

Life on the Vine

By

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<http://web.mac.com/smpuckster/Site/Blog/Blog.html>

Introduction: Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit in Our Church Family

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. (Matthew 7:16-20)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

1. Being Known by Your Fruit
Matthew 7:16-20 and Galatians 5:22-25
2. Dying on the Vine
John 15:1-2 and Luke 13:6-9
3. Cultivating Love in the Midst of Selfishness
John 15:8-10 and Luke 6:32-36

4. Cultivating Joy in the Midst of Desire
John 15:8-11 and John 16:21-22
5. Cultivating Peace in the Midst of Fragmentation
Romans 14:15-17, 19 and James 3:16-18
6. Cultivating Patience in the Midst of Productivity
Romans 8:22-25 and James 5:7-11
7. Cultivating Kindness in the Midst of Self-Sufficiency
Hosea 11:3-4 and Luke 6:33-36
8. Cultivating Goodness in the Midst of Self-Help
Ephesians 5:8-11 and Matthew 12:33, 35
9. Cultivating Faithfulness in the Midst of Impermanence
Luke 8:15 and Hebrews 10:23
10. Cultivating Gentleness in the Midst of Aggression
James 1:19-21 and Galatians 5:25-6:1
11. Cultivating Self-Control in the Midst of Addiction
Luke 8:14 and Titus 3:3-5

Lesson 2 - Being Known by Our Fruit

Your Challenge: **Live like Christ in the midst of a culture like ours.**

For this class you need: **A good study bible like the Life Application Bible (New International Version) or the NIV Study Bible. You can usually find these Bibles at Walmart , Sam's, Family Christian Store or Barnes and Nobles.**

Scriptural Foundation:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. (Matthew 7:16-20)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. (John 15:1-2)

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

"'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" (Luke 13:6-9)

Reading for those following in *Life On the Vine* by Philip Kenneson: Introduction and Chapter One

Growth in the Spirit Vs. Culture

Growth in the Spirit

Jesus commands his followers to bear fruit (John 15:16). Christians have often understood this to mean evangelism—getting others to follow Jesus. But we all know that you can't give to someone else what you don't already have. Bearing fruit starts with you! You can't share fruit until you bear fruit.

The image of fruit, vines, and vineyards is found throughout the Bible. Who can forget the imagery of Psalm 1:3 that compares those who do the right thing to trees planted by streams of water that bear fruit and never die?

In Galatians 6:8, Paul reminds us that we reap what we sow. Just a few verses earlier he lists for us the fruits of the Spirit.

The interesting thing about farming metaphors is the cooperation between grace and effort, gift and work. The farmer can plant the seed, but he can't make it grow. He can cultivate the plant, but he can't make the sun shine, or the rain fall. He is very dependent on God's grace and gifts in this regard.

The farmer knows that growth is the first gift of God and every Christians should know that growth in the Spirit is also the gift of God. Yes, you will discover in this study of the fruits of the Spirit that you must till, plant, cultivate, fertilize, mulch, stake, prune, irrigate and harvest, but God through His Spirit makes it all possible.

Culture

Culture in a simple definition is a particular way of life, whether of a specific people, group, or period. Culture is a set of expectations that guide and shape a people's life. Cultures are distinguished from one another by those shared practices, convictions, institutions and narratives that order and give shape to the lives of a particular group of people.

Our culture is so ingrained in us that we never really notice its uniqueness or its particulars. However, when you travel to another part of the world you are made very aware of the culture and how it is different from your culture.

Since our culture differs so much from the way God wants us to live, that difference should be noticeable in every Christian's life and habits. The fruits of your life should be different from the fruits of the lives of those who live in the world.

1. Give your opinions and your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the following statements:

- λ Churches in the United States are more spiritual than they have ever been.
 - λ Churches in the United States are seriously ill.
 - λ Churches in the United States are seriously lukewarm.
2. How can you evaluate the health or lack of health in a church family?
 3. According to the Scriptural foundations for our lesson, what does nature teach us about trees, vines, and fruit?
 4. According to Galatians 5, what are the signs, "fruits", of a healthy church family?
 5. Why do you think these nine fruits were chosen?
 6. What fruit or fruits most describe your life?
 7. What fruit or fruits do you need to allow the Spirit to cultivate in your life?
 8. Is the fruit that the church family is bearing the fruit of the Spirit?
 9. How can our church family encourage these fruits to be produced in the lives of each person?
 10. Share some specific examples with each other as to how one might express these fruits of the Spirit in the family, with friends, or at work this week.

Action Item for this week

- λ Select one fruit of the Spirit.
- λ Pray for God to give you direction and courage that the Spirit might produce this fruit in your life.
- λ Choose a specific way to express this way of living in your family, with a friend, or at work.
- λ Share what you learned or what happened with your class next week.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on each fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Think about how you can make these fruits a part of your life.
- λ Consider beginning each day by asking God to give you an open heart to His Spirit to produce these fruits in you life.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Galatians 5:22-25.

Tuesday

- λ Devote some time to reflecting on the environment/culture you live in.
- λ How is your life like the environment/culture in which you live?
- λ How is your life different from the environment/culture in which you live?
- λ Can you think of any actions you can take to be more like Christ?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Matthew 7:16-20.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ Set aside some time to evaluate honestly what influence your environment/culture has on your relationship with God and others like friends and family.
- λ Have you ever found yourself thinking, "This is the way I am. I will never be any different?"
- λ What would Jesus say to you about this way of thinking?
- λ What would happened if you and others you trust plowed the soil of your life and planted some good seeds?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Luke 13:6-9.

Friday

- λ Reflect on what nature teaches you about trees, vines, and fruit.
- λ What might happen if you realized that Jesus is the vine and that you are one of his branches?
- λ Reflect on the promise of Jesus in John 15:7. What does this mean for your life?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through John 15:1-8.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Mark 12:28-30

Galatians 5:14

1 Corinthians 13:13

Galatians 5:6

Colossians 3:12-14

Romans 5:5

- 4. How do these verses describe God’s love for you?
 - A. Romans 5:8 and Ephesians 2:4-7
 - B. Romans 8:31-39
 - C. Isaiah 53 and Acts 3:18, 8:30-35; 17:3; 26:3, 23
 - D. Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 6:27-36 and Luke 10:25-37

5. What is the recurring theme of these verses?

Luke 10:37 1 John 4:19-21 Ephesians 5:1-2
 1 John 3:16-18 1 Peter 2:20-25

Name Three Obstacles to the Life of Love

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

How Can You Cultivate Love?

- 1. _____

Galatians 5:13

2. _____
1 Corinthians 11:17-34 and Matthew 5:23-24
3. _____
Philippians 2:1-11

Action Item for this week

- λ Pray for God to give you direction and courage that the Spirit might produce in your life the kind of love you have studied about.
- λ Choose a specific way to express this kind of love in your family, with a friend, or at work.
- λ Share what you learned or what happened with your class next week.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on the proportion of time you devote each day to yourself, your concerns and your agenda, compared with how much you devote to the needs and concerns of others.
- λ Consider beginning each day by asking God to give you eyes to see the needs of others, even if this means setting aside your own agenda and preoccupations.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Luke 10:25-37

Tuesday

- λ Devote some time to reflecting on your personal relationships and the ways that you view them.
- λ Have you ever found yourself evaluating an existing or potential relationship by engaging in a crude form of cost-benefit analysis—what am I going to get out of this relationship?
- λ Do you think relationships made in this way are capable of nurturing God's love?

- λ Can you think of any practices you engage in that encourage you to view other people as objects for your own pleasure or benefit?
- λ Is it possible that much of the pleasure gained from talk shows, reality shows, tell-all memoirs, pornography, and web cams is related to the fact that such pleasure is secured from a safe distance, without risk of human involvement?
- λ Are you consuming as entertainment another person's troubles, body or life?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Romans 12

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ Set aside some time to evaluate honestly whether our cultural habit of viewing most of life through the lens of self-interest has affected the way you view your relationship with God.
- λ Have you ever found yourself thinking of your relationship with God or His family in terms of self-interest?
- λ Have you ask, what am I getting from my relationship with God or His people?
- λ Have you ever been tempted to think about the Christian life primarily in terms of "what's in it for me?"
- λ Have you ever ended your relationship with a church family because the "cost" of continued involvement was too high?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Philippians 2:1-11.

Friday

- λ Do you find yourself devoting considerable energy to "keeping score" with your friends (How much did they spend on my birthday?)
- λ What might happen if you began to think of your possessions and your relationships in terms of stewardship?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Lesson 3 - Joy

Your Challenge: **Take delight in something or someone beyond yourself**

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:8-11)

A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. (John 16:21-22)

1. How would you define joy?

2. How would the Bible's description of joy and the world's description of joy be different?

3. What do each of these verses teach us about joy?

<u>Recovery of what's lost=rejoicing</u>	<u>Teamwork brings joy</u>
Luke 15:6b-7; 9-10; 23-24;	John 4:36
32	

<u>Healing brings joy</u>	<u>Salvation brings joy</u>
Acts 8:8	Acts 8:39

Faith brings joy
Acts 16:34

Missions brings joy
Acts 15:3

Philippians 4:1

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6

Joy in Suffering
Hebrews 12:2

Joy in trials
James 1:2-4

Name Three Obstacles to the Life of Joy

1. Manufacturing desire.
2. Craving more.
3. Anxiety and fear.

Cultivating Joy

- λ Rejoicing in worship.
Psalm 63:1-7; Psalm 68:3-4; Habakkuk 3:17-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9
- λ Nurturing contentment.
Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:6-9
- λ Learning from the past.
Romans 15:4
- λ Enjoying children.
Mark 9:36-37 and Mark 10:13-16

Action Item for this week

- λ Pray for God to give you direction and courage that the Spirit might produce in your life the kind of joy you have studied about.
- λ Consider your posture when you worship. Do your facial expressions, hands, and body show that you delight in worshipping God?
- λ Based on your study this week pick someone that you take delight in and share your delight with that person or pick something that gives you great joy and share that with someone, perhaps even someone who might not be a Christian and who could be touched by what you share.
- λ If you feel it is appropriate, share what happened with your class next week.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on the way you begin most days. What typically happens in the first ten minutes of your day? In the first hour? Do your mind and your energies turn immediately to the pressures of the day ahead? If so, joy may have a difficult time gaining a foothold in your life.
- λ Take a few moments each day this week after you first open your eyes, before you get out of bed to give thanks to God for simple pleasures and joys.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Psalm 5.

Tuesday

- λ Make a list of all of your deepest desires, being as honest with yourself as you can.
- λ Next, try to discern how you came to each desire.
- λ Where your desires seem appropriate, give thanks to God for instilling right desires in your heart.

- λ Where your desires seem inappropriate, ask God to direct your longings in another direction.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Psalm 23.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ Many of the desires that we have are instilled or at least reinforced by television, advertising, movies, the internet, music or other media. Think about the unhealthy desires that these different media can encourage.
- λ How contented and joyful are you after exposure to these media?
- λ Choose one of these media that you take delight in and instead of exposing yourself to that media choose another activity like going for a walk, going for a bike ride, or visiting someone in a nursing home or hospital. Do this activity with a friend or family member if you like.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Timothy 6:6-19.

Friday

- λ Take some time to view the world through a child's eyes.
- λ How long has it been since you have chosen to have regular and sustained interaction with your children?
- λ If you're children are grown or you don't have children, consider volunteering your services to a school, your church family, or a neighbor.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Mark 9:33-37 and Mark 10:13-16.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Life in the Kingdom/Life on the Vine Joy

How are you doing? How are you doing?

We are working on Life in God's Kingdom, Life on the Vine—bringing what's up there down here as the Lord's Prayer describes it in Matthew 6:9-10, **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

The good news of the kingdom that Jesus and the apostles preached is not the minimum requirements to get into heaven, but living like heaven on this earth. When you live this way the fruits of the Spirit will grow and be cultivated in your lives.

Joy thoughts—when choose to follow Christ

Final reward/glorified

Tough part in-between

1 Peter 1:6-9

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Christianity is a life of painful joy. The Old Testament commands us to delight ourselves in the Lord (Psalm 37:4) and to worship the Lord with gladness (Psalm 100:2).

Jesus says, **Rejoice in that day and leap for joy**

because great is your reward in heaven (Luke 6:23), and he tells us, **I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete** (John 15:11).

The apostle Paul commands us, **Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** (Philippians 4:4). He tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). He told the Christians at Corinth that he was a worker with them for joy (2 Corinthians 1:24) and that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). He told the Philippians that he lived for the advancement and joy of their common faith (Philippians 1:25).

And so it is with the other writers of Scripture. The message is: Christianity is a life of tremendous and abiding joy.

Now Peter picks up this great theme in 1:6 and shows us two great reasons for joy, and in the process, why it is

painful joy.

Two reasons why Christians can be joyful

1. The promise of a great future

Let me just remind you of the first reason since that's what Peter does at the beginning of verse 6. He says, "In this you greatly rejoice." The word "this" refers to the first reason for great joy. It refers back to what we've seen in verses 3-5.

Verse 3: God caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Verse 4: God is keeping an inheritance for us in heaven that can't perish or spoil or fade.

Verse 5: God is keeping us for that inheritance.

There's an inheritance and there's an inheritor. And the first basis of our joy is that God is keeping both: he is keeping the inheritance perfect for us; and he is keeping

us in faith so that we will in fact not make shipwreck of our faith and lose the inheritance.

Then in verse 6 Peter says, "In THIS you greatly rejoice." The first reason for our joy is the great future God promises us and his unswerving commitment to keep it for us and us for it. In other words, our joy is based on the happiness of our future with God and the certainty that we will make it there. Christian joy is almost synonymous with Christian hope. That's why Peter says in verse 3 that we were born again into a living hope; then verses 4 and 5 describe the content of that hope; and then verse 6 begins, "in THIS you rejoice." In this you have living, vital, life-changing hope; and in this you rejoice. Our hope is our joy.

2. A design for our trials.

The second reason is that God has a design for our trials in this life. This is what verses 6 and 7 are about--

God's design for our trials.

But now don't misunderstand me. The second reason for joy is essentially the same as the first one, namely, hope. But the difference is this:

1) In verses 3-5 the point is that the inheritance is out there waiting for us imperishable and unfading, and that we are being kept for it, so that no matter what trials we face we can look beyond them to the sure future that is coming and take heart. It is going to be worth it all.

2) In verses 6-7 the point is different: namely, that the trials themselves have a part in getting us ready to enjoy the inheritance to the fullest possible measure. We don't just look beyond the trials to the sure hope; we look at God's design in the trials--and see how God is working the trials together for our good.

So Christianity is a life of tremendous joy first

because we have a great and fail-safe future to look forward to beyond all our trials, AND second because God has a design to increase our joy in that future by means of all our trials.

Let's look at this design in verses 6 and 7.

First, where do I get the idea that our trials are designed by God for our good?

Verse 7 gives us the answer. Peter makes it plain that Christian trials only happen if God wills them. In 1 Peter 3:17 he says, **It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.** You might suffer for doing what is right; you might not. The ultimate choice is God's. "If it is God's will." Or again in 4:19 he says, **So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**

In other words, Peter is teaching that the sovereign

will of God governs all the trials that happen to us and, therefore the design in them is not ultimately the design of evil men or the design of Satan (which are real enough!), but is a design of God.

So when Peter says in verse 6, **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials** he means, "If God deems it necessary."

But why would God do that? This leads us to the words "so that" in verse 7. This gives the reason why God would deem it necessary that we be trialed by various trials: **so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** What this verse does is spell out the design of our trials. The design is that our trials would refine the genuineness of our faith the way fire refines gold so that

when Christ comes back the quality of our faith would win praise and glory and honor.

So there is a design in your trials as a Christian. God wills them, and he does so for your good.

Now I know that this raises a painful and troubling question. We are not playing games here. We are talking about your life and my life this very day. Does God will the break up of your marriage? Does God will your cancer, your homosexual orientation, the rebellion of your child, the loss of your job, the threatening chaos in Russia and Congo and Somalia and Guinea? I will give you my answer, which I believe to be the Biblical one, based on texts like 1 Peter 3:17 and 4:19.

The answer is No, God does not will it, and Yes, he does. No, in the sense that he does not delight in pain for its own sake; he does not command sin or approve of sinning. But Yes, he does will that these things be, in the

sense that he could prevent any of those things but sometimes does not, but rather guides them, because of higher designs than the destructiveness of sin or the deceitfulness of Satan or the painfulness of suffering.

When Christians suffer for doing right, sin is happening to them. But 1 Peter 3:17 says that sometimes God wills that this happen. He does not endorse or approve sinning, but he can and does will that sinful acts come about for his own holy designs. When Christ was murdered on the cross, it was sin, but God willed that it happen: **Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,** (Isaiah 53:10).

And by that will we are saved.

Five elements of God's design in our trials

Now if there is a divine design in our trials, we must ask what that is. Because knowing this is a means of tremendous joy in and through our trials.

Peter mentions at least five elements of God's design in our trials.

1. In God's design, our grief is made up of various trials.

Verse 6b: **though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.** The point is that the variety of ways that we experience trials are great. So in God's design it is "necessary," he says, to use a wide range of trials. There is not just one kind of trial in view here. God paints with many colors. Many dark and many bright. And in the end the canvas of your life will be glorious, if you entrust your soul to a faithful Creator (4:19).

2. In God's design, my trials are brief.

Verse 6 again: **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer**

grief in all kinds of trials. A little while is very relative, isn't it. If you say, "He can hold his breath a long time," you mean two or three minutes. That's long for breath-holding. But if you say, "He's been a minister of the church for a long time, you mean perhaps 15 or 20 years."

So it is with the phrase "little while" in this verse. Compared to others and compared to a lifetime on earth, your trials may last a long time not a little. But compared to eternity--compared to the inheritance imperishable, undefiled, unfading kept in heaven for you--they are only for a little time. Peter shares James' perspective on this life: "You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away" (James 4:14). Compared to the length and greatness of the future God has planned for you, all the trials of this life are very little in deed (cf. 5:10).

3. In God's design, our trials give us grief.

They are trials. The word in verse 6, (**you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials**) means grieved, sorrowed. Mark this well. It's not double talk when Peter says, **In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief.** You are rejoicing though you are grieved. We know this is not a mistake, because Paul said he experienced this very thing. In 2 Corinthians 6:10 he says he lived as **sorrowful** (same word) **yet always rejoicing.**

In God's design for our trials there is a place for real, authentic grieving and trial. But this experience is fundamentally altered from the way the world experiences these things. We see a design in it all. And so our root stays planted even though the branches thrash in the wind. And the leaves remain green and the fruit keeps growing because our roots go down by the

stream of God's sovereign grace--and we trust him for a good design.

4. In God's design, our trials are like the fire that refines gold from its impurities.

Verse 7: **These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed** When gold is melted in the fire the impurities float to the top and can be removed. When the refining fire is over, the gold is even more valuable. So it is with your faith in God. You have faith. You trust his promises. But there are impurities in it. There are elements of murmuring and pessimism (I speak from painful experience). And there are tendencies to trust money and position and popularity, along side God--dirt mingled with the gold of faith.

These impurities in our faith hinder our fullest experience of the goodness and greatness of God. So God designs to refine our faith with the fires of trial and trial. His aim is that our faith be more pure and more genuine. That is, that it be more utterly dependent on him and not on things and other persons for our joy.

One of the best illustrations of how this works comes from the experience the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 1:8-9 Paul described this very refining design of God in his trial. **We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.**

God took away from Paul an ordinary prop of safety and let him feel an almost overwhelming sense of human abandonment. This was the fire of 1 Peter 1:7. Not because God didn't love Paul. But because God saw Paul's faith as gold worthy of refining.

5. Finally, in God's design, the result of this refining is that our faith will receive praise and honor and glory.

Verse 7: **that your faith . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed**

When Jesus appears in glory two things are going to happen. His glory will be magnificently reflected in the mirror of our faith. He will be the trusted one and the hoped-for one and the rejoiced-in one. So his glory will shine in our faith and hope and joy. And the more pure and refined the gold of our faith, the more clearly his

beauty and worth will be reflected.

But since God exalts all that exalts him, he will give praise and honor and glory to our faith. He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He will give us (as Peter says in 5:4) **the crown of glory that will never fade away.**

And we will see finally that the design of God in our trial has been the extraordinary joy of sharing in the very glory and praise and honor of God himself.

One Tin Soldier

Listen, children, to a story
That was written long ago,
'Bout a kingdom on a mountain
And the valley-folk below.

On the mountain was a treasure
Buried deep beneath the stone,
And the valley-people swore
They'd have it for their very own.

Go ahead and hate your neighbor,
Go ahead and cheat a friend.
Do it in the name of Heaven,
You can justify it in the end.
There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day,
On the bloody morning after....
One tin soldier rides away.

So the people of the valley
Sent a message up the hill,
Asking for the buried treasure,
Tons of gold for which they'd kill.

Came an answer from the kingdom,
"With our brothers we will share
All the secrets of our mountain,
All the riches buried there."

Go ahead and hate your neighbor,
Go ahead and cheat a friend.
Do it in the name of Heaven,
You can justify it in the end.

**There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day,
On the bloody morning after....
One tin soldier rides away.**

**Now the valley cried with anger,
"Mount your horses! Draw your sword!"
And they killed the mountain-people,
So they won their just reward.**

**Now they stood beside the treasure,
On the mountain, dark and red.
Turned the stone and looked beneath it...
"Peace on Earth" was all it said.**

**Go ahead and hate your neighbor,
Go ahead and cheat a friend.
Do it in the name of Heaven,
You can justify it in the end.
There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day,
On the bloody morning after....
One tin soldier rides away.**

**Go ahead and hate your neighbor,
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Come the judgment day,
On the bloody morning after....
One tin soldier rides away.**

**Life on the Vine: Peace
Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit in Our Church Family**

Your Challenge: Be an instrument of God's peace.

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (Romans 14:13-19)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peaceloving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:13-18)

1. How does the world define peace?

2. What Bible words are used to define peace?
3. Why would wholeness be a good word to describe what the Bible means by peace?
4. What is the way of peace in Isaiah 59:8?
5. What ideas are connected to peace in Isaiah 60:17-21 and Psalm 85:8-10?
6. What do these terms mean?
 - λ Gospel of peace – Ephesians 6:15
 - λ God of peace – Philippians 4:9
 - λ Lord of peace – 2 Thessalonians 3:16
7. How would you explain these verses in your own words to an unbeliever – Ephesians 2:13-22?
8. Describe a life that is lived in peace – Romans 12:14-19.

Obstacles to Peace

1. Dividing the world into _____ and _____ spheres.
2. Compartmentalizing _____ .
3. Defending our _____ .

4. Sanctioning _____ .

Cultivating Peace

λ Deepen our understanding of _____ .
Galatians 2:20; 3:26-27; & 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

λ _____ each other up!
Philippians 2:4-5; 1 Corinthians 6:7

λ _____ one another.
Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 12:11

λ _____ one another.
Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 18:23-35

Action Item for this week

λ So often our "lack of peace" is related to an issue of forgiveness. Search your soul this week and seek out any issues of "un-forgiveness."

λ Pray that God will give you an answer to this issue and help you "resolve" the issue in a way that gives him honor.

λ Reflect on someone who has shown you forgiveness. Offer a prayer of thanks for this person and, if appropriate, write them a note of thanks.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on the public and private side of your religious beliefs. Are you as open in public with your religious beliefs as you are in private? Why or Why not?
- λ Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' behavior related to his public and private life. Was his behavior significantly different in private than in public?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Galatians 2:11-21.

Tuesday

- λ Do you ever find yourself creating distinctly different identities as you move in different settings? (When you travel, for example, or when you visit online "chat" rooms?) What do you think accounts for this behavior?
- λ Is there a significant difference in your public and private behavior?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Matthew 15:1-20.

Wednesday

- λ Have you ever made a public profession of your faith? Why would a public profession of faith be important?
- λ What does baptism teach us about the body of Christ?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Thursday

- λ Think back on those instances in which you have heard "rights" language crop up in the church family. Do you think this language helped to resolve the matter, or do you think it made matters worse?
- λ Read and reflect on these two passages: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 and Philipians 2:1-11
- λ In your daily prayers, ask God to give you courage to apply these scriptures to your life.

Friday

λ (Easter) The resurrection of Jesus is all about bringing forgiveness, peace, and healing to your life.

λ Reflect on one part of your life that needs forgiveness, peace or healing.

λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Ephesians 2:13-22.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 4 - Peace

Your Challenge: Be an instrument of God's peace.

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (Romans 14:13-19)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peaceloving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:13-18)

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7. How would you explain these verses in your own words to an unbeliever – Ephesians 2:13-22?
8. Describe a life that is lived in peace – Romans 12:14-19.

Obstacles to Peace

1. Dividing the world into _____ and _____ spheres.
2. Compartmentalizing _____ .
3. Defending our _____ .

4. Sanctioning _____ .

Cultivating Peace

λ Deepen our understanding of _____ .
Galatians 2:20; 3:26-27; & 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

λ _____ each other up!
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λ _____ one another.
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Action Item for this week

λ So often our "lack of peace" is related to an issue of forgiveness. Search your soul this week and seek out any issues of "un-forgiveness."

λ Pray that God will give you an answer to this issue and help you "resolve" the issue in a way that gives him honor.

λ Reflect on someone who has shown you forgiveness. Offer a prayer of thanks for this person and, if appropriate, write them a note of thanks.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on the public and private side of your religious beliefs. Are you as open in public with your religious beliefs as you are in private? Why or Why not?
- λ Take a moment to reflect on Jesus' behavior related to his public and private life. Was his behavior significantly different in private than in public?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Galatians 2:11-21.

Tuesday

- λ Do you ever find yourself creating distinctly different identities as you move in different settings? (When you travel, for example, or when you visit online "chat" rooms?) What do you think accounts for this behavior?
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- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Matthew 15:1-20.

Wednesday

- λ Have you ever made a public profession of your faith? Why would a public profession of faith be important?
- λ What does baptism teach us about the body of Christ?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.

Thursday

- λ Think back on those instances in which you have heard "rights" language crop up in the church family. Do you think this language helped to resolve the matter, or do you think it made matters worse?
- λ Read and reflect on these two passages: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 and Philippians 2:1-11
- λ In your daily prayers, ask God to give you courage to apply these scriptures to your life.

Friday

λ (Easter) The resurrection of Jesus is all about bringing forgiveness, peace, and healing to your life.

λ Reflect on one part of your life that needs forgiveness, peace or healing.

λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Ephesians 2:13-22.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 5 - Patience

Your Challenge: **Slow down, smell the roses, be patient.**

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Romans 8:22-25)

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy. (James 5:7-11)

1. Give an example of a time when you were patient.

Give an example of a time when you were impatient.

2. How are each of these words related to patience?

Long-suffering	Even Tempered	Self-control
Endurance	Serenity	Perseverance

3. How does the Bible describe God in Psalm 103:8?
4. What advice does James give us in James 1:19-20?
5. What is the connection between God's patience and our repentance in 2 Peter 3:8-15?
6. What idea is closely connected to patience in this parable in Matthew 18:23-35?

Obstacles to Patience

1. Segmenting and regulating **TIME** .
2. Hoarding **TIME** .
3. Exalting **PRODUCTIVITY** .
4. Going **FASTER** .

Cultivating Patience

- λ **REMEMBERING** our story.

λ **RECKONING** time differently.

λ **EMBODYING** different rhythm.

Action Item for this week

λ In what area of your life are you experiencing the greatest amount of impatience?

λ Reflect on how much patience God has shown to you in your lifetime when you have rebelled against him, disappointed him, or refused to include him in “your” schedule.

λ Make an appointment with God. Write it on your calendar or place it in your computer/palm pilot calendar. At this time, ask God to forgive you for your impatience. Ask God to open your heart and eyes so you can see how, when, and/or where he wants you to be patient and long-suffering.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

λ Reflect on your own life during the past few days, considering those times when you have found yourself growing impatient. How do you think your understanding of time contributed to your impatience? Can you, for instance, think of times when your impatience and frustration was rooted in your conviction that your time was your own?

λ Can you recall times when you have grown impatient because people were not meeting your expectations or were not conforming to *your* timetable?

λ Read, meditate on, and pray through James 5:7-11.

Tuesday

- λ What's the difference in "investing your time" and "devoting your time" to someone?
- λ When you devote your time to someone you acknowledge that person's worth.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Romans 12:10 and 1 Corinthians 16:15a.

Wednesday

- λ Reflect on what happens in your life when you are "productivity" driven.
- λ How do you handle interruptions in your schedule, especially people interruptions?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Mark 5:21-43.

Thursday

- λ We are often deceived into thinking that this day is *my* day to do with as I have planned it out. What would change if you thought of this day as belonging to God rather than to you? Would you be more patient or less patient?
- λ Are you "tied" to your watch and your calendar/palm pilot? Try to go through one day without your watch. If you need to know the time, there are almost always clocks in every room. If not, why not use this time as an opportunity to initiate some human interaction and ask someone else the time?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Psalm 118:24.

Friday

- λ Patience is so important when dealing with others in our church family. What do you think about when someone takes a little longer to express a need during our assemblies or when the song leader, communion leader, or preacher uses extra time?

- λ Reflect on the expectations you have when you come to our assemblies. Are you coming with the expectation that God or someone in the church family will “do” something for you? Are you thinking about what you expect to “get” from the service?

- λ Before attending the next assembly, ask God to give you patience to hear what he wants you to get or to give during your time with the church family.

- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Colossians 1:10-12.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 6 - Kindness

Your Challenge: Practice *Relational* Acts of Kindness

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love; I lifted the yoke from their neck and bent down to feed them. (Hosea 11:3-4)

And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' lend to 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:33-36)

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. (Titus 3:3-5a)

1. What is a random act of kindness?

What is a relational act of kindness?

2. A Bible Wide View of Kindness

Old Testament

2 Samuel 9:1-3

Job 6:14

Proverbs 21:21

Micah 6:8

Zechariah 7:9-10

Psalm 23:6

1 Chronicles 16:34

Psalm 100:5

New Testament

Matthew 11:30

Luke 6:35

Romans 2:4

Romans 11:22

1 Corinthians 13:4

Ephesians 2:4-7

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:12

1 Peter 2:2-3

Obstacles to a Life of Kindness

λ S _____ -S _____

λ A _____

Cultivating a Life of Kindness

λ _____ our story.

λ _____ connections.

λ _____ to one another.

Action Item for this week

- λ Read and reflect on Matthew 25:31-46 and Hebrews 13:1-3.
- λ Make a list of ten items that you would consider acts of kindness.
- λ Choose one or two items from your list and practice kindness this week.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Titus 3:3-5a.
- λ In what way did God extend his kindness to you?
- λ How would your life need to change to reflect God's kindness?

Tuesday

- λ Kindness is about treating one another with special consideration. What do these one-another passages teach you about kindness?

Colossians 3:13

Hebrews 10:25

1 Peter 1:22

1 Peter 3:8

1 Peter 4:9

1 John 4:12

- λ Do a word search on other “one another” passages to see how you should relate to others in kindness.

Wednesday

- λ As a Christian you are only one part of a body of many parts. How does God want you to relate to the other parts of the body?
- λ How do you handle interruptions in your schedule, especially people interruptions?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

Thursday

- λ Reflect on the relationships that you most cherish and admire. How are these relationships characterized by *interdependence*?
- λ What would it mean for Christians to think of their work (whatever shape that takes) as service to others rather than simply a means to secure their *own* (or their family’s) livelihood? What would it mean for you to consider *other* people’s work as service to you?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Galatians 5:13-26.

Friday

- λ How would you rate your listening skills on a scale of 1 to 10?

Poor
Listener

Good
Listener

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- λ When you truly listen to another person you are communicating that what that person is saying is important to you and that this person is important to you. Reflect on a time when someone else gave you his/her “ear” and listened to what you had/needed to say. How did this experience make you feel? When was the last time you listened in this way to someone else?

- λ In your one on one times with other individuals this week, make an effort to listen to what the person is saying and how this person is expressing himself or herself. Be “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” (James 1:19).

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 7 – Goodness (Answer Key)

Your Challenge: **Do to others what you would have them do to you.**

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. (Matthew 12:33-35)

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:8-11)

Understanding Goodness

1. **God** alone is unequivocally **good**.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Psalm 107:1)

“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good — except God alone.” (Mark 10:18)

2. Human bondage to **sin** makes us incapable of goodness apart

from **God**.

Romans 7:18-25; Romans 15:14; Ephesians 2:10; and 2 Peter 1:3-8

3. Knowing what is good can only be determined under the guidance of **God's Spirit**.

Romans 12:2; Colossians 1:9-12; Acts 11:22-24; Titus 1:7-8;
1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Obstacles to Goodness

λ **Democratizing** goodness

λ Inadequate or no **moral** formation.

λ **Self** help

Scriptural Warning

2 Timothy 4:1-4

Scriptural Exhortations

Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-15; and 1 Peter 2:11-12

Cultivating Goodness

λ Learning to **name** our sin.

1 John 1:8-10

λ Giving attention to **God's** voice.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

λ **Imitating** the saints.

1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:10-15;

1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; and Philippians 4:8-9

Action Item for this week

λ Read and reflect on Galatians 6:7-10.

λ Visualize a situation where you are doing something good for someone else. You might even visualize a situation where you are choosing to do what is right over something that you normally choose to do that is wrong.

λ Pray that God will open the door for you to do this good thing or to choose the right behavior over the wrong behavior when the situation arises again in your life.

λ Go in the peace of God and take action!

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

λ Reflect on this idea, "Confession is good for the soul."

λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 John 1:8-10 and James 5:16.

λ Get on your knees before God and confess your sins to him. Claim God's promise for forgiveness and purification from 1 John 1.

- λ If you need encouragement and help beyond this prayer, consider talking with one of our elders about your situation or bring your situation before our church family so we can pray with you and encourage you.

Tuesday

- λ Reflect on how much time you spend each week listening to God's voice.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Matthew 13:1-23. Take special note of verse 16.
- λ How can you "see" and "hear" this week?

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ We are programmed to come, sit, listen, and leave. Reflect on your response to the teaching you hear during our church family meeting times, Bible classes, sermons and small groups.
- λ Do you consider the word of God, God's words to you? (Romans 15:4)
- λ Pray for God to open your heart to respond to (act on) what you read, hear and are taught.

Friday

- λ As you learned this week in the lesson, imitating the faith and trust in God of other spiritually mature Christians is important. (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:10-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; and Philippians 4:8-9)
- λ Developing friendships with Christians who are more spiritually mature than you are is one way to grow and allow the Spirit to produce fruit in your life. If you don't have a mature Christian friend that you get encouragement from, make a plan to get to know someone for this

purpose. Or perhaps you could get to know a younger, less mature Christian and encourage this person in his/her life in the Kingdom.

- λ Read, meditate on and pray through Acts 11:22-26, Acts 12:25 and Acts 18:18-28.

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Lesson 7 - Goodness
Cultivating the Fruits of the Spirit in Our Church Family

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For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. (Ephesians 5:8-11)

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from _____.

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_____.

Romans 12:2; Colossians 1:9-12; Acts 11:22-24; Titus 1:7-8;
1 Thessalonians 5:12-22

Obstacles to Goodness

λ _____ goodness

λ Inadequate or no _____ formation.

λ _____ help

Scriptural Warning

2 Timothy 4:1-4

Scriptural Exhortations

Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:14-15; and 1 Peter 2:11-12

Cultivating Goodness

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λ Giving attention to _____ voice.

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1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:10-15;

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Action Item for this week

λ Read and reflect on Galatians 6:7-10.

λ Visualize a situation where you are doing something good for someone else. You might even visualize a situation where you are choosing to do what is right over something that you normally choose to do that is wrong.

λ Pray that God will open the door for you to do this good thing or to choose the right behavior over the wrong behavior when the situation arises again in your life.

λ Go in the peace of God and take action!

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- λ How can you "see" and "hear" this week?

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- λ Pray for God to open your heart to respond to (act on) what you read, hear and are taught.

Friday

- λ As you learned this week in the lesson, imitating the faith and trust in God of other spiritually mature Christians is important. (1 Corinthians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; 2 Timothy 3:10-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:4-7; and Philippians 4:8-9)

- λ Developing friendships with Christians who are more spiritually mature than you are is one way to grow and allow the Spirit to produce fruit in your life. If you don't have a mature Christian friend that you get encouragement from, make a plan to get to know someone for this purpose. Or perhaps you could get to know a younger, less mature Christian and encourage this person in his/her life in the Kingdom.

- λ Read, meditate on and pray through Acts 11:22-26, Acts 12:25 and Acts 18:18-28.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 8 - Faithfulness

Your Challenge: Keep your promises to God and to others

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations. (Psalm 100:5)

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:1-2)

For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. (Colossians 2:5-7)

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

The Character of Faithfulness

- Faith and faithfulness are words that carry a great depth of meaning in the Bible. How do these words explain faithfulness?

Reliability

Steadfastness

Constancy

Fidelity

Dependability

Trustworthiness

2. What are some Bible stories that teach God's faithfulness?
3. What are some stories in your life that teach God's faithfulness?
4. How does Jeremiah describe God in Lamentations 3:22-26?
5. Hebrews 11 has been called Faith's Hall of Fame. How does Hebrews 11 describe each of these individuals who had faith?

Abel

Enoch

Noah

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

Joseph

Moses

People of Israel

Rahab

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the Prophets

6. What message do these individuals have for us today? (Hebrews 12:1-3)

Obstacles to Faithfulness

λ _____ mentality

λ _____ commitments.

λ _____ loyalty.

Cultivating Faithfulness

λ Celebrating God's _____ presence.

Revelation 1:5

λ Making and keeping _____ .

λ _____ the truth.

Action Item for this week

λ Read and reflect on Romans 15:1-13.

λ Make a list of all the people to whom you have made promises or commitments in the last few weeks.

λ Make another list of those people on whom you believe you could rely to be there for you regardless of the circumstances.

λ Consider what your life would be like and who you would be if the people on your two lists were not involved in your life or you in their lives.

- λ Use these lists for a time of prayer to thank God for those people who rely on you to keep your promises and those people on whom you rely to keep their promises to you.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on the word, "disposable."
- λ How does our society see relationships and people as "disposable?"
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Corinthians 4:1-2.

Tuesday

- λ Reflect on the word, "promise."
- λ What does it mean to make and keep a promise?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Micah 7:1-7, 18-20.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ What is the connection between faithfulness and truth-telling?
- λ If you haven't been a truth-teller or faithful in your relationships, it's never too late to do the right thing. Consider 1 John 1:9.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Ephesians 4:7-16

Friday

- λ Take a few minutes and read through Hebrews 11.
- λ What did faith in God allow these different individuals to do?

λ Read, meditate on and pray through Hebrews 12:1-13.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Life in the Kingdom: Faithfulness

A faithful promise 25 years in the making

Abraham was 75 when called and 100 when finally seeing the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise.

Genesis–Story of Abraham–12–21

God has not called us to be successful. God has called us to be faithful.

Every faithful person must go through Egypt. Genesis 12:10-20

Abraham learned to trust God–story of Lot indicates this.

Genesis 13

God's promise–Genesis 15:1

You can leave Egypt, but Egypt also lives within you.

Genesis 16–Abraham wanted God to use his plan with Ishmael.

Genesis 17–Abraham laughed

Genesis 18–Sarah laughed

Isaac means "he laughed". Genesis 21–God has brought me laughter Sarah said.

Prayer

God's call to become a person of faith and faithfulness.

Lesson 9 - Gentleness

Your Challenge: Become a person built for others.

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. (Galatians 5:22-6:1)

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope when you were called — one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1:19-21)

The Character of Gentleness

1. What character traits would you expect to find in someone who is gentle?

Colossians 3:12

2. _____ is the soil in which gentleness grows, matures, and flourishes.

On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the LORD. (Zephaniah 3:11-12)

3. _____ is knowing that you were created to be dependent on God.

4. What are some characteristics that defeat gentleness?
Luke 18:9-14 and Acts 7:51

5. Three important texts to consider:

Matthew 11:28-30
11

James 3:9-18

Philippians 2:3-

Obstacles to Gentleness

λ Fostering _____ and
_____.

λ Aspiring to positions of _____.

Cultivating Gentleness

λ Altering our _____ through prayer.

Prayer is the seed of gentleness and the absence of anger.

If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her. (John 8:7)

Ephesians 4:29–5:2

λ Learning to _____ .

By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” when away! (2 Corinthians 10:1)

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17)

λ Hanging out with those of “_____”
_____.”

Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. (Romans 12:16)

Luke 14:7-14

Action Item for this week

- λ Gentleness relates directly to how we treat other people.
- λ Reflect on the lives of those people you know whom you regard as gentle or humble. In what specific situations have you seen their gentleness or humility? How do they respond when criticized or misunderstood?
- λ Consider speaking with them at some time about how they have come to respond with gentleness and humility.
- λ Think about a situation that you regularly face where you need to apply the gentleness of the Spirit. Ask God through his Spirit to empower you to show his gentleness and humility the next time you face this situation.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Ephesians 4:29–5:2.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Reflect on this statement, "Prayer is the ally of a gentle spirit."
- λ Begin now to make a habit of praying for people who misunderstand, disappoint, irritate or attack you. Express your anger to God about these situations so that he might soften your heart toward them.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Matthew 5:43-46 and Luke 6:27-36.

Tuesday

- λ In the Psalms, individuals regularly expressed their raw emotions to God, especially about their enemies.
- λ Read Psalm 25 and Psalm 31 and note the types of emotions that are expressed.
- λ The Psalms are really poems that were often put to music. Today and this week use any emotionally raw moments to express your feelings to God in prayer. Writing out your prayer might even help you.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ Reflect on those times when you've been "in charge." In what ways have you been tempted to "lord it over" others?
- λ Why do you think you were tempted to act this way?
- λ Look around you for examples of servant leaders that you can model.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Mark 10:35-45.

Friday

- λ Being gentle starts with what we think and say.

- λ Think about a time when you acted in anger or made a judgment about someone else. What circumstances or thoughts led up to those moments?
- λ Read, meditate on and pray through Ephesians 4:29–5:2.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 10 - Self-Control

Your Challenge: Keep in step with the Spirit.

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-25)

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. (2 Peter 1:5-9)

λ What is self-control?

Control of one's emotions, desires, or actions by one's own will.

λ What kinds of activities do we normally associate with self-control?

The Character of Self-Control

1. What is a prerequisite to the Spirit producing self-control in your life? (Ephesians 4:17-24, especially verse 23)
2. What spiritual value does self-control have? (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)
3. None of the fruits of the Spirit have human origins. What has to happen before the fruits of the Spirit like self-control can be produced in us? (Romans 6:1-23 and Romans 8:1-11)
4. What qualities does Peter link to self-control in 1 Peter 1:13-16?

Obstacles to Self-Control

λ **PURSING** happiness.

λ **CONTROLLING** the self (by the self, for the sake of the self).

λ **MODERATION** in all things.

Cultivating Self-Control

λ The key to self control: Live **BY THE SPIRIT**.
Galatians 5:16

How?

λ Redirect the source of your **PLEASURE**.

God created you to worship him. (Romans 12:1)

- λ Open your heart to God's **SPIRITUAL** formation.
(Romans 12:2)

Two habits that encourage self-control: **FASTING** and
PRAYING.

Action Item for this week

- λ Choose two days this week to skip one of your regular meals. The Bible calls this practice "fasting."
- λ Fasting is not about self-discipline, but is designed by God to help us focus our attention completely on him for a special purpose.
- λ During each meal that you skip choose one of the reflection question and suggestion sections below for a time of meditation and prayer or if you prefer, use this time for Bible reading and prayer.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Devote some time to reflecting honestly and prayerfully on the orientation of your life. To what extent do you believe your life is taken up with service to others?
- λ Make a list of your current goals and aspirations. Will your current goals and aspirations help you to become like Christ? Why? or Why not?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Philippians 2:1-18.

Tuesday

- λ Self-Control is often thought of in relationship to getting in shape, losing weight, saving money or similar items. Most of these items have a selfish motive.
- λ Reflect on how God wants you to use self-control for the benefit of others.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 1 Peter 1:13-25.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ What does moderation mean to you?
- λ Please notice what Paul says about producing and practicing the fruits of the Spirit—*against such things there is no law*. (Galatians 5:23) What does this Scripture have to say about our understanding of moderation?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Luke 14:25-34.

Friday

- λ As with all of the fruits of the Spirit, there are specific areas where we need the Spirit of God to produce self-control in our lives.
- λ In what areas of your life does the Spirit need to help you produce the fruit of self-control?
- λ Read, meditate on and pray through Hebrews 12:7-29.

Resource for this study: *Life on the Vine: Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community* by Philip D. Kenneson

Lesson 10 - Self-Control (Scriptures)
Galatians 5:1-26
8 May 2005

1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. 11 Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

19 The acts (works—something you do) of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery (eagerness for lustful pleasure—NLT); Gal. 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft (magic or sorcery—dark arts—participation in demonic activity—NLT); hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions (the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group) 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies (wild parties), and the like. I warn

you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit (contrasted with works in verse 19—fruit is something that Spirit produces) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

1 Corinthians 9:24

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last

forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

Lesson 11 - Weed-Control

Your Challenge: Weed out the acts (works) of the sinful nature

Scriptural Foundation:

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16-25)

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:5-10)

λ What is a weed and what is weed control?

λ What kinds of weeds grow in competition with the fruit of the Spirit?
Galatians 5:19-21 & 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Weed Control (Part 1)

Weed

Sexual Immorality

Impurity

12:21

Debauchery

12:21

Idolatry

Witchcraft
33:1-6

18

Weed Control

Hebrews 13:4

Colossians 3:5
2 Corinthians

Ephesians 5:18
2 Corinthians

Isaiah 44:13-20
1 Peter 4:1-3

2 Chronicles

Ephesians 6:10-

Hatred

Proverbs 10:12
James 4:4

Discord
(quarreling, rivalry, strife, arguments)

1 Timothy 6:3-5
Titus 3:8-10

Jealousy
3:1-7

1 Corinthians

Weed (acts of the sinful nature) Nutrients

λ _____ ambition.
(James 3:16)

λ _____
Proverbs 13:10; 16:18

λ _____ of privilege
Luke 3:7-8; Luke 18:9-14; John 8:39

Weed (acts of the sinful nature) Killers

λ _____
James 3:13-18; Luke 18:9-13

λ _____
Luke 3:8; Acts 17:30

λ _____ of service
Galatians 5:13; Matthew 20:25-28

λ _____
Matthew 26:41

Action Item for this week

λ Make a list of the specific sins in your life that cause you to fail.

- λ Confess your sins openly and freely to God.
- λ For any specific sin with which you struggle regularly, consider sharing with one of our Elders or a spiritually mature person that you trust for prayer and spiritual counsel.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through James 5:13-20 and 1 John 1:5-10.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- λ Take some time to read through and reflect on the lists of the acts of the sinful nature in Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and Colossians 3:5.
- λ In your prayer time, thank God for the cleansing and purifying of these sins that he makes available in your life through Jesus. (1 Corinthians 6:11)

Tuesday

- λ Read Psalm 51.
- λ What did this writer think and feel about his own sins?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through 2 Samuel 11-12.

Wednesday/Thursday

- λ How do selfish ambition, pride and positions of privilege prevent you from confessing sin?
- λ How are little children like the kingdom of God?
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through Luke 18:9-17.

Friday

- λ The acts of the sinful nature are powerful and destructive. How have your sins been destructive in your life and/or in the lives of others?
- λ Reflect on God's power to forgive sins. That power is made possible by his love (John 3:16). God longs to forgive you and will freely forgive you. It's never too late to do what's right. Jesus freely forgave Peter of his denials and he used Peter to minister to thousands.
- λ Read, meditate on, and pray through John 21:15-17.

Lesson 12 - The Spirit's Rewards

Your Challenge: Wallow in (indulge in an unrestrained way in) the Spirit's Blessings!

Scriptural Foundation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.

Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 5:22-6-10)

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. (Romans 8:9-11)

But as surely as God is faithful, our message to you is not "Yes" and "No." For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by me and Silas and Timothy, was not "Yes" and "No," but in him it has always

been "Yes." For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:18-22)

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14)

Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." (2 Timothy 2:19)

Living in the world confuses the Christian's thinking.

The World's Lie: Sin is God's way of keeping you from having a good time.

God's Truth: Sin is my way of keeping you from damaging yourself so you can enjoy an eternal reward.
Romans 6:16, 23; Hebrews 11:24-26; James 1:13-18

The World's Lie: You get your sense of self-worth from what other people think of you.

God's Truth: I created you and I love you no matter what other people think of you.
John 15:18-19; Romans 5:1-11; Romans 8:1-4, 31-39;
1 John 3:1

The World's Lie: You get your sense of self-worth from how well you perform.

God's Truth: I love you because you are my child. Your performance has nothing to do with why I love you.
Luke 15:11-32; Ephesians 2:1-10

The Holy Spirit gives us confidence for the present and the future.

- Romans 8:9-11
- 2 Corinthians 1:18-22
- Ephesians 1:11-14
- 2 Timothy 2:19

Action Item for this week

- Which of these is more challenging to you? (Fill in the blank and then check one)

Example: This sinful pleasure (sex outside of marriage) will give me more satisfaction no matter what God says about it.

This sinful pleasure (_____) will give me more satisfaction no matter what God says about it.

_____ What (_____) thinks about me is more important to me than what God thinks about me.

_____ This activity (_____) will win God's favor for me.

- In your prayer time and Bible meditation time ask God to give you clarification and direction about his will in the area that you checked.

Reflection Questions and Suggestions

Monday

- Reflect on what it means to have the Spirit of Christ.
- In what ways does the Spirit give us life?
- Read, meditate on, and pray through Romans 8:9-11.

Tuesday

- What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is our "yes"?
- Why has God put his seal of ownership on us?
- Read, meditate on, and pray through 2 Corinthians 1:18-22.

Wednesday/Thursday

- What led God to put his Holy Spirit seal on you?
- What does God's Holy Spirit seal guarantee you?
- Read, meditate on, and pray through Ephesians 2:11-14.

Friday

- How does the statement, "The Lord knows those who are his," give you confidence?
- What is true of your life if you have confessed the name of the Lord?
- Read, meditate on, and pray through 2 Timothy 2:19.

----Steve
Puckett