need to contact ... and the bills we need to pay ... and the activities to which our children need to be taken. In a flurry of motion, we attempt to cram 25 hours of activity into a 24-hour day and call that "living." Unwittingly, we are settling for a hectic existence far inferior to the abundant life we have been offered.

We need to learn how to slow down and *process* God's life-giving Word. "Did I really understand what I just read?" And if so, "What does it have to do with me?" To contemplate the wisdom of God that we might know how to live successfully ("abundantly") is one of the built-in features of this course.

You Will Be Encouraged to Pray Through What You Have Just Read

Prayer is a privilege, graciously given by our heavenly Father, allowing us to participate with Him in the fulfillment of *His* will. Yet, there are times when we are not sure if we are praying according to God's will or not.

Talking to our Father about the truth that stood out to us from a passage of Scripture is a way to guard against praying contrary to God's will. In doing so, we are using His revealed will to guide us as we pray.

Furthermore, our prayers sometimes become mechanical. We may find ourselves praying about the same things almost mindlessly. But with this approach, each day's reading will provide fresh insights, ushering us into a time of heartfelt prayer. It provides a natural way to discuss our Lord's life-giving wisdom with the Author Himself. In doing so, our prayers – new each day – will be a refreshment to our souls.

You Will Be Urged to Obey the Truth You Learn

Many have grown up believing that if revival is to take place in our lives and churches, a guest speaker must be invited to conduct a week-long conference on a fascinating subject such as apologetics or prophecy or marriage or finances. And if all of us would just learn more about this interesting subject, then all of us would be "fired up for Christ."

But spiritual growth does not take place simply by accumulating more and more knowledge. It occurs when we trust the indwelling Spirit of God to provide what we need (His wisdom, His motivation, and His power) *to obey the will of the Father*. As we prove ourselves faithful stewards of the Truth we *already know*, then – and only then – will our lives experience an abiding inner joy, a deepening insight of God's Truth, and a stability that surpasses human comprehension. Only a life of obedience, empowered by a living faith, will experience spiritual vitality.

This course will encourage us to make the Word of God a lived-out reality in our everyday lives.

YOUR EXPECTATIONS

So, let's get started. We will do so by, first, identifying your expectations.

What do you hope to gain from this study, *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship*?

THOSE WHO STAND TO BENEFIT FROM YOUR TIME IN GOD'S WORD

HOW BLESSED IS THE MAN ... (WHOSE) DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND IN HIS LAW HE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT. HE WILL BE LIKE A TREE ... WHICH YIELDS ITS FRUIT IN ITS SEASON AND ITS LEAF DOES NOT WITHER; AND IN WHATEVER HE DOES, HE PROSPERS.

(PSALM 1:1-3)

This is the most important *subject* you will ever study in your entire life. I say that without one shade of reservation. No other study can offer such priceless benefits as one that equips the believer to cultivate his relationship with the living God. What you are about to do has the potential to impact your own life as well as the lives of every single person you know, both now and throughout eternity.

Let's briefly consider how these can benefit from *your* time with the Author of Life.

YOU PERSONALLY

A daily exposure to the *Living* Word of God pays off largely in the form of a transformed life; and it will do so in no small measure. Because you are *daily* bombarded with this world's false teachings, it is essential that you *daily* saturate your mind with God's Truth. As you become firmly established in His *written* Word, a sense of security will replace insecurity, understanding will replace confusion, and joy will replace defeat.

Indeed, every area of your life will be transformed to reflect the life of Christ. Some of these changes may take place quickly; but most will not happen overnight. They will take place gradually over an extended time. You may not even notice you are changing; but you will be. That is the effect God's Word has upon a believing heart.

YOUR FAMILY

Furthermore, as Christ becomes more and more the "Centerpiece" of your life, the way you relate to *each member of your family* will also be affected. There will be a change in the time you give them, in the way you treat them, in the way you communicate with them, and in your composure around them. Your grandparents, your parents, your siblings, your spouse, your in-laws, your children, and your children's children are all able to benefit from the time you invest in the Presence of the living God.

YOUR CHURCH

The spiritual health of a local church is determined by the maturity level of its individual members. Consequently, *your local church* also stands to benefit from your commitment to understand and obey the Scriptures. As you grow in maturity, the Body of Christ will be strengthened, resulting in both the increased effectiveness of her witness and the exaltation of her Redeemer.

YOUR WORLD

And finally, *the world* itself – groping in darkness for guidance and crying out in despair for peace – desperately needs men and women of God whose minds are permeated with the Light of God's Word. As you become well-versed in the Scriptures, you will be equipped to make an impact in your world that will have an eternal bearing upon the lives of those who are separated from the Savior.

So, as you seek to understand and apply God's Word, you can expect your life, and the lives of others, to change. And they will never be the same again.

It will be an investment in eternity itself.

A WORD (OR TWO) TO THE WISE

Hopefully by now you are convinced that what lies before you is a journey that promises to change your life ... over time ... in no small way. As you begin this journey, you need to set off on the right foot. This involves establishing some wise practices that will continue throughout the rest of your life.

PRAYER

First and foremost, recognize that you are completely dependent upon the Spirit of God to understand the Word of God.

FOR WHO AMONG MEN KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF A MAN EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF THE MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THOUGHTS OF GOD NO ONE KNOWS EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD. NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW THE THINGS FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD (1ST CORINTHIANS 2:11-12)

Prayer is an essential part of Bible study. Before you begin to read the Scriptures, ask the Lord for the ability to understand it. You will be amazed at how much more you will see when your time in the Word begins with prayer.

FREQUENCY

To devour only one huge meal and then fast the other six days of the week would starve your body of the nutrients it needs. Likewise, to devour one big sermon on Sunday morning and then go on a "Scripture fast" the rest of the week would result in the malnourishment of your soul.

Investing a little time *every day* in Bible reading is much better than spending a lot of time in the Scriptures only one day each week. Therefore, budget some time into your *daily* schedule for God's Word.

TIME

Because of its importance and because it requires mental effort, you should try to schedule your daily Bible readings when you are *most alert*. For some, this may be early in the morning right after you get up. For others, this may be during the evening.

Whatever time you choose, you should try to do so *at the same time each day*. That is, you should reserve a consistent block of time in your daily schedule for Bible reading and prayer. If you do not do this, it will likely get lost in the shuffle. You need to jealously guard your time with the Father.

PLACE

It is also best to read the Word in the *same place* if possible. That way, your surroundings become familiar to you so that they will not be a distraction. Pick a *quiet place* where you will be best protected from disturbance.

SUMMARY

You should, therefore, approach God's Word:

Prayerfully.

Every day.

At the same time when you are most alert.

And in the same, quiet place where you are least distracted.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

It is one thing to agree in principle with each of the Bible study hints you just read. It is another matter to put them into practice. The purpose of the following few questions is to help you add some “flesh” of practical action to the “bones” of your good intentions.

This little assignment will not be difficult; and it probably will not take you long to do. Yet, it *is* important, and you should, therefore, give it careful thought. The seemingly small decisions you are about to make can be used to establish long-term habits that will dramatically affect your life and ministry.

- 1) Realistically, *how much time* are you willing to set aside each day for Bible reading and prayer?

- 2) *What time* during the day is best for you (when you are most alert)?

- 3) *Where* is it best for you to meditate upon and pray through the Word of God (a quiet place with few distractions)?

Come prepared to present the plan you have set up for yourself at next week's meeting. Together, we will grow to *“LONG FOR THE PURE MILK OF THE WORD, SO THAT BY IT (WE) MAY GROW IN RESPECT TO SALVATION.”* (1ST PETER 2:2)

A GROUP STUDY

If this is a group study, each of you will have a prayer partner (a different one each week). Part of your prayer partner's ministry will be to hold you up before the Lord in prayer, asking Him:

- 1) that your times of fellowship with Him would be the highlight of your day, something you truly look forward to,
- 2) that your eyes would be opened to the truths He wants you to see,
- 3) and that your life would be changed – just a little bit more each day – into the image of Christ.

Your prayer partner will also hold you personally accountable to the commitment you are making.

CONTEMPLATING THE SCRIPTURES

O HOW I LOVE YOUR LAW! IT IS MY MEDITATION ALL THE DAY. (PSALM 119:97)

THE JOURNAL

The tone of this course is relational, engaging both your mind and your emotions.

Each day you will read one chapter from the Bible.

Having read the passage, you will then record your thoughts in a journal. Slowing down to record your thoughts allows you to really think about what you are reading. It will help you *process* God's Truth.

So, let's begin by walking through this process of journaling, step by step.

Step One

Always begin each day of Bible reading with prayer. Ask the Lord to help you *understand* what you are about to read. Ask Him to *strengthen and refresh your soul* through this reading of His Word. Ask Him to *change your life* into the likeness of His Son.

Step Two

Following "Appendix **B**: A Daily Bible Reading Schedule," read one chapter from the Bible.

Step Three

After you read that day's passage, ask yourself the question:

"What is the one Truth that stands out the most to me from this chapter?"

This might be one of God's

- *perfections (of character)* that strengthens your faith
 - *works* that stabilizes your life
 - *promises* that gives your soul hope
 - *commands* that pierces your conscience
 - or perhaps it is a *new thought* that simply catches your attention
-

Step Four

In your journal, record this *key thought* in your own words. What you write can be as brief or as lengthy as you wish.

You should start each day at the top of a new page. The space below your thoughts should be left blank to record what others in your small group mention or what your pastor mentions in his sermons.

Some Examples of Key Thoughts

- Let's say that you are reading through Romans; and in Chapter 8 you come across a *promise* that comforts you:

FOR I AM CONVINCED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR POWERS, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATED THING, WILL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD, WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. (ROMANS 8:38-39)

So, you record in your journal:

Romans 8:38-39: God will never stop loving me. His love for me is everlasting. Nothing can ever separate me from the love of my heavenly Father.

- While reading through John 14, a *new thought* catches your attention:

IF YOU LOVE ME, YOU WILL KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS. (JOHN 14:15)

So, you record in your journal:

John 14:15: The way I outwardly display my inward love for Christ is by my obedience (through faith in the indwelling Holy Spirit).

- While reading through Titus one morning, you come across this verse:

*URGE BONDSLAVES TO BE SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN MASTERS IN EVERYTHING, TO BE WELL-
PLEASING ... NOT PILFERING, BUT SHOWING ALL GOOD FAITH SO THAT THEY WILL ADORN THE
DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR IN EVERY RESPECT. (TITUS 2:9-10)*

Because this *command* pierces your conscience, you write in your journal:

Titus 2:9-10: My work ethic is to reflect the faith I have in Christ.

This, then, is the first step toward cultivating a vibrant fellowship with your heavenly Father: flooding your mind, heart, and soul – each day – with the cleansing, life-changing Word of God.

PRAYING THROUGH THE SCRIPTURES

“O, the pure delight of a single hour that before Thy throne I spend,
when I kneel in prayer, and with Thee, my God, I commune as friend with Friend.”

“I Am Thine, O Lord” (Fanny J. Crosby / William H. Doane)

“Take time to be holy; the world rushes on.
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone.
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be.
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.”

“Take Time to Be Holy” (William D. Longstaff / George C. Stebbins)

“What a Friend we have in Jesus. All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit; O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!”

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (Joseph M. Scriven / Charles C. Converse)

“I need Thee ev'ry hour, in joy or pain.
Come quickly and abide, or life is vain.
I need Thee, O I need Thee; every hour I need Thee!
O bless me now, my Savior, I come to Thee.”

“I Need Thee Every Hour” (Annie S. Hawks / Robert Lowry)

“Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, thy wings shall my petition bear
to Him Whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.
And since He bids me seek His face, believe His Word, and trust His grace,
I'll cast on Him my every care and wait for thee, sweet hour of prayer.”

“Sweet Hour of Prayer” (William W. Walford / William B. Bradbury)

THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER: A REVERENT CONFIDENCE

The purpose of *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship* is to help transform our relationship with the true and living God into a refreshing ... strengthening ... life-changing ... worshipful fellowship. And if there is one thing that will help us do that, it is to *pray our way through the Scriptures*.

Under the Old (Mosaic) Covenant the veil of the Jewish Temple prevented – and protected – individual worshippers from approaching God's deadly holiness. Only the high priest was given admission into the Holy of Holies. But when the blood of Jesus Christ ratified the *New Covenant*, that veil was “torn in two from top to bottom,” giving every believer free ... direct ... and intimate access to the very throne of heaven.

AND JESUS UTTERED A LOUD CRY, AND BREATHED HIS LAST. AND THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE WAS TORN IN TWO FROM TOP TO BOTTOM. (MARK 15:37-38; ALSO MATTHEW 27:50-51)

THEREFORE LET US DRAW NEAR WITH CONFIDENCE TO THE THRONE OF GRACE, SO THAT WE MAY RECEIVE MERCY AND FIND GRACE TO HELP IN TIME OF NEED. (HEBREWS 4:16)

We need to pause and let the reality of this “right of entry” sink in for a minute. When we exercise this *New Covenant* privilege, we are in the Presence of the One Who commands millions upon millions of angels. The One Who spoke into existence the splendor of heaven's galaxies and their quadrillions of stars. The One Who created the grandeur of earth's countless wonders. The One Who established the orbits of our planets around the sun ... and the paths of every atom's electrons around its nucleus. The One Who guides human history and directs the affairs of world governments to fulfill His purposes. The One Who sent His Son to die in our place. The One Who redeemed our lives from the pit and crowned us with lovingkindness and compassion.

When we pray, *this* is the One before Whom we bow. *This* is the One listening to our every word. Can we think of anything else we had planned to do that day that is more important than speaking to the One Who reigns over heaven and earth? Dear friends, before we speak our first word, we need to remind ourselves of the incomprehensible majesty and greatness of our Audience.

THE CONTENT OF PRAYER: THE WORD OF GOD

Having prepared ourselves to enter the Presence of God with a reverent confidence, what better way to spend time with our Father than to discuss with Him what we are learning from His Word. Our *key thoughts* provide a natural way to discuss our Lord's life-changing counsel with the Author Himself.

His Character. If your key thought focuses on the goodness of the Lord ... or His love ... or His holiness ... or any of His other perfections, nothing better will cultivate your *respect* and *admiration* for the God of heaven and earth than expressing your appreciation of Him.

His Works. If your key thought focuses on something the Lord has done, nothing will fill your heart with greater *contentment* and *gratitude* than thanking the all-powerful One for His gracious generosity.

His Promises. Perhaps your key thought has pointed you to one of His promises. If so, nothing will give you greater *hope* than telling the faithful One, "I am trusting You to keep Your Word."

His Commands. If your key thought points you to one of His commands, nothing will *bless* and *strengthen* your soul more than telling the God Who loves you, "Father, Your ways are best. Motivate and empower me to do Your will. I want to be like Your Son."

You will find nothing more satisfying, more strengthening, more stabilizing, more joyous than praying your way through the Word of God. Each day's reading will yield *fresh* insights, ushering you into a time of heartfelt fellowship with your Father. Your prayers – new each day – will be a *refreshment* to your soul.¹

¹ A suggestion would be to *write out* your prayers under your key thoughts.

THE TURNING POINT

We come now to the turning point of this course. We are about to enter a discussion that is often overlooked by today's Christian community but is, in fact, essential to both the well-being of our souls and the honor of God's reputation. With a journal we have learned to *ponder* over and *pray* through the Scriptures. Now it is time to learn how to *apply* His Truth to our lives.

But before we consider the priceless and eternal benefits of obedience, we must first clearly understand what obedience can **never** accomplish.

WHAT OBEDIENCE CAN NEVER ACCOMPLISH

The Problem

Dear friends, we have a problem. Of all the problems we have faced or ever will face, this one is the most serious.

YOU AND I HAVE OFFENDED A HOLY GOD.

We have angered the One Who has authority over the eternal destiny of our souls. Furthermore, the crimes we have committed against Him are not few. We have violated His moral laws over and over and over. According to God's Word,

ALL HAVE SINNED AND (CONTINUALLY) FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD. (ROMANS 3:23, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

No one has lived up to the glory of God's character. The bar is too high. And yet, *His perfection* is the standard by which we will be judged. One person might be more moral than another; but no one is good enough to satisfy the demands of our holy Judge. The fact is, God will settle for nothing less from us than *His Own degree of righteousness*.

Consequently, we are not on good terms with Him. In fact, according to God's Word,

... WE (ARE HIS) ENEMIES. (ROMANS 5:10, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Yes, it is true: God *is* a God of love.

FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. (JOHN 3:16)

But the world that God loves is a world of His enemies, not a world of His friends. The One Who commands His people to "*LOVE YOUR ENEMIES*" (Matthew 5:44) is Someone Who knows firsthand the cost of that commitment.

This Problem Could Not Be Worse Than It Is

But our problem worsens. We, the enemies of a just and impartial Judge, have been sentenced to receive the death penalty. We are all criminals on death row.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

The death we deserve is not a mere physical death. It also refers to a spiritual death. Because of our rebellion against God's authority, we have all been condemned to eternal death. And once that sentence is carried out, we shall be forever separated from God. This punishment is described in His Word as

THE PENALTY OF ETERNAL DESTRUCTION, AWAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER. (2ND THESSALONIANS 1:9)

We all deserve to be expelled forever from the Presence of the One Whose moral laws we have broken time and time again. According to the Bible, the place to which God will exile His enemies is known as

THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ... (WHERE) THEY WILL BE TORMENTED DAY AND NIGHT FOREVER AND EVER. (REVELATION 20:10, 15)

Yes, we have a *serious* problem. We are criminals in the sight of a holy Judge, condemned to be separated from Him in eternal torment.

For this problem to be solved, we must be made acceptable to the One we have offended. Somehow, we who are guilty of countless sins must be *cleansed* of those sins. By some means they must be *washed away*. We must become **righteous**. Only then will our broken relationship with God be restored.

According to the Bible there are *two kinds of righteousness*: one that God accepts and one that God rejects.

The Righteousness that God Rejects

The Word of God teaches a sobering truth. Millions upon millions of people – representing all the world's religions – will be condemned to eternal death because they tried to *make themselves righteous* in the sight of God by *performing a religious ritual*:

- * attending a church / observing the rituals of Christianity
- * attending a synagogue / observing the rituals of Judaism
- * attending a mosque / observing the rituals of Islam
- * attending a pagoda (vihara, stupa, wat) / observing the rituals of Buddhism
- * performing a puja / observing the rituals of Hinduism

Yet, as we shall see, *no ritual* – practiced by *any* religion – can help us.

Nor can we calm the anger of a just God by *following a code of conduct* such as:

- * the New Testament / the teachings of Christ and His apostles
- * the Golden Rule
- * the Sermon on the Mount
- * the Old Testament / the teachings of Judaism
- * the Ten Commandments
- * the Quran / the teachings of Islam
- * the Tripitaka (and Sutra) / the teachings of Buddhism
- * the Vedas and the Upanishads / the teachings of Hinduism

But again, as we shall see, *no system of law* – taught by *any* religion – can help us.

Nor will *servicing others* satisfy the penetrating justice of God. We can

- * love our spouse
- * love our children
- * perform community service
- * volunteer for humanitarian relief
- * work to preserve the environment
- * be a responsible citizen
- * serve in the military
- * die for our country

Being a good person – or trying harder to be a better one – is not going to solve our problem.

The problem with the above kinds of righteousness is that all of it is *man-generated*.

- Man, however, is imperfect ... which means that the only kind of righteousness we *can* produce is one that is imperfect. Yet, God demands perfection.
- It is a righteousness that we never permanently possess. If salvation can be gained by good works, then it can be lost by a moral failure.
- Furthermore, it is a righteousness we are never fully sure we have. There is always a gnawing doubt that, perhaps, we have not been good enough to satisfy God.

This is the righteousness that God rejects ... that which is produced by man.

Why God Rejects the Righteousness of Man

There are two reasons why God does not accept our best efforts to restore our shattered relationship with Him:

- In the first place, our good works are not the payment for sins. To be sure, we *do* owe God a debt; but the debt we owe Him is not an apology, followed by our promise to “try harder to do better.” No, the debt we owe God is death, not an improved lifestyle.

THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH. (ROMANS 6:23)

- In the second place, our best efforts are far inferior to God's expectations. They do not come close to the perfection He demands. Our *imperfect* goodness cannot restore the broken relationship we have with the Holy One Whose standard is *absolute perfection*.

ALL OF US HAVE BECOME LIKE ONE WHO IS UNCLEAN, AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUS DEEDS ARE LIKE A FILTHY GARMENT ... AND OUR INIQUITIES, LIKE THE WIND, TAKE US AWAY. (ISAIAH 64:6)

Even an atheist can build a hospital. And that is a good thing to do. But it is not good enough to restore his broken relationship with God. Why not? Because

- God demands death for his sins; but a death has not taken place, and
- God demands perfection; but that level of righteousness has not been met.

Most surely, we have a deadly problem.

The Solution to Our Problem

Since the goodness of man is unacceptable to God, what righteousness *does* He accept? According to God's Word, the only kind of righteousness God accepts is *His Own*. That is because *His* righteousness is perfect.

So, how can we obtain God's perfect righteousness?

The only way to be made right in the sight of God is by trusting in what Jesus Christ has done for us. Because of our crimes against God, we all deserve to die. But God in His mercy sent His Son to die in our place ... as our Substitute ... so we would not have to.

BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US (IN OUR PLACE, ON OUR BEHALF). (ROMANS 5:8, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

By His death we can escape eternal death. And by His resurrection from the dead, we can have eternal life.

TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, HE WHO HEARS MY WORD, AND BELIEVES HIM WHO SENT ME, HAS ETERNAL LIFE, AND DOES NOT COME INTO JUDGMENT, BUT HAS PASSED OUT OF DEATH INTO LIFE. (JOHN 5:24)

To be delivered from eternal death and given eternal life, *we must depend on what Jesus Christ has done on our behalf ... and nothing else.* When we do, an amazing “swap” takes place. Our sins are removed from us and placed upon Christ; and the righteousness of Christ is given to us.

HE (GOD THE FATHER) MADE HIM (JESUS CHRIST) WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM. (2ND CORINTHIANS 5:21, PARENTHESES ADDED)

That is why the Word of God says

I (DO NOT HAVE) A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN DERIVED FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES FROM GOD ON THE BASIS OF FAITH. (PHILIPPIANS 3:8-9, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

Dear friends, the only righteousness God accepts cannot be earned by your religious deeds or humanitarian efforts. Rather, it is **God-generated**, given to you *through faith* in Christ's work on your behalf.

- It is not something you work for; it is a gift you are given.
- Since it was not earned by good works, it cannot be lost by a moral failure. It is one that you permanently own.
- As a result, you will not be filled with uncertainty if you are unfaithful to God. Rather, you can rest in its security because of *Christ's* faithfulness to His Father.

*IN HIM, YOU ALSO, AFTER LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION – HAVING ALSO BELIEVED, YOU WERE **SEALED IN HIM** WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE ... FOR THE DAY OF REDEMPTION. (EPHESIANS 1:13, 4:30)*

We are “locked” in Jesus Christ for the Day of Redemption. Because He is forever righteous, the one who is “sealed in Him” will remain forever righteous as well.

PLACING OUR FAITH IN CHRIST'S PAYMENT FOR OUR SINS IS THE SOLUTION TO OUR PROBLEM.

SUMMARY

But why was the above discussion even necessary for a course such as this?

We are about to learn how to apply God's Word to our lives. But before we do, we need to be clear about the following two truths:

First, Obeying God's Commands Will Not Save Us

A person is not made right with God by his own righteousness. If that were possible, then Jesus Christ died for nothing.

I DO NOT NULLIFY THE GRACE OF GOD, FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COMES THROUGH THE LAW, THEN CHRIST DIED NEEDLESSLY. (GALATIANS 2:21)

Second, Obeying God's Commands Will Not Keep Us Saved

The payment for salvation is not made in installments. Christ Jesus did not make a down payment on the Cross and the rest of the bill is ours to work off for the rest of our lives. No, there is nothing more to pay on the debt we owe God. It has been paid in full. To the praise of God's magnificent and glorious grace, Jesus loudly cried out from the Cross,

IT IS FINISHED! (JOHN 19:30)

That is,

OUR DEBT OF DEATH (IT) IS PAID IN FULL (IS FINISHED)!

There is only one way a person can be pardoned of his sins and made righteous in the sight of God. He must trust in the *finished* work of the resurrected Christ to be the Payment for his sins, and in that alone.

FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, SO THAT NO ONE MAY BOAST. (EPHESIANS 2:8-9)

And so, a word of warning: if you are trusting in a religious ritual or a code of conduct or in some other person other than Jesus Christ to make yourself acceptable to God, you are facing an eternity of torment, separated from the Presence of God.

But if your faith is placed in the Person of Christ Jesus – and in Him alone – you are facing an eternity of glory in His radiant Presence.

WHAT OBEDIENCE WILL ACCOMPLISH

FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS FOR GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD PREPARED BEFOREHAND SO THAT WE WOULD WALK IN THEM. (EPHESIANS 2:10)

We have seen what obedience to God's Law **cannot** do. It cannot save us. Nor can it keep us saved. Why, then, does this course promote a lifestyle of obedience to God?

Obedience Promotes the Wellbeing of Our Souls

Spiritual growth *begins* with a knowledge of God's will (as revealed in His Word). That is why we invested the first few weeks of this course in Bible reading and prayer. But a mere knowledge of the Scriptures does not produce spiritual vitality. There is more to cultivating a robust soul than accumulating Biblical knowledge.

For our lives to overflow with the joy and strength of Christ, we must apply the Truth we know. *Obedience is the key to the abundant life our Lord offers.*

IF YOU KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, YOU WILL ABIDE IN MY LOVE; JUST AS I HAVE KEPT MY FATHER'S COMMANDMENTS AND ABIDE IN HIS LOVE. THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN TO YOU SO THAT MY JOY MAY BE IN YOU, AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE MADE FULL. (JOHN 15:10-11)

Do you want to abide in the love of Christ? Do you want His joy to flood your soul? If so, you must – in dependence upon God's power – obey the Truth you know.

***TO BELIEVE AND OBEY THE WORD OF GOD IN THE POWER OF GOD
IS WHAT FLOODS A SOUL WITH ABUNDANT JOY***

Obedience Exalts the Glory of God's Name

Furthermore, as we *publicly* submit our will to the will of God, we are saying to our families, our friends, our co-workers, our fellow classmates, and the world around us:

*JESUS CHRIST IS LORD.
HE HAS THE RIGHT TO RULE.*

He has the right to rule creation. He has the right to rule the nations. He has the right to rule His Church. And He has the right to rule your life and mine.

As our thoughts and attitudes and words and conduct become more and more like that of our Redeemer, we are declaring to this dark world the great worth of God our Father. He is worthy of our respect. He is worthy of being trusted. He is worthy of being feared and loved and worshipped.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN. (MATTHEW 5:16)

SUMMARY

If you are depending on Christ's death to be the Payment for your sins against God, then you have been pardoned of those crimes. Every single one of them. They have **all** been washed away. In the sight of God, you are completely forgiven ... *completely clean* (1st Corinthians 6:9-11).

You are also *completely righteous*. In place of your washed-away sins, you have become – in Christ – the righteousness of God Himself (2nd Corinthians 5:21).

Furthermore, the Father has sealed you in Christ for the Day of Redemption (using His Own Spirit as the Seal). You are “locked” in the righteous One and, therefore, *eternally secure* in your salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30).

Therefore, by God's grace through faith in His obedient Son, you are forever clean, forever righteous, and forever secure. But *your* obedience to a system of law ... any system of law ... is not what accomplished this. Obedience is not what *makes* you right in God's sight, nor does it *keep* you right in God's sight.

What then does a Spirit-empowered obedience do?

- It floods your soul with the fullness of Christ (John 15:10-11).
- And it testifies of the Father's magnificent character before the watchful eyes of a despairing world (Matthew 5:16).

These are the reasons *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship* promotes a lifestyle of obedience.

But there is one more reason: your evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Every true believer has a scheduled one-on-One appointment with the Son of God. And dear friends, once we have been ushered into His Presence, we are going to have the frankest discussion of our lives.

As we bow before our Lord, we will give an account of our stewardship of God's Word. Were we faithful to submit our will to the will of the Father?

OUR STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S WORD

FROM EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH, MUCH WILL BE REQUIRED; AND TO WHOM THEY ENTRUSTED MUCH, OF HIM THEY WILL ASK ALL THE MORE. (LUKE 12:48)

Beloved, if you have a copy of the Bible, then you have been blessed with a storehouse of priceless, eternal treasures. But you have also been entrusted with a sobering responsibility. God's Word is God's property; and when He placed His sacred Word in your hands, you became His steward. You became a "guardian-investor" of His Truth. And the one thing the Master expects from His stewards is faithfulness.

... IT IS REQUIRED OF STEWARDS THAT ONE BE FOUND TRUSTWORTHY. (1ST CORINTHIANS 4:2)

This is true no matter what level of Bible knowledge we have. Whether a little or a lot or somewhere in between, our Lord expects us to respond to His Word in **faith** and **obedience**. These are the traits of a faithful steward. Our Master wants us

to trust Him ...

to provide the wisdom and power we need ...

to apply His Word to our lives ...

each day of our lives.

We are to *trust* Him to help us *obey* Him (being fully aware that only God has the power to obey God). Otherwise, our failure to act upon His Word in faith will result in a *diminishing ability to receive more Truth* (a tragic condition in which to be).

FOR WHOEVER HAS, TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE; BUT WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE, EVEN WHAT HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM. (MATTHEW 13:12)

That is,

FOR WHOEVER HAS (THE RESOLVE TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY THE WORD OF GOD), TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE (I.E., HE WILL RECEIVE AN INCREASING DESIRE AND CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE HE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF THE TRUTH THAT HE KNOWS);

BUT WHOEVER DOES NOT HAVE (THE RESOLVE TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY THE WORD OF GOD), EVEN WHAT HE HAS SHALL BE TAKEN AWAY FROM HIM (I.E., HIS CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES WILL DIMINISH. HE WILL BECOME SPIRITUALLY INDIFFERENT AND WEAK IN DISCERNMENT). (MATTHEW 13:12, PARENTHESES ADDED)

Dear saints, nothing is more senseless than for one who is indwelt by the third Person of the Trinity to have a casual attitude toward obedience; for in doing so, he compromises his ability to receive deeper insights from God's Word. Consider for a moment the consequences of such a decline:

Concerning *his own soul*, the abundant life Christ offers him is forfeited for something far less. No longer does he want to *know* all that Christ wants him to know ... and *be* all that Christ wants him to be ... and *do* all that Christ wants him to do. That longing is replaced with a craving for this world's empty promises. As a result, the fullness of spiritual vitality is diluted.

Concerning *his local church*, he has become one of its weak links. In service, he is fruitless ... in character, he is worldly ... in spiritual understanding, his mind is clouded. When faith and obedience are not the passion of one's heart, true spiritual effectiveness is limited.

Concerning *the unbelieving community*, his witness is virtually non-existent. Because his heart has grown cold toward the things of God, there is little difference between his life and those who make no profession of faith in Christ whatsoever. And we can be sure that the unbelievers out there have taken note of this ... that he is just one more hypocrite that goes to church somewhere.

And concerning *his evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ*, if he does not repent, the eternal rewards he could have received will be forever lost.

Clearly, this is not what we want for ourselves. We do not want to be spiritual infants. But there is a remedy. In Hebrews 5:11-14 we find three "ingredients" necessary for growth in spiritual maturity.

(1) First, one needs *time* to grow. What is true for the physical, mental, emotional, and social development of an individual is also true for the spiritual development of the believer. **Spiritual maturity takes time.**

CONCERNING HIM (MELCHIZEDEK, SEE GENESIS 14) WE HAVE MUCH TO SAY, AND IT IS HARD TO EXPLAIN, SINCE YOU HAVE BECOME DULL OF HEARING. FOR THOUGH BY THIS TIME YOU OUGHT TO BE TEACHERS, YOU HAVE NEED AGAIN FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU THE ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES OF THE ORACLES OF GOD, AND YOU HAVE COME TO NEED MILK AND NOT SOLID FOOD. (HEBREWS 5:11-12, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

(2) Notice that the second ingredient necessary for spiritual growth is *the Word of God*.

FOR EVERYONE WHO PARTAKES ONLY OF MILK IS NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, FOR HE IS AN INFANT. (HEBREWS 5:13)

As with other forms of growth, **spiritual maturity takes food**, namely, nourishment from God's Word. We feed our souls with God's Truth. Otherwise, the believer will be *stunted* in his capacity to understand spiritual truth.

(3) The third ingredient necessary for spiritual growth is *practice*.

*BUT SOLID FOOD IS FOR THE MATURE, WHO BECAUSE OF **PRACTICE** HAVE THEIR SENSES TRAINED TO DISCERN GOOD AND EVIL. (HEBREWS 5:14)*

Spiritual maturity takes practice. To be spiritually fit, one must exercise. That is, he must obey the Truth he knows. Obedience itself is nourishment for the soul.

*JESUS SAID TO THEM, "MY **FOOD** IS TO **DO** THE WILL OF HIM WHO SENT ME AND TO ACCOMPLISH HIS WORK." (JOHN 4:34)*

Therefore, to cultivate spiritual maturity in our lives, we must

*take **time** each day*

*to absorb **the Scriptures** into our minds and hearts and souls,*

*trusting the Spirit of God for the ability to **understand** and the power to **obey** the Father's will.*

Fellow bondslaves of Christ, Bible study is risky business. It *demand*s a response. May our Master judge us to be faithful stewards of His Word when He returns for His Church or when He calls us – one by one – to come home.

APPLYING THE SCRIPTURES

As you read the Bible each day, you are going to discover many wonderful truths: what God is like, what He has done, what He has promised to do, as well as the lifestyle He expects from His people that will be for their good and His glory.

Sometimes, the truth that catches your attention – though always profitable – will not call for a specific *course of action*. Perhaps it simply reminds you of something the Lord has done for you – or promises to do – and you want to thank Him. Or something about Him that prompts you to praise Him. With truths such as these, a simple prayer is your response to those truths.

But there will be other times when the Spirit of God prompts you to respond to a truth in a *specific way*. The following steps are meant to help you turn this God-generated motivation into a deliberate course of action.

STEP ONE

Ask the Lord to show you how to apply this truth to your life.

STEP TWO

Write down the specifics of your plan to obey His will. Your application should have the following three traits:

a) It Should Be a Personal Commitment

You should *not* begin your application with the words, “A believer should” Those words merely agree with the will of God in principle but express no real commitment on your part to obey it. Rather, your application should begin with the words “I will”

- The word “I” gets you involved *personally*.
- The word “will” is an expression of *commitment*. You are saying to the Lord, “By Your power, I intend to take the following action.”

b) It Should Be Specific

The application you write should be as specific as possible. To make it so, you should try to answer as many of the following questions as you can:

- *What person(s)* (other than myself) will this course of action involve?
- *What* specific course of action will I take?
- *When* will I take this action?
- *Where* will I take this action?

c) It Should Be Current

Your application should not address some imaginary situation that *might* happen to you. It should address a situation that you are facing right now (or one you will likely face).

Now that you have planned a specific course of action ahead of time, you are better prepared (and more likely to obey the Lord) when faced with that situation.

STEP THREE

It is our responsibility to obey the Truth revealed to us by the Spirit of God. And, of course, to faithfully obey His will, we need *God's guidance and wisdom*. But we also need *God's motivation and power*.

Therefore, after writing out your application, invest some time in prayer. Ask the Lord to help you do what you just committed yourself to do. By praying for God's help to do His will, you will be given everything you need to please Him with your life.

SUMMARY

- 1) Ask the Lord to show you *how* to *specifically* apply this truth to your life.
- 2) Record how you plan to apply this Truth to your life. Your application should
 - begin with the words, "*I will*"
 - be as specific as possible (*who, what, when, where*)
 - address a situation you are facing right now (or one you will likely face)
- 3) Ask the Lord for *His motivation and power* to apply His Word to your life.

EXAMPLES OF THE PROCESS

Perhaps it would be good for us to see some examples of this process of writing a specific application.

I. Your Situation

Let's say that you work for someone who builds houses. And your boss gives you and your co-workers two 15-minute breaks each day, the first usually coming around 10:00 in the morning and the second in the afternoon around 2:00. But your employer is not always on the job site. You have found yourself joining the other laborers (when the boss is not around) stretching out each of these breaks to be 25-30 minutes long. And this is beginning to make you feel uneasy.

Passage

It so happens that you are reading through Titus; and as you do, you come across this verse:

URGE BONDSLAVES TO BE SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN MASTERS IN EVERYTHING, TO BE WELL-PLEASING ... NOT PILFERING, BUT SHOWING ALL GOOD FAITH SO THAT THEY WILL ADORN THE DOCTRINE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR IN EVERY RESPECT. (TITUS 2:9-10)

Key Thought

This passage pierces your conscience. You know that, on every payday, you are accepting money for 40 hours of work that your boss thinks you gave him ... but you know that you did not. And what is worse, your co-laborers know about your stand for Christ. So, you write this *key thought* in your journal that day:

My work ethic is to reflect the faith I have in Christ.

Application

Step One: The question you now face is, "How can I apply this truth from Titus 2:9-10 to my situation at work? So, you ask the Lord for His wisdom.

Step Two: You then write the following application:

Starting Monday, I will not pilfer time from my employer by taking 25-30 minutes for a break when he allows me only 15 minutes. I will be careful to watch the clock and return to work at 10:15 and 2:15.

Prayer

Step Three: Knowing that you will fail apart from the motivation and power of God, you pray (and perhaps write out) the following prayer:

Father, please help me remember to keep track of the time. And please give me the courage and grace to return to work when my co-workers put pressure on me to keep sitting there with them.

It Is a Personal Commitment It Is Specific And It Is Current

Let's notice a few things about the above application. First, we should notice how it was *not* written. It does not read

A believer should not pilfer.

Nor does it read

Whenever I find myself in a situation that tempts me to compromise my work ethic in some way, I will pray that God would deliver me from that temptation.

The first statement does not involve you personally, no commitment is being made, and it is not specific.

The second statement is still too general ("Whenever" ... "in some way"). To be sure, it is a good intention; but it is not a specific application.

But notice how it *is* written:

Starting Monday, I will not pilfer time from my employer by taking 25-30 minutes for a break when he allows me only 15 minutes. I will be careful to watch the clock and return to work at 10:15 and 2:15.

Do you see the difference between this application and the two above it?

- *Who:* my employer
- *What:* be careful to watch the clock and return to work at 10:15 and 2:15
- *When:* starting Monday
- *Where:* at work

Notice, too, that this application was not based upon some possible situation that could happen to you. It was a real situation that you were presently facing (or one that you were likely to face).

II. Your Situation

You are the only believer in your family. Before you trusted in Christ Jesus for salvation, things were fine between you and your siblings. But now, your values are changing ... and so is your family's ability to relate to your new-found faith. They have, in fact, begun to publicly ridicule you at family gatherings. They seem to delight in trying to discredit your faith and make you look foolish. They also talk around you, pushing you out of their conversations. You feel alone, surrounded by those who once enjoyed your company but now reject you.

Passage

FOR WE DO NOT HAVE A HIGH PRIEST WHO CANNOT SYMPATHIZE WITH OUR WEAKNESSES, BUT ONE WHO HAS BEEN TEMPTED IN ALL THINGS AS WE ARE, YET WITHOUT SIN. (HEBREWS 4:15)

Key Thought

Jesus Christ Himself was tempted "in all things" so that He would be able to relate to what I am going through.

Poor Application (Vague)

I will be grateful that Jesus Christ can relate to whatever suffering this world causes me to endure.

Good Application (Specific)

Who: my family

What: thoughtfully contemplate: "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One Who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

thoughtfully contemplate: "For not even His brothers were believing in Him."
(John 7:5)

pray that I represent Christ faithfully and consistently before them

When: right before going to our annual gathering for Thanksgiving this year

Where: my cousin's house

This year, right before going to my cousin's house for our family's annual gathering for Thanksgiving, I will (1) encourage and strengthen myself by thoughtfully contemplating Hebrews 4:15 and John 7:5, and (2) pray that I represent Him faithfully and consistently before my family.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank You for being Someone Who understands what I'm going through with my family. You, too, were ridiculed by Your own siblings. Please empower me now to take Your truth with me to this gathering and to represent You faithfully and consistently before them.

Notice the Difference between ...

I will be grateful that Jesus Christ can relate to whatever suffering this world causes me to endure.

and ...

This year, right before going to my cousin's house for our family's annual gathering for Thanksgiving, I will (1) encourage and strengthen myself by thoughtfully contemplating Hebrews 4:15 and John 7:5, and (2) pray that I represent Him faithfully and consistently before my family.

III. Your Situation

Both you and your wife work. And when you come home, you are both tired. After work, both of you, of course, have chores to do around the house; but it seems that, on most days, you finish your tasks sooner than she does. (You work from morning to suppertime. She works from morning to bedtime.)

Passage

*DO NOT MERELY LOOK OUT FOR YOUR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS, BUT ALSO FOR THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS.
(PHILIPPIANS 2:4)*

Key Thought

I am to be on the “look out” for ways to promote the welfare of others and not just for ways to benefit myself (especially at the expense of others).

Poor Application (Vague)

I will look for ways to help my wife.

Good Application (Specific)

Who: my wife

What: vacuum the carpets

When: every Thursday night after supper

Where: our house

For my wife, I will vacuum the carpets every Thursday night after supper.

Prayer

Dear Father, thank you for a wife that is willing to provide needed income for our family. Please remind me to write this task into my calendar each week. And please give me a glad heart to help her / us in this way.

Notice the Difference between ...

I will look for ways to help my wife.

and ...

For my wife, I will vacuum the carpets every Thursday night after supper.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

IV. Your Situation

Your employer has just posted a list of work-related positions that have just opened. One catches your attention. This position would fully use your education and experience, it would provide you with an increase in salary (your three children are approaching college-age), and it would mean better working hours (allowing you to spend more time with your family). This job seems to be perfect for your situation. So, you apply for it.

Passage

THIS IS THE CONFIDENCE WHICH WE HAVE BEFORE HIM THAT, IF WE ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, HE HEARS US. AND IF WE KNOW THAT HE HEARS US IN WHATEVER WE ASK, WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE THE REQUESTS WHICH WE HAVE ASKED FROM HIM. (1ST JOHN 5:14-15)

Key Thought

I can have the assurance that God will give me whatever I pray for **IF** what I ask of Him agrees with **His** will.

Application

Who _____

What _____

When _____

Where _____

I will _____

Prayer

Dear Father, _____

CONCLUSION

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, a spiritually lethargic *soul* (and for that matter, a spiritually lethargic *local church*) will not be revived simply by accumulating more and more knowledge. The only way a believer's innermost being can be refreshed, energized, and strengthened is by *obeying* the Truth he *already knows*. The reason is simple:

Because he is committed to obey the will of the Father, the Holy Spirit will entrust this faithful steward with an ever-increasing capacity to understand God's Word as well as the divine power to apply it to his life.

*FOR WHOEVER HAS, TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN, AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE
(MATTHEW 13:12A)*

That is,

FOR WHOEVER HAS (THE RESOLVE TO UNDERSTAND AND OBEY THE WORD OF GOD), TO HIM MORE SHALL BE GIVEN AND HE WILL HAVE AN ABUNDANCE (I.E., HE WILL RECEIVE AN INCREASING DESIRE AND CAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES BECAUSE HE HAS PROVEN HIMSELF TO BE A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF THE TRUTH HE KNOWS);

Divine wisdom ... understanding ... insights ... discernment ... stability ... security ... love ... joy ... peace ... patience ... indeed, all the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is his reward for faithful stewardship. These qualities are the "rivers of living water" which flow from his innermost being (John 7:38). *This* is the "abundant life" about which Christ spoke (John 10:10). *This* is what it means to "be filled (controlled) with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

This is the life for which the world around you is desperately seeking ... but cannot find. Blindly searching in all the wrong places, those who do not know the Savior are trying to fill the emptiness and misery of their souls with something that only Christ Jesus can provide. Yet, apart from Him, their souls will remain bankrupt.

But beloved, this life is at *your* very fingertips, that is, if you know Jesus Christ as your Savior. It is within your grasp. So, if this what you want, then

PROVE (YOURSELF A DOER) OF THE WORD, AND NOT MERELY HEARERS WHO DELUDE THEMSELVES ... (FOR) ONE WHO LOOKS INTENTLY AT THE PERFECT LAW, THE LAW OF LIBERTY, AND ABIDES BY IT, NOT HAVING BECOME A FORGETFUL HEARER BUT AN EFFECTUAL DOER, THIS MAN SHALL BE BLESSED IN WHAT HE DOES. (JAMES 1:22, 25, PARENTHESIS ADDED)

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

MEDITATION

- 1) Record in your journal – at the top of a new page – the Scripture reference (book, chapter, and verse) and the date.
- 2) Pray that your heavenly Father will help you *understand* what you are about to read. Ask Him to *strengthen and refresh your soul* through this reading of His Word. Ask Him to *change your life* into the likeness of Christ.
- 3) Thoughtfully read one (or more) chapters from the Bible.
- 4) After you read the passage, ask yourself the question:

What is the one Truth that stands out the most to me from this chapter(s)?

This might be one of God's

- *perfections (of character)* that strengthens your faith
 - *works* that stabilizes your life
 - *promises* that gives your soul hope
 - *commands* that pierces your conscience
 - or perhaps it is a *new thought* that simply catches your attention
- 5) In your journal record this *key thought* in your own words. What you write can be as brief or as lengthy as you wish.

PRAYER

- 6) Through prayer, enter the Lord's Presence to discuss your key thought.
 - praise Him for what He is like (His character)
 - thank Him for what He has done (His works)
 - trust Him to keep His Word (His promises)
 - depend upon Him to help you obey His will (His commandments)

You may want to write out your prayers under your key thoughts.

APPLICATION

- 7) Ask the Lord to show you *how* to *specifically* apply this truth to your life.

- 8) Record how you plan to obey this Truth. Your application should
 - begin with the words, "*I will*"
 - be as specific as possible (*who, what, when, where*)
 - address a situation you are facing right now (or one you will likely face)

- 9) Ask God for *His guidance and power* to apply His Word to your life.

A CHALLENGE

THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES, ENTRUST THESE TO FAITHFUL MEN WHO WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO. (2ND TIMOTHY 2:2)

You have just finished a study that presented a simple approach to reading the Bible, praying over its truths, and applying its principles to your life. Now you are faced with a decision: "What will I do with what I have learned? Will I continue to stay in the Word; or will I set the Scriptures aside because this course is over?"

If you are like many of us, you need someone to help you *stay* in the Word of Life until your love for its Author has matured. So, this is my challenge to you: that you form a small group of believers with whom you can meet on a weekly basis to discuss your key thoughts and to support one another in prayer.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A MEMBER OF A SMALL GROUP

Your Small Group Will Provide Accountability

One of the greatest problems a person has in establishing a consistent fellowship with the Lord is a lack of on-going motivation. The beauty of being part of a small band of believers is that it will serve as an accountability group. You will listen to each other's insights on that week's readings. And you will pray for one another to be faithful in applying God's Word to your lives. Accountability is a definite benefit to participating in a small group.

Your Small Group Will Provide Spiritual Fellowship

It seems the word "fellowship" is used rather loosely among us Christians. We get together to watch the Super Bowl and call that "fellowship." Certainly, there is nothing wrong with believers having fun together. In fact, it is a healthy thing for us to do. But even unbelievers do that ... and they have fun, too.

What transforms a *social* gathering into a genuine *spiritual* fellowship is when the Scriptures become the Centerpiece of our conversation. As we focus on the written Word of God, *our souls are refreshed and strengthened* by the Living Word of God.

This, too, is one of the benefits of participating in a small group. In doing so, you will get closer to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. *Much closer.* Meeting week after week, you will learn to carry one another's burdens and share in each other's joys. What may start out as a group of strangers or acquaintances will gradually become a band of true and loyal friends.

Would you like to cultivate some close Christian friendships? Something more than our typical Sunday morning "Hello-how-are-you" ... "See-you-next-week" acquaintances? Genuine spiritual fellowship is another benefit to participating in a small group.

Your Small Group Will Provide Enriching Discussions

When you meet to present your key thoughts for the week, your comments will often spark several short discussions. So, if there are four people in the group, you will have four (brief) Bible studies. Consequently, your times of fellowship will be saturated with enriching, strengthening, life-changing discussions over God's Truth.

Your Small Group Will Promote Mutual Mentoring

Furthermore, there is no need for anyone to prepare a lesson to teach. Instead of viewing one person as the teacher and all the others as the students, you will be hearing from each member as he / she explains to the group an insight the Spirit of God revealed to him / her during the week. It will be a time of mutual mentoring.

FORMING YOUR OWN SMALL GROUP

But how does one start an informal Bible discussion group? Perhaps your spouse and / or your (older) children would be a good place to start. Or maybe you have a close friend or co-worker (of the same gender) to whom you would like to introduce this system of study. *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship* could even be used in your local church as part of its discipleship program. In whatever way you choose to use this simple course, it will be most effective when you meet with *more than one person (2-5)* to discuss your thoughts.

Perhaps these questions will help you get started:

- Whom will I ask to meet with me each week to discuss the thoughts we journal during our daily Bible readings?
- What is the best day and time for each of us?

- Where is a good place (with few distractions) for us to meet?
- Will we follow the Bible Reading Schedule from this course? Or will we follow another?

CONCLUSION

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do not set these skills aside simply because the homework is over. Instead, use what you have learned to bathe your own minds and souls in the holy Scriptures ... and to teach others to do likewise.

This type of study is a very pleasant way to spend time with fellow believers. Furthermore, the benefits are priceless, eternal, and far-reaching. Not only will *your* lives be impacted by God's Truth, but so will the lives of your grandparents, your parents, your in-laws, your spouse, your children, your children's children, your church, your friends, your classmates, your boss, your co-workers, your neighbors, and your community.

*YOU WILL FIND NO INVESTMENT OF YOUR TIME OR ENERGY
THAT WILL YIELD A GREATER DIVIDEND.*

It is my sincere hope that the Spirit of God has begun to transform your fellowship with the Father into the most satisfying thing you do all day. May the Word of God have its fullest impact in your life, cultivating your love for the One Who has done so much for you.

O HOW I LOVE YOUR LAW! IT IS MY MEDITATION ALL THE DAY. YOUR COMMANDMENTS MAKE ME WISER THAN MY ENEMIES, FOR THEY ARE EVER MINE.

I HAVE MORE INSIGHT THAN ALL MY TEACHERS, FOR YOUR TESTIMONIES ARE MY MEDITATION. I UNDERSTAND MORE THAN THE AGED, BECAUSE I HAVE OBSERVED YOUR PRECEPTS.

I HAVE RESTRAINED MY FEET FROM EVERY EVIL WAY, THAT I MAY KEEP YOUR WORD. I HAVE NOT TURNED ASIDE FROM YOUR ORDINANCES, FOR YOU YOURSELF HAVE TAUGHT ME.

HOW SWEET ARE YOUR WORDS TO MY TASTE! YES, SWEETER THAN HONEY TO MY MOUTH! FROM YOUR PRECEPTS I GET UNDERSTANDING; THEREFORE, I HATE EVERY FALSE WAY. (PSALM 119:97-104)

APPENDIX A

THE UNIQUE FEATURES OF OUR READING SCHEDULES (Appendices B, C, and D)

The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship provides you with three different reading plans. We hope that you will see the value of using *all three* of them (one at a time!) in the following order:

APPENDIX B

Appendix B (pages 58-61) is the reading schedule you will use during this study. This appendix, in fact, offers *four schedules from which to choose*. The only difference between these four plans is the *Gospel* your small group decides to read:

- (A) Matthew
- (B) Mark
- (C) Luke
- (D) John

After you finish reading *one* of the Gospels, the remaining books are the same in each plan. These books of the Bible were chosen to orient you to the various kinds of literature found in God's Word:

- The Gospels (historical / narrative)
- Psalms (wisdom / poetry)
- Proverbs (wisdom / life's principles)
- Exodus (legal)
- 1st Thessalonians (instructional / doctrine and morality)
- The Revelation (prophetic)

APPENDIX C

Appendix C (pages 62-63) is the *first* reading schedule we recommend *after you finish* this study, "*The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship*." This plan will take you all the way through the *New Testament* before you begin reading from the Old Testament.

You will notice that each of the four Gospels is evenly spaced throughout this schedule. Furthermore, each New Testament book is followed by a reading from *Psalms 119* (8 verses) and by one or two chapters from the Book of *Proverbs*.

Thus, you will read the entirety of the New Testament, all of Psalm 119, and all 31 chapters of Proverbs.

APPENDIX D

Appendix D (pages 64-66) is the *second* reading schedule we recommend *after you finish this study*. With this plan you will be taken through *the entire counsel of God (that is, both Testaments)*. This schedule alternates New Testament books with Old Testament books, evenly spacing the four Gospels, all the Psalms, and all the Proverbs throughout.

WHY THIS APPROACH?

The New Testament Is Read First

When someone decides to read through the Bible, nine times out of ten he will begin with *Genesis*. And, of course, that is a very logical place to start. As he proceeds, first through *Genesis* and then through *Exodus*, he finds these narratives to be both fascinating and easy to read.

Then he comes to *Leviticus*! And suddenly, he finds himself “bogged down” in a series of *seemingly* irrelevant laws (for example, the animal sacrificial system, priestly garments, ceremonial rituals, dietary restrictions, etc.).

It is at this point that many give up their New Year's resolution to read through the Bible before giving this noble goal a fighting chance (which is unfortunate). Therefore, *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship* directs you to read through the New Testament first (Appendix C), *then* through the entire Bible (Appendix D). This approach will establish you in a pattern of reading so satisfying that even *Leviticus* will not thwart you.

(Incidentally, *Leviticus* is an exceedingly rich and rewarding book to read once you discover all the New Testament realities to which these Old Testament practices are pointing: the Crucifixion of Christ ... the High Priesthood of Christ ... the purity of New Covenant believers, etc.)

The Historical Settings of Certain Psalms

An attempt has been made to position certain Psalms within their historical settings. For example, King David wrote Psalm 51 after his sin with Bathsheba. Therefore, you are scheduled to read this Psalm after reading the account of their sin from 2nd Samuel 11-12.

This approach will help make these Psalms come alive!

APPENDIX B**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – A**

(1)	Matthew 1	(31)	Psalms 7-8
(2)	Matthew 2	(32)	Psalms 9
(3)	Matthew 3	(33)	Psalms 10-11
(4)	Matthew 4	(34)	Psalms 12-15
(5)	Matthew 5	(35)	Proverbs 1
(6)	Matthew 6	(36)	Proverbs 2
(7)	Matthew 7	(37)	Proverbs 3
(8)	Matthew 8	(38)	Proverbs 4
(9)	Matthew 9	(39)	Proverbs 5
(10)	Matthew 10	(40)	Proverbs 6
(11)	Matthew 11	(41)	Exodus 20
(12)	Matthew 12	(42)	Exodus 21
(13)	Matthew 13	(43)	Exodus 22
(14)	Matthew 14	(44)	Exodus 23
(15)	Matthew 15	(45)	Exodus 24
(16)	Matthew 16	(46)	1 st Thessalonians 1
(17)	Matthew 17	(47)	1 st Thessalonians 2
(18)	Matthew 18	(48)	1 st Thessalonians 3
(19)	Matthew 19	(49)	1 st Thessalonians 4
(20)	Matthew 20	(50)	1 st Thessalonians 5
(21)	Matthew 21	(51)	Revelation 1
(22)	Matthew 22	(52)	Revelation 2
(23)	Matthew 23	(53)	Revelation 3
(24)	Matthew 24	(54)	Revelation 4
(25)	Matthew 25	(55)	Revelation 5
(26)	Matthew 26		
(27)	Matthew 27		
(28)	Matthew 28		
(29)	Psalms 1-3		
(30)	Psalms 4-6		

APPENDIX B**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – B**

(1)	Mark 1	(31)	Proverbs 3
(2)	Mark 2	(32)	Proverbs 4
(3)	Mark 3	(33)	Proverbs 5
(4)	Mark 4	(34)	Proverbs 6
(5)	Mark 5	(35)	Proverbs 7
(6)	Mark 6	(36)	Proverbs 8
(7)	Mark 7	(37)	Proverbs 9
(8)	Mark 8	(38)	Proverbs 10
(9)	Mark 9	(39)	Proverbs 11
(10)	Mark 10	(40)	Proverbs 12
(11)	Mark 11	(41)	Exodus 20
(12)	Mark 12	(42)	Exodus 21
(13)	Mark 13	(43)	Exodus 22
(14)	Mark 14	(44)	Exodus 23
(15)	Mark 15	(45)	Exodus 24
(16)	Mark 16	(46)	1 st Thessalonians 1
(17)	Psalms 1-3	(47)	1 st Thessalonians 2
(18)	Psalms 4-6	(48)	1 st Thessalonians 3
(19)	Psalms 7-8	(49)	1 st Thessalonians 4
(20)	Psalms 9	(50)	1 st Thessalonians 5
(21)	Psalms 10-11	(51)	Revelation 1
(22)	Psalms 12-15	(52)	Revelation 2
(23)	Psalms 16-17	(53)	Revelation 3
(24)	Psalms 18	(54)	Revelation 4
(25)	Psalms 19-20	(55)	Revelation 5
(26)	Psalms 21-22		
(27)	Psalms 23-24		
(28)	Psalms 25		
(29)	Proverbs 1		
(30)	Proverbs 2		

APPENDIX B**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – C**

(1)	Luke 1	(31)	Psalms 16-17
(2)	Luke 2	(32)	Psalms 18
(3)	Luke 3	(33)	Proverbs 1
(4)	Luke 4	(34)	Proverbs 2
(5)	Luke 5	(35)	Proverbs 3
(6)	Luke 6	(36)	Proverbs 4
(7)	Luke 7	(37)	Proverbs 5
(8)	Luke 8	(38)	Proverbs 6
(9)	Luke 9	(39)	Proverbs 7
(10)	Luke 10	(40)	Proverbs 8
(11)	Luke 11	(41)	Exodus 20
(12)	Luke 12	(42)	Exodus 21
(13)	Luke 13	(43)	Exodus 22
(14)	Luke 14	(44)	Exodus 23
(15)	Luke 15	(45)	Exodus 24
(16)	Luke 16	(46)	1 st Thessalonians 1
(17)	Luke 17	(47)	1 st Thessalonians 2
(18)	Luke 18	(48)	1 st Thessalonians 3
(19)	Luke 19	(49)	1 st Thessalonians 4
(20)	Luke 20	(50)	1 st Thessalonians 5
(21)	Luke 21	(51)	Revelation 1
(22)	Luke 22	(52)	Revelation 2
(23)	Luke 23	(53)	Revelation 3
(24)	Luke 24	(54)	Revelation 4
(25)	Psalms 1-3	(55)	Revelation 5
(26)	Psalms 4-6		
(27)	Psalms 7-8		
(28)	Psalms 9		
(29)	Psalms 10-11		
(30)	Psalms 12-15		

APPENDIX B**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE – D**

(1)	John 1	(31)	Psalms 21-22
(2)	John 2	(32)	Proverbs 1
(3)	John 3	(33)	Proverbs 2
(4)	John 4	(34)	Proverbs 3
(5)	John 5	(35)	Proverbs 4
(6)	John 6	(36)	Proverbs 5
(7)	John 7	(37)	Proverbs 6
(8)	John 8	(38)	Proverbs 7
(9)	John 9	(39)	Proverbs 8
(10)	John 10	(40)	Proverbs 9
(11)	John 11	(41)	Exodus 20
(12)	John 12	(42)	Exodus 21
(13)	John 13	(43)	Exodus 22
(14)	John 14	(44)	Exodus 23
(15)	John 15	(45)	Exodus 24
(16)	John 16	(46)	1 st Thessalonians 1
(17)	John 17	(47)	1 st Thessalonians 2
(18)	John 18	(48)	1 st Thessalonians 3
(19)	John 19	(49)	1 st Thessalonians 4
(20)	John 20	(50)	1 st Thessalonians 5
(21)	John 21	(51)	Revelation 1
(22)	Psalms 1-3	(52)	Revelation 2
(23)	Psalms 4-6	(53)	Revelation 3
(24)	Psalms 7-8	(54)	Revelation 4
(25)	Psalms 9	(55)	Revelation 5
(26)	Psalms 10-11		
(27)	Psalms 12-15		
(28)	Psalms 16-17		
(29)	Psalms 18		
(30)	Psalms 19-20		

APPENDIX C**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE (NEW TESTAMENT) ²****(ALSO, PSALM 119 AND PROVERBS)**

(1-21)	The Gospel of John 1-21	(133-138)	Galatians 1-6
(22)	Psalms 119:1-8	(139)	Psalms 119:49-56
(23)	Proverbs 1	(140)	Proverbs 9
(24-51)	Acts 1-28	(141-146)	Ephesians 1-6
(52)	Psalms 119:9-16	(147)	Psalms 119:57-64
(53)	Proverbs 2	(148)	Proverbs 10
(54)	Proverbs 3	(149)	Proverbs 11
(55-70)	Romans 1-16	(150-153)	Philippians 1-4
(71)	Psalms 119:17-24	(154)	Psalms 119:65-72
(72)	Proverbs 4	(155)	Proverbs 12
(73-88)	1 st Corinthians 1-16	(156-159)	Colossians 1-4
(89)	Psalms 119:25-32	(160)	Psalms 119:73-80
(90)	Proverbs 5	(161)	Proverbs 13
(91-103)	2 nd Corinthians 1-13	(162-166)	1 st Thessalonians 1-5
(104)	Psalms 119:33-40	(167-169)	2 nd Thessalonians 1-3
(105)	Proverbs 6	(170)	Psalms 119:81-88
(106)	Proverbs 7	(171)	Proverbs 14
		(172)	Proverbs 15
(107-130)	The Gospel of Luke 1-24	(173-188)	The Gospel of Mark 1-16
(131)	Psalms 119:41-48	(189)	Psalms 119:89-96
(132)	Proverbs 8	(190)	Proverbs 16

(191-196)	1 st Timothy 1-6	(235-262)	The Gospel of Matthew 1-28
(197)	Psalms 119:97-104	(263)	Psalms 119:137-144
(198)	Proverbs 17	(264)	Proverbs 24
		(265)	Proverbs 25
(199-202)	2 nd Timothy 1-4	(266-270)	1 st Peter 1-5
(203)	Psalms 119:105-112	(271-273)	2 nd Peter 1-3
(204)	Proverbs 18	(274)	Psalms 119:145-152
(205)	Proverbs 19	(275)	Proverbs 26
(206-208)	Titus 1-3	(276-280)	1 st John 1-5
(209)	Philemon 1	(281)	2 nd John 1
(210)	Psalms 119:113-120	(282)	Psalms 119:153-160
(211)	Proverbs 20	(283)	Proverbs 27
		(284)	Proverbs 28
(212-224)	Hebrews 1-13	(285)	3 rd John 1
(225)	Psalms 119:121-128	(286)	Jude 1
(226)	Proverbs 21	(287)	Psalms 119:161-168
(227)	Proverbs 22	(288)	Proverbs 29
(228-232)	James 1-5	(289-310)	Revelation 1-22
(233)	Psalms 119:129-136	(311)	Psalms 119:169-176
(234)	Proverbs 23	(312)	Proverbs 30
		(313)	Proverbs 31

² With each New Testament book, you *may* want to limit your reading to *one chapter per day*. This will give you extra time to contemplate and pray through each passage you read.

If you decide to read at that pace, this schedule will take **313 days** (~ **one year**) to complete.

APPENDIX D**A DAILY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE (OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS) ³**

(1)	Psalms 1; John 1:1-18	(317-332)	Romans 1-16
(2)	John 1:19-51	(333)	Psalms 33, 36
(3-22)	John 2-21	(334)	Proverbs 7
(23)	Psalms 2, 4, 5	(335)	Psalms 53
(24-73)	Genesis 1-50	(336-356)	Judges 1-21
(74)	Psalms 6, 7, 8	(357)	Psalms 38, 39
(75)	Proverbs 1	(358-362)	1 st John 1-5
(76)	Proverbs 2	(363)	Psalms 40
(77)	Psalms 10	(364)	Psalms 41, 42
(78-117)	Exodus 1-40	(365)	Proverbs 8
(118)	Psalms 9	(366)	Psalms 73
(119-146)	Acts 1-28	(367-369)	Ruth 1-3
(147)	Psalms 13, 15, 16	(370)	Ruth 4; Psalms 43
(148)	Psalms 19, 23	(371)	Proverbs 9
(149)	Proverbs 3	(372-395)	Luke 1-24
(150)	Psalms 12; Leviticus 1	(396)	Psalms 20
(151-176)	Leviticus 2-27	(397)	Psalms 44, 46
(177)	Psalms 22	(398)	Proverbs 10
(178-190)	Hebrews 1-13	(399-417)	1 st Samuel 1-19
(191)	Psalms 18	(418)	Psalms 11, 59
(192)	Proverbs 4	(419-420)	1 st Samuel 20-21
(193)	Psalms 14; Num. 1:1-23	(421)	Psalms 56, 34
(194)	Numbers 1:24-54	(422)	1 st Samuel 22
(195-228)	Numbers 2-35	(423)	Psalms 57, 142, 52
(229)	Numbers 36; Psalms 24	(424)	1 st Samuel 23
(230-245)	1 st Corinthians 1-16	(425)	Psalms 63, 54
(246)	Psalms 25	(426)	1 st Samuel 24
(247)	Psalms 26, 27	(427)	Psalms 35
(248)	Proverbs 5	(428)	1 st Samuel 25
(249)	Psalms 37	(429)	Psalms 17
(250-283)	Deuteronomy 1-34	(430-435)	1 st Samuel 26-31
(284-287)	2 nd Timothy 1-4	(436-439)	Colossians 1-4
(288)	Psalms 28, 29	(440)	Proverbs 11
(289)	Psalms 31	(441-448)	2 nd Samuel 1-8
(290)	Proverbs 6	(449)	Psalms 60
(291)	Psalms 49	(450-453)	2 nd Samuel 9-12
(292-315)	Joshua 1-24	(454)	Psalms 51
(316)	Psalms 32	(455-458)	2 nd Samuel 13-16

(459)	Psalm 3	(681)	Psalms 21, 79
(460-467)	2 nd Samuel 17-24	(682)	Psalm 80
(468-473)	1 st Timothy 1-6	(683)	Proverbs 19
(474)	Proverbs 12	(684)	Psalm 119:65-80
(475)	Psalm 94	(685-726)	Job 1-42
(476-497)	1 st Kings 1-22	(727)	Psalm 78
(498-510)	2 nd Corinthians 1-13	(728-732)	1 st Peter 1-5
(511)	Psalms 47, 48	(733)	Proverbs 20
(512)	Proverbs 13	(734)	Psalm 119:81-96
(513)	Psalm 112; 2 nd Kings 1	(735-745)	Ecclesiastes 1-11
(514-537)	2 nd Kings 2-25	(746)	Ecclesiastes 12; Psalm 81
(538)	Psalm 50	(747-754)	Song of Solomon 1-8
(539)	3 rd John 1	(755)	Psalms 82, 83
(540)	Psalm 55	(756)	Psalm 84
(541)	Psalms 58, 61	(757-760)	Philippians 1-4
(542)	Proverbs 14	(761)	Psalm 85
(543-563)	1 st Chronicles 1-21	(762)	Psalms 86, 87
(564)	Psalm 30	(763)	Proverbs 21
(565-572)	1 st Chronicles 22-29	(764-800)	Isaiah 1-37
(573)	Psalms 62, 64	(801)	Psalm 75
(574)	Proverbs 15	(802-830)	Isaiah 38-66
(575)	Psalm 119:1-16; 2 nd Chronicles 1	(831)	Psalm 45
(576-610)	2 nd Chronicles 2-36	(832)	Psalm 88
(611)	Psalms 65, 66	(833)	Proverbs 22
(612)	2 nd John 1; Psalm 67	(834-861)	Matthew 1-28
(613)	Psalm 68	(862)	Psalm 72
(614)	Proverbs 16	(863)	Psalm 90
(615)	Psalm 119:17-32; Ezra 1	(864)	Proverbs 23
(616-624)	Ezra 2-10	(865)	Psalm 119:97-112
(625)	Psalm 69	(866-917)	Jeremiah 1-52
(626-630)	Ephesians 1-5	(918)	Psalm 89
(631)	Ephesians 6; Psalm 70	(919-921)	2 nd Peter 1-3
(632)	Proverbs 17	(922)	Psalm 91
(633)	Psalm 119:33-48; Nehemiah 1	(923)	Proverbs 24
(634-645)	Nehemiah 2-13	(924)	Psalm 119:113-128
(646)	Psalm 71	(925-929)	Lamentations 1-5
(647-649)	Titus 1-3	(930)	Psalms 92, 93
(650)	Psalm 74	(931-934)	James 1-4
(651)	Psalm 76	(935)	James 5; Psalm 95
(652)	Proverbs 18	(936)	Psalms 96, 97
(653)	Psalm 119:49-64	(937)	Proverbs 25
(654-663)	Esther 1-10	(938)	Psalm 119:129-144
(664)	Psalm 77	(939-986)	Ezekiel 1-48
(665-680)	Mark 1-16	(987)	Psalms 98, 99, 100

(988)	Jude 1	(1073-1079)	Micah 1-7
(989)	Psalms 102	(1080)	Psalms 117, 118
(990)	Proverbs 26	(1081)	Psalms 120; Nahum 1
(991)	Psalms 119:145-160	(1082-1083)	Nahum 2-3
(992-1003)	Daniel 1-12	(1084)	Psalms 121, 122
(1004)	Psalms 101, 103	(1085)	Psalms 123, 124, 126
(1005-1025)	Revelation 1-21	(1086-1087)	Habakkuk 1-2
(1026)	Revelation 22; Psalm 110	(1088)	Habakkuk 3; Psalm 129
(1027)	Psalm 104	(1089)	Psalms 130, 131, 132
(1028)	Proverbs 27	(1090-1095)	Galatians 1-6
(1029)	Psalm 119:161-176; Hosea 1	(1096)	Psalms 133, 134, 135
(1030-1042)	Hosea 2-14	(1097)	Proverbs 30
(1043)	Philemon 1	(1098)	Psalm 128; Zephaniah 1
(1044)	Psalm 105	(1099-1100)	Zephaniah 2-3
(1045)	Proverbs 28	(1101)	Psalm 136
(1046)	Psalm 125; Joel 1	(1102)	Psalm 137; Haggai 1
(1047-1048)	Joel 2-3	(1103)	Haggai 2
(1049)	Psalm 106	(1104)	Psalms 138, 139
(1050-1058)	Amos 1-9	(1105-1118)	Zechariah 1-14
(1059)	Psalm 107	(1119)	Psalm 144
(1060)	Obadiah 1; Psalm 108	(1120)	Psalms 140, 141
(1061)	Psalm 109	(1121-1123)	Malachi 1-3
(1062-1064)	2 nd Thessalonians 1-3	(1124)	Malachi 4; Psalm 143
(1065)	Psalms 111, 113, 114	(1125)	Psalm 145
(1066)	Proverbs 29	(1126)	Psalm 146; 1 st Thessalonians 1
(1067)	Psalm 127; Jonah 1	(1127-1130)	1 st Thessalonians 2-5
(1068-1070)	Jonah 2-4	(1131)	Psalm 147
(1071)	Psalm 115	(1132)	Psalms 148, 149, 150
(1072)	Psalm 116	(1133)	Proverbs 31

3 With each Old and New Testament book, you *may* want to limit your reading to *one chapter per day*. This will give you extra time to contemplate and pray through each passage you read.

If you decide to read at that pace, this schedule will take **1,133 days (~ 3.6 years)** to complete.

APPENDIX E**THE LIABILITY OF BIBLE STUDY**

taken from the website, *Steward of Truth Publications*
www.stewardoftruth.com
 archived blog, "Something to Consider from Luke 8"
 (June 27th, 2018)

Bible study is risky business. It demands a response. Bible knowledge will produce either a joyous reward or a grievous loss depending on whether we are doers of God's Word or mere hearers. That is why we should

"Take care how (we) listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him." (Luke 8:18)

- "Whoever has" the resolve (through faith in the Spirit of God) to obey the will of God,
- the Holy Spirit will increase his *capacity to understand* and his *motivation to apply* even more of God's Word.

That is, because of his faithful stewardship of the Master's will, the Master will entrust him with even greater responsibilities (and honor) and will cause his spiritual effectiveness to flourish.

- But "whoever does *not* have" the resolve to obey the will of God,
- the Holy Spirit will decrease his *capacity to understand* and his *motivation to apply* the Scriptures.

That is, because he is an unfaithful steward of his Master's will, the Master will not entrust him with any more responsibilities (or honor) but, instead, will allow his spiritual effectiveness to fade.

He will *become* "dull of hearing." (Hebrews 5:11)

Bible study is risky business because it makes the reader liable. What he learns, he is responsible for.

Therefore, it is highly important that you and I are in God's Word. But even more important is this:

Is God's Word in me?
 What am I doing with the Truth I already know?

APPENDIX F**THE ETERNAL INVESTMENT OF BIBLE STUDY**

taken from the website, *Steward of Truth Publications*
www.stewardoftruth.com
archived blog, "Something to Consider from Luke 20"
(August 15th, 2019)

"If you could go back in time to observe just one historical event, what would it be?"

This is one of the ice-breaker questions we use in our small groups; and over the years some interesting answers have surfaced. Some were more "American" in nature: "the signing of the Declaration of Independence" ... "the Battle at Gettysburg." Others were more personal in nature: "the day my mother and father met." And, of course, many were Biblical in nature: "creation" ... "the parting of the Red Sea" ... "the Crucifixion and Resurrection" (being the most common answer).

Certainly, all those events would be fascinating to witness. Still, another event I would add to that list would be to observe the life of Jesus when He was growing up. It would be interesting to watch how His parents related to their perfect Child ... and how His younger "half siblings" responded to their perfect Brother. ("Why doesn't Jesus ever get in trouble!") Did He play games with others His age; or was most of His free time spent reading the Scriptures in Nazareth's synagogue? Perhaps most of His life – both at home and around town – was lived in the background, not calling attention to Himself.

Jesus, of course, did not start out as a fully developed adult male. We are told that the Son of God was clothed in humanity as a developing Fetus in Mary's uterus (Luke 1:31). We also read that as He matured from childhood to adulthood, He "kept **increasing** in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52). That is, Jesus went through all the mental and physical stages of human development ... and He did so **without sinning**.

These stages of human development suggest the possibility that there was a time – during His infancy and early childhood – that a very young Jesus was not aware that He was Israel's long-awaited Messiah. (It is unlikely that the mind of the newborn King, lying in Bethlehem's manger, had developed to that point.) But certainly, by the age of 12 He knew (Luke 2:42-49). Had Joseph and Mary told Him? Or did they wait for "an angel of the Lord" or the Spirit of God Himself to do so? And was this revelation gradual or in a moment of time? We do not know. But by whatever means His Divine status and calling was revealed to Him, can you imagine what that must have been like ... to come to the realization that all the Messianic prophecies referred to Himself!

And what was it like for this young Teenager to attend synagogue every Sabbath, listening to the rabbi read passages foretelling of His coming Crucifixion and eventual reign over the nations, knowing (*secretly*) that He was that promised One! What was it like for Him to use a hammer and nails six days a week, week after week, year after year, knowing such passages as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53? (We should not let that fact escape our notice. Every day of His life, while working in Joseph's carpentry shop, our Savior was reminded of the death that lay ahead for Him. And yet, He remained faithful to the will of God His Father.)

Luke chapter 20 also adds to our understanding of Jesus' younger life. From this chapter we can see that, while growing up, He spent hours upon hours immersing Himself in the Scriptures. Perhaps He went to the synagogue each day to read from the scrolls. Perhaps he spent a lot of time with the rabbi, asking him questions, listening to him teach. That is what we find Him doing in Jerusalem when He was twelve years old (Luke 2:46). Jesus invested 30+ years of His life cultivating His mind in knowledge and wisdom. And He used the Jewish Scriptures (what we call the Old Testament) to do so.

When His public ministry finally began, Jesus would draw from that insight and understanding considerably. After years of saturating His mind with Truth, He was ready to explain God's Word to those who were hungry to receive It ... and to reprove those who were just as determined to reject It. In His teaching Jesus was able to use reason, cite current events, create illustrations (parables) and quote from rabbinic commentaries. But much of His instruction included quotes from the inspired Scriptures.

Chief priests, scribes and elders: "We do not accept Your authority or Your teachings. Why should we? From Whom did You receive Your message?" (20:1-19)

- His final answer came in the form of a parable (using a vineyard), followed by a prophetic passage: "Because I am the Son of the Father, I was sent with His authority. And I have come to claim My Kingdom. But you have already shown that you will not submit to My authority, just as it is written: 'The Stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief Cornerstone.'" (**Psalm 118:22**)

Sadducees: "We intend to discredit the integrity of Your teaching; and we will do so using the doctrine of the resurrection. There is no such thing (as You say there is)." (20:27-40)

- "It is you Sadducees who are mistaken. Did not Yahweh say to Moses, 'I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'? (**Exodus 3:6**) He did not say 'I WAS their God' but 'I STILL AM their God.' Contrary to what *you* teach, there *is* life after death. You do not know the Scriptures (the exchange at the burning bush), nor do you understand the power of God (to raise the dead)."

(Did you notice that the Master Teacher used the mere tense of a verb to prove the resurrection!)

Jesus then goes on the offensive. Through the vineyard parable, He had claimed to be the Messiah. Now He takes that assertion a major step forward: He states that He, the Messiah, is God Himself ... fully Man and fully God. And once again, He uses the Scriptures to do so.

- First, He quotes **Psalm 110:1**: "The LORD says to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.' " Then Jesus does to His antagonists what they tried to do to Him ... He silences them: "How can the Messiah be both David's Son and his Lord at the same time?" (20:41-44)

By quoting just a few verses to answer His critics, Jesus claims to be both Israel's Messiah and Israel's God ... the one true God ... "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" ... the "I AM" of the burning bush ... Yahweh.

Without question, Jesus had an incredible mind! But He had more than that. According to Luke 20 (and, indeed, throughout the four Gospels), Jesus had an extraordinary command of the Scriptures. This suggests that, before His public ministry began, Jesus poured over the scrolls in Nazareth's synagogue, probably from the time He first learned to read.

- So, how can our lives reflect more accurately, more fully, more consistently the Living Word of God? By investing time in the written Word of God.
- And how can we have an eternal impact on the lives around us? By saturating our minds with the Scriptures.
- And how can our lives become more stable ... more composed ... more content ... more joyful ... more at rest? Through a daily reading of the Bible.

Not by reading books *about* the Bible but the Bible itself. Most surely, we need to consult the counsel of godly men and women who, themselves, have been instructed over the centuries by the Spirit of God through the Word of God. But if we are so busy that we have time for only one read, then let us lay aside our devotionals and our small group Bible study workbooks and our commentaries and our online sermons and our blogs (including the ones on this website); and let our first and foremost read be the God-breathed, life-changing Word of God.

To do so is to make a daily investment in eternity itself.

APPENDIX G**EVALUATION OF THE COURSE*****THE PLEASURE OF MY FATHER'S FELLOWSHIP***

Now your group leader would like to hear from you. What did you think of this study?

Please take some time to answer the following questions.

THE COURSE

- (1) I understand how to write a *key thought* from a passage of Scripture. (Please check one.)

Definitely	()
Yes, for the most part	()
Somewhat, but I am still unclear about it	()
Not at all	()

- (2) I understand how to write a *personal, specific, current application* based on my key thought. (Please check one.)

Definitely	()
Yes, for the most part	()
Somewhat, but I am still unclear about it	()
Not at all	()

THE SEMINAR FORMAT

The seminar format your small group followed these past few months was designed to enhance your growth in fellowship with the Lord and with one another, as well as to make the most of your time. Please evaluate each aspect of the seminar format by commenting on

- a) what you *enjoyed* or *appreciated* about this aspect and *why*
- b) what you think should be *improved* (added or removed) and *how*

(3) Your *fellowship* at the beginning of (and after) each class

(a) _____

(b) _____

(4) The brief *administration* at the beginning of each class

(a) _____

(b) _____

(5) Your discussion of the assigned *reading materials*

(a) _____

(b) _____

(6) The “roundtable” discussion of your *key thoughts*

(a) _____

(b) _____

(7) The “roundtable” discussion of your *applications*

(a) _____

(b) _____

(8) Your *prayers* for one another, both in and out of class

(a) _____

(b) _____

THE FACILITATOR

(9) Do you have any constructive suggestions on what your teacher could do to improve his teaching skills?

THE GROUP

(10) Do you have any constructive suggestions on how the members of this small group could better relate to one another (for example, in the way we treat one another ... or in the way we share personal issues ... or in our manner of communication, etc.)?

(11) I believe that my accountability to this group helped motivate me to be more consistent in my personal times of fellowship with the Lord.

Definitely Somewhat No

YOURSELF

(12) I have begun to think about what I read from the Scriptures.

Definitely Somewhat No

(13) My personal times of prayer have been strengthened through this method of meditating on the Scriptures.

Definitely Somewhat No

(14) My obedience to God’s Word has become more deliberate through this approach to application.

Definitely Somewhat No

(15) Please look on page 16 of your materials. For one of your first assignments, you were asked to record your answer to this question: “What do you hope to gain from this course, *The Pleasure of My Father’s Fellowship*? Please write below

- a) how you answered this question
- b) **if** you believe this study did or did not fulfill your expectations
- c) **how** the course did or did not fulfill your expectations

(a) _____

(next page)

(b) _____

(c) _____

(16) If I took this course over again, I would do the following differently:

(17) I am planning to use what I learned in this course, *The Pleasure of My Father's Fellowship*, in my *personal* times with the Lord. (Please check one.)

Most of it (90% - 100%) ()

A good bit of it (60% - 80%) ()

Some of it (20% - 50%) ()

Very little, if any, of it (0% - 10%) ()

(18) If you can use what you have learned with your *family* or in a *ministry*, how do you plan to do so? (Family devotions? Meeting with others to discuss the Scriptures? A Sunday School class? A home Bible study?)
