

a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.

2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and verse numbers that provide a reason for living this way. Example: "in order to please God" (v. 1).
3. In view of your study of 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10, what do you need to do differently starting today?

Day 6 — Your Job

1. Sometimes Christians feel their work is unspiritual. It is true that some jobs fit in God's kingdom better than others. But God expects Christians to provide for themselves and their families and to be responsible workers. What are reasons for working according to these passages:

Ephesians 4:28—

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12—

Titus 3:14—

2. What are some attitudes toward work that we need to develop as disciples of Jesus?

Titus 2:9-10—

Colossians 3:22-24—

Ephesians 6:5-9—(Note: for "slave" substitute "employee" and for "master" substitute "boss" or "employer.")

3. What are some specific things you can do to put some of these teachings into practice on your job?

Summary of Fourth Week

Your Father in Heaven really does know what is best for you and He wants and expects you to obey the things He tells you. He wants you to obey willingly and eagerly because you trust Him, not halfheartedly out of a sense of dull duty. All the instructions you read in the New Testament about your words, deeds and attitudes in your personal life, home life and work are for your benefit. It is reassuring to know that as you obey Him in all things, you are choosing to live the way that is best for you.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR NEW BIRTH God forgave you for every sin you have ever committed. In doing so, He took care of a problem that we simply could not take care of ourselves. As we continue in the Christian life we will still sin, and so we will need ongoing forgiveness. When we sin it burdens our consciences and makes it hard for us to keep going. God knows we need help with this. He wants to keep on forgiving. It's His nature to do so. Because He so much wants to help us, He has told us what to do when we sin so that He will continue to be merciful to us. The meditations this week concern God's gracious nature and our sinful one.

Day 1 — The Dilemma

1. Read 1 John 1:5-2:2. Why does John say he is writing this?
2. Does the text indicate that we will or will not sin? (Remember he is writing to Christians. You already know this from your personal experience, but it helps to see it in the Bible.)
3. Based on what you learned from 1 John 1:5-2:2, what is a good way to sum up a proper view toward sin?

Day 4 — Walking Wisely

1. Read through Ephesians 5:1-6:9. Make a list of all the things we are told to do as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are told not to do or to stop doing. Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.
2. Now look through the text again. Write down the phrases and the verse numbers that provide a reason for living this way. Example: "just as Christ loved us" (v. 2).
3. In view of your study of Ephesians 5:1-6:9, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one area in which you are convicted you need to change and decide right now on a specific way you can put it into practice.

Day 5 — Living To Please God

1. Read through 1 Thessalonians 4:1-10. Make a list of all the things we are told to do as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are told not to do or to stop doing. Use

Day 3 — Off With The Old

1. Read Ephesians 4:20-32. Make a list of all the things we are told to “put on” (do) as disciples of Jesus and a list of all the things we are told to “put off” (not to do). Use a dictionary to define any words that are not clear to you.

2. Look through the text again. Write down the phrases and the verse numbers that tell *a reason* for living this way. These phrases are not the ones that tell you what to do, but why or how. Example: “that is the way Christ is” (v. 20). Remember that Christian obedience is different from mindless rulekeeping.

3. In view of your study of Ephesians 4:20-32, what do you need to do differently starting today? Pick one area in which you are convicted you need to change and decide on a specific way you can put it into practice.

4. The Bible compares a person becoming a Christian with a slave being released from one master and entering into the service of another (Romans 6:15-23). What parallels can you draw from this analogy?

5. You may still be in the habit of serving your old master because you have done so for quite some time. But your new master will be very patient as He teaches you a new way of life. What are some things you can do to become free from your old master?

Day 2 — Nature of Sin

1. The word “sin” is often used today in a way that causes us to misunderstand its true nature. A light-hearted use of the term dilutes in our thinking the power and ugliness of sin. Until we see sin in its true nature, we probably won't see the need to be saved from it. One major characteristic of sin is that it makes us guilty before our Creator. Our Creator has a true standard of right and wrong. What does James 2:10-11 say about sin?

2. Sin also alienates us from God. The essence of sin is rebellion. What do the following verses say about rebellious hearts?

Jeremiah 7:23-24—

Jeremiah 9:13-14—

Ephesians 4:17-19—

Colossians 1:21—

Pause and reflect for a moment on how alarming it is to do something that alienates you and makes you guilty before the God of the whole universe. Record any thoughts.

3. According to John 8:34 and 2 Peter 2:19, what is another major characteristic of sin?

4. Read Romans 1:21-32; 6:19; and Ephesians 4:19. What happens when we continue in sin?

God says this is the wrong way to understand our relationship with Him. According to Colossians 2:20-23, what is the problem with this attitude?

2. What does Romans 1:5 say should be our motivation for obedience?

3. God wants us to obey Him because we trust Him completely. But it is important to remember that we do not live up to His Word by our own power. Remember, He has given you a totally new beginning. He has given you power to change through His Spirit who now lives in you. He has given you a loving, supportive family to help and encourage you. He has limited the power of your old sinful self. Based on these things He has done, we are now called to follow Him in every aspect of our lives. What impact does each of the four items just mentioned make on you? How can they actually help you change the way you live?

2. It will be difficult to do everything God asks of you in the Scriptures. Sin has ensnared you for quite some time, and it will take awhile to become free from it's control. Make every effort to do all God says, but do not become discouraged when you fail. What do these verses teach about sin?

James 4:4-10—

1 John 1:5-10—

3. God's forgiveness is unlimited because He is full of mercy. What he cannot accept is for you to close your heart to Him and distance yourself. But if you humble yourself, your heart will remain soft and open to him. Read Psalm 51:1-10. What does this Psalm show about David's heart?
4. In Acts 13:22, David is called a man after God's own heart. Would you be described as a person "after His own heart?" Why or why not?

Day 2 — The Obedience of Faith

1. A part of us continually tries to reduce our relationship with God to a series of rules and regulations. Some of the rules we come up with seem to be good and helpful. But

5. Do your sins have greater or less hold over you than they did at first?
6. Do you still fight as hard not to commit a particular sin as you used to, or have you pretty much given up?
7. Based on these characteristics, sin may perhaps be better understood if we compare it to cocaine: it is destructive, addictive, and yet it can be perversely attractive. If I can come to see sin in this light—destructive to my relationship with my Creator and a power that enslaves me—I will desire strongly to be free from it. What are some sins from which you want to be freed?

Day 3 — A Gracious Father

1. God is just. The common understanding of this word, that "He will give me a break," is not correct. Rather it means He will do what is right and fair. What does the Bible say is a right and fair response to sin?

Romans 1:32—

Romans 2:2—

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10—

2. In spite of this, God wants to help us with the problem of sin. He is a God of grace and mercy. Grace means "gift." We do not earn or deserve it, He gives it freely. Read the following verses and notice what they say about grace.

Romans 4:4-5,16—

Galatians 3:18—

2 Timothy 1:9—

3. Read Romans 5:6. Why is it necessary to receive this gift from God?

4. One way we learn to receive from God is to learn to receive from people. Determine right now that you will graciously receive any gift or favor anyone does for you this week. Do you have trouble receiving gifts from people? If so, why?

5. In order for us to respond to God as we should, we must really believe that He is gracious. Read the following texts and note this aspect of His nature:

GOD HAS CALLED YOU TO LIFE! It is a life that is abundant (John 10:10). It has quality. It is rich and full. His word of truth tells us that some things contribute to this new life and other things take away from it. We may not always understand or desire the things God says, but He is our Father, and He is true and reliable. So we trust Him. And based on this, we do what He says. This week you will be learning about things that God says are right (helpful) and wrong (harmful). When we disobey God's commands, He is angry because He knows we are hurting ourselves as well as trusting in our own insight instead of His. But when we obey Him, He is pleased with us and considers us faithful and obedient children.

Day 1 — A Heart of Obedience

1. Every time you hear the Word of God, you make a crucial decision. You can open your heart to God's Word and do what it says, or you can close your heart and disobey. What do the following verses teach about the heart and obedience?

John 14:15—

Hebrews 3:7-8—

Hebrews 6:4-8—

Hebrews 10:26-27—

Proverbs 4:23—

6. For Christians, the Day of Judgment is not a cause of fear. Read the following verses and explain why we can have confidence before God:

1 John 4:13-17—

Hebrews 4:14-16—

1 John 1:7-9—

Summary of Third Week

Christianity is not simply a matter of doing the right things. It is a matter of allowing the Lord to touch your heart and change you on the inside. If you will open your heart to Him, allow His Word to affect you deeply, and pray to Him often, He can and will change you on the inside. He will deepen and solidify your faith and give you a confident hope about the future. With a renewed inner life, you will not only be able to do the right things, but also do them for the right reasons.

Exodus 34:6-7—

Numbers 6:22-26—

Nehemiah 9:17—

Isaiah 30:18—

1 Peter 5:10—

Day 4 — The Gracious Son

1. One reason the stories of Jesus' dealings with people in the New Testament are so important is that they put flesh and blood on the grace of God. Read the following verses and note what they say about Jesus.

John 14:8-10—

Hebrews 1:3—

2. Read John 8:1-11 and substitute your name for the "woman." This will help you see how God's gracious nature touches you. What did the woman (and the man) deserve according to the law in Leviticus 20:10?

Did Jesus treat her according to what she deserved?

Did the woman do anything to earn Jesus' forgiveness?

What effect does it have on you to know God views you like this?

3. Another demonstration of God's grace is seen in the way Jesus dealt with Peter. Read the following verses and note what Peter did, what Jesus did, and how Peter responded.

Mark 14:66-72—

Mark 16:7—

Acts 2:14ff—

Did Peter do anything to deserve this treatment?

4. The greatest demonstration of God's grace was at the cross of Jesus. In the death of His Son, God solved the dilemma between the demands of justice and his mercy. He counted the death of Jesus as the payment for the penalty we rightly deserve for our sins. For this reason, the New Testament often associates the word "grace" with the death of Christ and our salvation. Meditate on the following verses to better appreciate what God did for you at the cross:

Acts 15:11—

Romans 3:24—

Ephesians 2:5-9—

Titus 3:4-7—

5. Since Jesus paid the penalty for our sins, it is important for us not to try to pay that penalty ourselves. We sometimes do this by verbally "beating" ourselves or demanding

In what way are these words encouraging to you? In what way could you encourage someone else in the church with these words?

4. After the resurrection comes the Day of Judgment. According to the following passages, on what basis will we be judged?

Matthew 16:27—

2 Corinthians 5:10—

Revelation 22:12—

5. This does not mean we can save ourselves by our works. In fact, one can do many religious deeds and still not be saved. Read Matthew 7:21-23. The phrase "I never knew you" helps us understand this passage. If we know God (that is, have a close relationship with Him), our faith will lead us to be what He desires and do what He says. True faith always leads to obedience. Therefore He can judge our faith by looking at our deeds. Are you doing what you believe? List some examples.

4. How is hope developed according to Romans 5:3-4; 15:4?
5. Reread Romans 5:3-4. How can we respond to suffering in a way that will develop hope? Is there any situation in your own life right now to which you can apply this?

Day 6 — Resurrection and Judgment

1. Another aspect of our hope is that we will one day be raised from the dead. We are not doomed to non-existence for eternity after we die. What do the following verses say about the resurrection?

John 5:28-29—

1 Corinthians 15:51-52—

Philippians 3:21—

2. Read 1 Thessalonians 4: 13. What does Paul say results from understanding that there is a resurrection?
3. Read the description of the Lord's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18. What will occur then?

certain actions to "make up for" sins we commit. This goes back to how difficult it is for us to receive gifts. But that's exactly what faith is: believing that we are forgiven and acceptable to God, not because of anything we do, but because of what He did at the cross. Determine right now to do what 1 Peter 1:13 instructs. In this verse, what does the word "fully" or "completely" mean?

6. Jesus died to cover our past sins and now sits at the right hand of God as our personal lawyer, appealing our case. What do these verses say about Jesus?

Romans 8:34—

1 John 2:1—

7. Because of this, we have unlimited access to God's grace and forgiveness as long as we turn back to God. What assurance does Hebrews 4:14-16 give you?

Day 5 — Repentance

1. We have seen that God is a God of Grace and that He wants to be merciful to us. He does not want to treat us according to what our sins deserve (Psalm 103:10-11), and He is patient with us (Romans 2:4-5). However, what attitude does Romans 6:1-2 warn us to avoid?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 12:21 and Revelation 2:5,16. When we sin, what does God want us to do?

3. Repentance literally means "change of mind," but a change of mind always leads to a change of actions. Furthermore, it is usually a pretty drastic change. Repentance may be thought of as "a radical reorientation of the life." Why is repentance important?

Luke 3:8-9—

Joel 2:12-14—

4. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11. According to verse 10, from what does repentance come?

Do your sins cause you to pity yourself (worldly sorrow) or to turn toward God (godly sorrow)?

What changes were produced in these people when they repented (v.11)?

5. If we have the perspective that is described above, we will not "receive God's grace in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). Rather, what effect will His grace have in our lives according to 1 Corinthians 15:10?

Day 5 — Hope

1. Read the following verses and note what our hope is:

Romans 5:2—

1 Thessalonians 5:8—

Titus 1:2—

Titus 2:13—

1 John 3:2—

2. For Christians hope is not a doubtful thing. It is solid and certain, and we wait for it expectantly (Romans 8:24-25). If the basis for it was ourselves, our hope would be doubtful. But that is not the basis for our hope. What is?

Colossians 1:27—

1 Timothy 4:10—

1 Timothy 6:17—

1 Peter 1:13—

3. What effect does hope have on us?

1 Thessalonians 1:3—

Hebrews 6:19—

1 John 3:2-3—

4. One of the most beautiful aspects of Christianity is that we do not need a human priest to approach God in our behalf. Why not? See Hebrews 10:19-23.

How can we know we are forgiven?

5. Read James 5:16. What does it instruct us to do?

We are all in the same situation: plagued by sin and in need of a powerful and merciful God. Confession provides a way that we can help and encourage each other in the battle against sin. To whom in the congregation would you feel most free to confess your sins?

Summary of Fifth Week

In spite of your new life in Christ, it is inevitable that you will sometimes do wrong. When you do, it is important to remember that God still loves you and longs to be merciful toward you. You must not distance yourself from Him when you know you have failed. Instead, you must confess your sin to Him very specifically and determine to turn away from that sin. When you do, you can rest assured that His grace continues to cleanse you and save you. You need to find appropriate people to confess your sins to, as well. Remember that if you keep giving in to sin and refuse to bring it before God in repentance and confession, sin will come to have great power over you and drag you back into slavery.

Day 4 — Faith

1. The words "faith" and "believe" are so commonly used that it may be difficult for us to really understand them. Faith includes believing that certain facts are true, but it is more than that. It is having a trusting relationship with someone. It is helpful to think of faith as an attitude. Read John 8:26. What was Jesus' attitude toward God?

2. If God is true, right and reliable, then we will not view His words as a burden but as true statements concerning what is true, right and reliable for our lives (John 17:17). Do you view the words of God (in the Bible) as a reliable message that tells you what is really best for your life?

3. Our actions grow out of our faith. This is one of the unique teachings of Jesus and something of which you will constantly have to remind yourself. What do the following verses say about inward faith and outward appearance?

Matthew 7:15-20—

Matthew 12:33-35—

Matthew 23:25-26—

1 Thessalonians 1:3—

James 2:14-26—

b. You may bow your head, kneel, close your eyes, or not. You also may pray aloud or silently. Your physical posture is not so important as your inward posture. Your inward posture should be one of humility and dependence on God. (If you have trouble concentrating, try praying aloud.)

c. You may wish to model your prayers after the Lord's prayer in Matt. 6:6-13. Another helpful model to keep your prayers from becoming self-centered is the "ACTS" prayer, using the following verses as an outline:

Adoration—Matthew 11:25

Confession—1 John 1:9

Thanksgiving—Philippians 1:3-6

Supplication (requests)—Romans 1:9-10

d. Remember that our Father knows what is best for His children and will do what is best, even if we ask for something else. We must trust our Father in this. Our greatest desire is not that our prayers be answered the way we want them to be, but that God's will be done (1 John 5:14). If you are firmly convinced that something is God's will, pray for it fervently.

e. The one thing that is prayed for in the New Testament more than anything else is people. Pray for the growth and maturity of your Christian family and for the salvation of non-Christians you know.

3. If you are not already doing so, begin a regular time of prayer to God. It might be good to do it at the same time you do your Bible reading and this study guide.

THE IDEA OF "CHURCH" often is misunderstood. We describe it here as the family of God because the Bible refers to it in this way (1 Timothy 3:15) and because it may give us a better feel for what the church is about. The word "church" means "assembly" and refers to the assembly of the people of God. It is not a place nor a building. It is people. All those who have entered into the Father/child relationship with God through Jesus Christ have become the children of God. These children, along with God their Father and Jesus their brother, make up the family of God, the church.

Day 1 — What It Is

1. Read Mark 3:31-35. What does Jesus say a person must do to have a close relationship with Him?

How does Jesus describe those people who do the will of His Father (v. 35)?

If all of us who have obeyed Him have become His brothers and sisters, what have we become in relationship to each other?

2. Read Mark 10:28-30. How do we receive the things mentioned in v. 30? (Your understanding of what the church is should help explain this. As a member of the family, you need to think both in terms of receiving and giving.)

3. On the day you were baptized the Lord Jesus Himself made you a part of His family, His church. Since then, how have you become more involved with the family of God?

Day 2 — What It's For

1. One important purpose of the church is to continue the work that Jesus started in the world. Read Acts 1:1-2. The "former book" is the Gospel of Luke. Luke, who wrote both the gospel and Acts, says that his first book was about "all that Jesus began to do and teach." This current work, the book of Acts, will tell the story of the growth and work of His church. Apparently, Luke is saying that what Jesus began to do and teach during His lifetime is now being continued by His church. From what you know of Jesus, what would it mean for you to continue His work in the world?

- understanding or impact. You may need to read a paragraph a couple of times before you go on to the next one.
- d. Write down any questions you have as you read and ask someone for help answering them. This is an excellent way to learn and grow. You may also want to write down significant things you learn.

 - e. Read regularly and consistently so that God will have a regular and consistent opportunity to get through to you.

 - f. Always read with a view toward obeying. If the word confronts you or rebukes you, let it. Repent. If you hear His voice, do not harden your heart (Hebrews 3:15).
3. If you are not already doing so, choose a book of the New Testament right now to begin reading through. Each day, after you work through the questions in this study guide, spend a few extra minutes reading in the book you choose.

Day 3 — Prayer

1. Another avenue by which we come into contact with God is through prayer. According to Philippians 4:6-7, what does prayer do for you?

2. The following considerations may help you get started if you are not used to praying regularly:
 - a. Don't be concerned about using the right words, or making your prayer sound good (Matthew 6:7). Just express yourself honestly to God. Avoid "pat" phrases because they probably won't be a genuine expression of yourself. Don't worry about the length of your prayer.

Day 2 — The Word

1. The main avenue through which God can touch your heart is His Word. What do the following verses say about the effect of God's Word on your heart?

Isaiah 55:10-11—

Jeremiah 23:29—

Matthew 13:23—

1 Thessalonians 2:13—

Hebrews 4:12—

2. At your baptism God worked in your heart to cleanse you and forgive you. Indeed, He gave you a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). Now it is important that you nurture and protect your heart by exposing it regularly to His Word. Here are some practical suggestions for doing that:
 - a. Find a quiet time and place to regularly read the Bible.
 - b. Select a book of the New Testament and read it all the way through. Most of the books will take more than one sitting to complete, but you can pick up where you left off the next time. Some good starting books might be: Mark, Acts, James or 1 John.
 - c. Don't get in too big of a hurry as you read. The purpose is not to read as much as you can in one sitting, but to make sure God has a chance to speak to your heart. It would be better to read only one paragraph and have it make an impression than to read a whole book without

2. One might summarize the work of Jesus under three headings: doing good to people, speaking the gospel to people who are not His followers, and teaching His followers so as to help them mature and grow. Think of examples of how Jesus was involved in each of these three areas:

doing good—

speaking the gospel to non-believers—

maturing His disciples—
3. As a member of Jesus' church, you will be continuing His work in the world. Think of one way you could be involved in each of these three areas:

doing good—

speaking the gospel to non-believers—

maturing His disciples—
4. To be a disciple of Jesus means to be a life-long learner from Him. What are some ways your brothers and sisters have tried to help you grow in Him (formally and informally)? How have you responded to their efforts? What could you do to respond better next time?

Day 3 — The Church As A Body

1. To help us understand the church better, the Bible compares it to something we are more familiar with: a human body. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-30. What conclusions can you make from this text about:
 - a. diversity of members in the church?
 - b. diversity of roles?
 - c. the importance of each member?
 - c. unity of purpose?
 - d. interrelationship between the parts (v. 26)—
 - e. feelings of inferiority (not being needed) or superiority (not needing the other parts)—
2. What evidence of these principles have you seen in the congregation here?

2. According to the following verses, what are some signs or causes of spiritual heart trouble?

Matthew 13:14-15—

Mark 3:1-5—

Ephesians 4:18-19—

Deuteronomy 29:18-19—

Luke 21:34—
3. On the other hand, these things are good for the heart:

Psalms 51:1-10—

James 4:8—

Hebrews 3:7-8—

Hebrew 3:12-13—

Philippians 4:6-7—
4. What are some things you can do starting today to improve the condition of your heart?

JESUS TAUGHT THAT THE INNER LIFE of each person is extremely important. He spoke a great deal about the heart, knowing that a real change on the inside would lead to right changes in the person's actions. In spite of His emphasis on this, we still try to change our actions without changing our hearts. This is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is so common and so deadly that Jesus sharply rebuked those who lived that way (Matthew 12:33-37; 15:8; 23:25-26). Let us heed His warning and give attention to the change God wants to bring about in our hearts.

Day 1 — The Heart

1. A person's intellect is involved in hearing and understanding spiritual truths. But God has given you another "organ" to help you accept His word. The heart, in its spiritual sense, is the place at which God can touch you. In addition the heart is the place from which all of our response to God flows. What do the following verses say about the heart?

John 5:38-40—

1 Corinthians 1:19-21—

Matthew 13:4-23—

Proverbs 4:23—

3. How do these principles apply to your relationship to this congregation?

Day 4 — "One Another" Relationships

1. The church consists of all people who are in a relationship with God through Christ Jesus. Because of the relationship we all have with Him, we also have a unique relationship with each other. Read the following passages and list what each one says about the special way Christians ought to treat "one another."

Romans 15:7—

Galatians 5:13—

Ephesians 4:32—

Colossians 3:12-13—

Hebrews 3:13—

1 Peter 4:9—

2. Think of at least one way you could do each of the items listed above.

3. Read the following passages and list what each one says we should *not* do in our relationships and dealings with "one another."

Romans 14:13—

Colossians 3:9—

James 4:11—

James 5:9—

4. Since becoming part of the family of God, have you done any of the things that we are taught not to do in our relationships with each other? When are you tempted to do these things?
5. How does understanding your special relationship to your new brothers and sisters change your attitudes or actions toward them?

2. When Jesus left the earth, He handed his purpose and mission over to His followers (Matthew 28:19-20). All of us will not be involved in the mission in exactly the same way, but all of us will be involved in it in some way. What are some ways you could be involved in continuing the purposes of Jesus?
3. A major hindrance to our fulfilling His mission is that we adopt so many other purposes in our lives. Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-12. What rights did Paul give up to follow Jesus?
4. What does the parable in Matthew 13:45-46 have to say about following Jesus?
5. Have you been pursuing something that you could or should abandon for the mission of God?

Summary of Second Week

Jesus Christ lived the most impressive and compelling life in all of history. You have chosen him as your master teacher. Following him is not merely a matter of classroom work. It is a matter of seeing what your teacher is like and striving to become like him. Imitate his relationship with God, his humility, his self-denial, his integrity, his compassion and his purpose. Focus on his life and imitate the many things you see in him, and God will transform you into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). He is your teacher, your master, your Lord.

Mark 1:40-41—

Mark 6:34—

2. Jesus taught us to love each other, just as He loved us (John 13:34-35; 15:13). What are some ways you can show love toward the members of this church?

3. Love means doing what is best for a person regardless of whether you feel like it or they deserve it. Who are some people you know right now that are hurting or in need? How could you show compassion on them?

Day 6 — His Purpose

1. Another noticeable characteristic of our Teacher's life is His sense of purpose. He had a mission to accomplish. Read each of the following verses and note the purpose it gives for Jesus coming to earth:

Mark 10:45—

Luke 4:43—

Luke 19:10—

1 John 3:8—

Day 5 — The Greatest Command

1. The "one another" teaching that is most frequently repeated in the New Testament is the exhortation for us to "love one another." Read John 13:34; Romans 13:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11. Record any thought that stands out to you in these passages.

2. Read 1 John 3:16-18. How do we know what real love is?

What must we do to show real love to each other? (See also John 15:13.)

What does it mean to lay down one's life for someone?

According to v. 18, what is real love and what is not?

Luke 15:1-2—

2. In Mark 14:32-42, Jesus wrestles with God's will for his life. How did Jesus work through the conflict between his will and God's will?

3. All desire is not wrong (1 Timothy 4:1-5; 6:17), but many desires are wrong if taken to an extreme. Our old nature constantly promotes desires that are wrong (Ephesians 2:3; 4:22). What did Jesus say about desire and discipleship?

Mark 8:34-36—

John 12:24-26—

4. What are some past or expected future situations that will call for self-denial on your part?

announced the coming of a new and different way of worshipping God. A major part of this new and different way of worship is spelled out in Romans 12:1. What does this verse say worship is?

2. Read Colossians 3:17. All that we do can be described as worship to God if we do it in a way that is holy and pleasing to Him. This includes your job, your home and family life, even your leisure. What changes should you make so that all you do will be worship, holy and pleasing to God?

3. Even though all of life is worship, the Sunday meetings of the whole church are still important. God has set aside this special day for His family to gather together (Acts 20:7). The highlight of this meeting is to participate in the Lord's Supper. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. What is the purpose of our eating the bread and drinking the cup?

4. What else happens in the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 10:16-17—

1 Corinthians 11:17-34—

5. According to 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Hebrews 10:25, what is another purpose of our Sunday gatherings?

6. God has set up this special time of assembly for our benefit. In the early church, worship and edification were accomplished by reading the Scriptures, teaching and exhortation, singing and participating in the Lord's Supper. Often they would take up a contribution to help people with their needs. As you experience this, you should view it as a resource for helping your faith. That is one reason the early church "devoted" themselves to the fellowship (Acts 2:42), and one reason we are told not to give up meeting together (Hebrews 10:25). Are you "devoted" to meeting together with your brothers and sisters?
7. At first, your mere presence in the assembly will encourage others because it reminds them that God is at work in your life. As time goes on, you will learn other ways to encourage your brothers and sisters. The next time you meet with the church, look for ways people give encouragement and record what you observe here.

Summary of Sixth Week

The church is God's family. It is a resource to help you grow in the Christian way and an army that continues to carry out the mission of Jesus in the world. There is much diversity in the church. Different parts have different strengths, weaknesses, and functions. Taken together, they represent Christ and continue God's work. It is important that you help preserve the unity and health of the church by treating other members in the special "one another" ways, undergirded by a firm, Christ-like love for each member. Though all of life should be worship, it is also important that you meet with the church regularly to praise God and be strengthened and encouraged in your faith.

3. According to the following scriptures, why is humility necessary in our relationship with God?

Matthew 5:3—

Matthew 18:1-4—

Matthew 23:8-12—

Luke 18:9-14—
4. How would greater humility change your relationships? Your attitude toward work? Your lifestyle?
5. Read Isaiah 6:1-5. How does this passage suggest humility is developed?

Day 3 — His Self-denial

1. Read the following verses and see if you can determine how Jesus denied Himself in each instance:

Matthew 4:1-2—

Mark 1:35—

Mark 10:45—

somewhat communicated by our word “daddy.” What does it mean to you to think of God as “Daddy?”

4. Read Hebrews 4:14-16 and 10:19-22. How can we have an intimate relationship with our God?

Day 2 — His Humility

1. Matthew was one of Jesus’ twelve close followers. He traveled with Jesus every day for about three years. In Matthew 12:15-21, Matthew quotes a verse from the Old Testament that he believed described Jesus well. How would you describe Jesus’ character based on this text?
2. Read Philippians 2:5-8. What can you add to your previous answer based on this text?

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST does not exist for itself and its own interests. It is not a self-seeking organization. Rather, it exists for a purpose. That means you, as a member of His church, exist for a purpose. Your purpose: to participate in God’s mission in the world. Your identity: a servant. Now is the time to think seriously about your involvement in God’s mission. Your involvement will be a learning process. You will make mistakes. You will be even more useful to Him later than you are now, because you will have grown. Yet you must begin. Jesus sent the twelve apostles out long before they were “totally prepared.” If we wait until we are totally prepared, we will never begin.

Day 1 — Servanthood

1. How did Jesus describe Himself in Mark 10:45?
2. Not only did He say this, He demonstrated it. What does John 13:1-5 say about His servanthood?
3. If we are to follow in His steps, we must come to view ourselves as servants. It is not hard for us to think about serving God or Jesus, until we realize that this means serving people. The world usually thinks more in terms of controlling people, and sees it as a sign of weakness to be “under” them. Yet Jesus’ view is different. What does He say about being a servant in Mark 10:42-44?

4. What is the attitude of a servant according to Luke 17:7-10?

This may be a difficult attitude to have at first. But the better you understand what God has done for you, the more humility you will have. In appreciation for His accepting you, you will humbly listen to Him. You will follow in the way of His Son, which is the way of a servant.

5. According to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, fleshly weapons are not effective in furthering God's cause, but spiritual ones are. How is serving a powerful, spiritual weapon?

6. List several specific things you could do to serve each of the following groups of people:

your family or roommates—

the people you work with—

your brothers and sisters in Christ—

THIS WEEK YOU WILL BE STUDYING some of the characteristics of your Master/Teacher so that you can become more like Him. Remember you are now His student. As you study what He was like, consider how you would apply those same characteristics to your life. Those who spend time with Jesus will be changed (Acts 4:13).

Day 1 — His Relationship with God

1. One of the reasons Jesus came to earth was to show us how to live. Read John 5:19 and John 8:28. How did Jesus get the direction and power for His life?

2. Nowhere is this trust in God more evident than in Jesus' prayer life. Read Luke 6:12 and Luke 5:16. What do these passages say about Jesus?

3. The intimacy of Jesus' relationship with God is seen in the way Jesus addressed Him. His regular way was "Father." The word he used in Mark 14:36, "Abba," is very intimate. It is the word Jewish children use for their fathers and is

3. God has given the church a responsibility to help you in your growth. However, you also have a responsibility. Read the following passages and note the things that *you* must do and the attitudes *you* must possess to grow:
 - a. Hebrews 5:11-14 —
 - b. Acts 2:42—
 - c. 1 Peter 2:2-3—
 - d. Mark 4:24-25—
 - e. 2 Peter 1:5-7—
4. What are some things you can do immediately to start acting on this?

Summary of First Week

Because of your faith in Jesus, your decision to turn away from your former life, your public confession of Jesus, and your baptism, God has made you into a new person. He has forgiven you for all your sins, come to live inside of you by means of His Holy Spirit, made you a part of His family (the church), and dealt your old, sinful nature a severe blow. You are now a "new baby" in Christ and a disciple of Jesus. God earnestly desires for you to grow and learn all you can about this new life. But to do so, you must open your heart to Him and pour yourself into learning and doing His word.

Day 2 — God's Mission in the World

1. For thousands of years, God has called and blessed people. His purpose in doing this has never been so that His people could hoard blessings. Why does God call and bless people according to the following scriptures?

Genesis 12:1-3—

1 Peter 2:9—
2. What does Jesus' teaching in Matthew 10:8 say about our responsibility to share God's blessings?
3. The reason God wants His people to pass the blessing on to others is that He has a mission in the world. God created man and wants to live in fellowship with him. But man turned his back on God. In spite of this, God still loves all people and wants to reach out and help them. Read the parable in Matthew 21:33-4. What does it say about God's persistence in saving people?
4. This desire to reach out to people in their dire situation and restore them is God's mission in the world. Write out the way Jesus stated God's mission to Paul in Acts 26:15-18:

Now rewrite it in your own words:

5. God's mission in the world will be carried out primarily by people. He still guides, directs and empowers us. It is still His mission. But He has entrusted His mission into our hands. What does 2 Timothy 2:15, 20-21 say about our role in carrying out His mission?

Day 3 — Doing Good

1. Part of God's mission in the world is doing good to others. Jesus is our model for this. How does Acts 10:38 summarize His life?

2. In His first public sermon Jesus explained His ministry in terms of an Old Testament text. Read Luke 4:16-21. What is meant by each of the phrases in vv. 18-19?

3. Throughout the New Testament we are instructed to do good for other people. What do the following verses say about this?

Matthew 5:16—

Ephesians 2:10—

Titus 2:14—

Titus 3:8—

3. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Ephesians 4:11-16; and Colossians 3:16. What are some of the means God will use to teach you?

4. You are a follower and a disciple of Jesus, not a follower of a philosophy or of a set of rules. You are striving to be like the person Jesus, who came here to show us the way (Luke 6:40). How will your life be different if you adopt this perspective?

Day 6 — I Started A Growth Spurt

1. The Bible compares new Christians to newborn babies in 1 Peter 2:2-3. It is obvious what will happen to a baby if it is not fed and nourished. What are other parallels between infants and new Christians?

2. God not only wants to save us from our sins, but He also wants us to grow and mature spiritually. Read Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; and 2 Peter 1:5-8. Why do you believe God wants us to grow?

had almost no power over it, but now you have been put in a position where you have the possibility of being free from it. How does your thinking need to change about your old nature and your struggle against sin?

4. What part of your old nature (deeds, thoughts, attitudes) do you want to bring under God's control as soon as possible?

Day 5 — I Became A Student

1. "Disciple" means "student, learner, pupil." However, since we not only are going to learn about Jesus, but also do what we learn, perhaps "follower" is a better definition. Read Matthew 28:18-20. How did Jesus define "disciple?"
2. Read Matthew 11:25-30 and Mark 4:24-25. What attitudes do you need to be a good student, one that He can readily and easily teach?

In the last verse, Paul tells Titus to stress "these things," so that the people would engage in good deeds. What are "these things" that are described in vv. 4-7?

How do they cause us to be involved in good deeds?

4. One way of doing good is to share our money and possessions. When you became a disciple of Jesus, you "gave up everything" (Luke 14:33). You realized that all of your possessions really belong to God—you are merely using them. How did the early Christians use their possessions?

Acts 4:32-35—

1 Corinthians 16:1-2—

5. Set a time to discuss with your spouse (if you have one) about giving. Think of ways to give in your daily life and to the church. You should try to set a fairly regular amount to give. Don't feel enslaved to that amount, but realize that if you don't set any amount, it is easy not to give anything or to give just the "leftovers." All your giving, whether to the church or to individuals, will be a way of participating in God's mission. What do the following verses teach about giving?

2 Corinthians 8:1-8; 15—

Acts 4:32-35—

1 Corinthians 16:1-4—

6. In addition to giving and sharing, what are some other deeds you can do...among your family members and in your home? ...at work? ...for people in the church? ...for your neighbors?

7. It is fine to have high hopes that the people you do good to will turn to God. However we must not condition our doing good on their response. Jesus' example in giving teaches us a very important lesson: Give with no strings attached. Read Luke 17:11-19. How many were healed? How many turned to Jesus? What "strings" might you be tempted to attach to your giving?

Day 4 — Spreading the News

1. Another part of God's mission is spreading the Good News of what Jesus has done to save from us from sin. What is Jesus' mission in Luke 19:10 and 4:42-44?

4. God has made you a part of His family, but you must decide to associate with it. What are some ways you can get more involved with the family of God this week?

Day 4 — I Had Surgery

1. The Bible uses several words to describe that part within us that wants to do wrong instead of good—old self, old nature, the flesh, the sinful nature, the self. According to Romans 6:3-7, what happened to this old nature when you were baptized?

2. A paradox is something that seems contradictory but isn't. Even though God crucified your old self, it is not totally dead. The Bible makes clear that Christians still have this part of their nature (Galatians 5:13). How have you noticed your old nature in your thinking or actions?

3. Continue reading Romans 6:8-14. When you were baptized, God did something to that old nature that put a limitation on its power over you. Before, you may have

4. Are you willing to cooperate with God as He seeks to change you and make you into the person He wants you to be? What might stand in your way?

Day 3 — I Was Added To The Church

1. Church is not a place, nor a building. It is people. It is all the people who are in Christ. According to Acts 2:40-47, how does one become a member of the church?
2. Jesus taught that all those who obey Him make up a spiritual family. Read Mark 3:31-35. What is our relationship with others who follow Christ? What is the reason for this closeness?
3. What does it mean to you to think of the people you know in the church as your family?

2. We are instructed to be ready always to give an account for the hope we have as Christians (1 Peter 3:15). It is important that the basics of the Good News be clear in your mind. Write out what you understand to be the Good News, including some Bible verses if you are able. Show this to a brother or sister in Christ and let them help you clarify your understanding.

3. Peter also tells us in 1 Peter 3:15 that how we state the news to others is important. In what manner should we explain it?

To what else must you pay great attention if you want your words to have an effect on others?

1 Peter 3:16—

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12—

Titus 2:10—

1 Peter 3:1-2—

4. The relationships you have with family members and friends are valuable to God's mission. You have a relationship and a trust from these people that the rest of the members of the church do not have. Read the following verses and notice how the Good News often spread through such family networks.

John 1:40-42—

Acts 10:21-27—

Acts 16:13-15—

5. Who among your family and friends might be open to learning about what God has done for us? Who could you connect them with that might help you teach them?

3. From what in your past are you especially thankful that you have been forgiven?

4. We must never take God's forgiveness for granted. Our attitude should be like that of the woman in Luke 7:36-50. How would you describe her attitude?

Day 2 — I Received A Gift

1. Read John 14:23 and Acts 2:38-39. What do these verses promise to those who love God and are baptized into Christ?
2. The Bible compares the Holy Spirit to a plant that bears fruit. That means He has the power to produce new qualities in your life. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Which of the qualities listed there do you most urgently desire right now?
3. Read Isaiah 63: 9-10. What will stop God's Spirit from producing fruit in your life?

Note: It is very important that you live a Christian life for these people to see. We are tempted to preach at them but don't always set a very good example.

YOU HAVE HEARD THE STORY of the death and resurrection of Jesus. You know that His death took place as a penalty for sins we have committed. You know that His resurrection shows Him to be the Lord of the universe. Because you believe this, because your heart has turned away from your old ways and turned toward Him, because you have embraced Him as your master, and because you were baptized in His name, the power of God has worked a miracle within you. You may not have felt it physically, but God has done something to you. You will never be the same. The exercises and meditations this week are designed to help you better understand what God has done in you.

Day 1 — I Was Forgiven

1. Your baptism was crucial in your journey to be right with God. According to Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, what happened when you were baptized?
2. We sometimes have difficulty forgiving ourselves. God, however, delights to forgive us. Read Psalm 103:8-13 and Luke 15:4-7. How does God view you?

Day 5 — Nurturing Others

1. A third part of God's mission in the world is to help those who have become Christians to grow and mature in their faith. People need to be nurtured. To nurture is to feed, nourish, develop, train. It is similar to what good parents do for their children. Notice how Jesus did this with His disciples:

Mark 9:30-31—

Matthew 5:1-2—
2. Paul had this concern as well. According to Colossians 1:28-29, what was his objective in teaching and nurturing Christians?
3. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:6-12. Paul compares his relationship with the Christians at Thessalonica to the relationship that a mother and father has with a child. What things does he say he did for his "children" in his role as a "mother" to them? What did he do for his "children" in his role as a "father"?

4. What qualities must you begin to develop if you want to help other Christians mature?

Galatians 4:19-20—

1 Thessalonians 5:14—

2 Timothy 2:24-25—

2 Timothy 4:2—

5. One thing you can do to help others mature is to speak to them according to what they need: teaching, sharing, warning, encouraging, admonishing, consoling, etc. Don't worry when you do not know what to say to people. Just say what you do know. Share what you have learned about the Christian life from the scriptures that you think is important. Though we must always speak the truth to each other, what is the condition placed on our speech in Ephesians 4:15?

6. Another thing you can do to help others mature is to have fellowship with them. To have fellowship is to share, to have something in common. As we associate with each other, we will rub off on each other and help each other grow. Read Acts 4:13. What did people notice about the disciples?

How To Use This Study Guide

WHAT IS "A SOLID FOUNDATION?" The name suggests a comparison between the building of a house and the building of a new life in Christ. In both cases a solid foundation is essential.

Use this as a day-by-day study guide. As you think and pray about the content of each day's Bible readings and questions, you will be building a solid foundation on the new life you have in Christ Jesus.

THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS will help your get the most out of your study:

1. Set aside at least fifteen minutes for each day's work. Find a quiet time and place. If at all possible, stay with the schedule, doing one day's work each day so that God will have regular and consistent opportunities to touch your heart and life.
2. Put something into it — that's the surest way to get something out of it. Don't hurry to finish. Spend time thinking and meditating about the questions and the subjects for that day. Write out your answers and thoughts.
3. Pray about what you learn. Express to your Father how much you depend on Him and need help with what you are learning.
4. Ask for help when you don't understand. Remember, the church is committed to helping you grow in Christ.
5. Share what you are learning with others. The best way to learn something is to teach it.

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7. Another thing you can do to help others mature in Christ is to pray for them. What can you learn about this from Colossians 4:12-13?

Who in the congregation do you know that really needs your prayers? What can you pray for them?

8. All Christians are responsible for actively looking out for those who need care. However, it sure helps if the person who needs to be nurtured will make their needs known. In what areas of your life do you need to be nurtured? With whom in the congregation could you share these needs?

Who do you know in the church that really needs to be nurtured? How could you nurture them?

Day 6 — Empowered by God

1. Everything you have studied this week concerns God's mission in the world. The Lord is calling you to be involved in His mission in some way. He needs people who will do good to others, who will spread the news of His salvation, who will nurture His people. As you think about all this, it may be overwhelming. It was for Paul. What was his question in 2 Corinthians 2:16?

2. How do we get the strength to carry out God's mission?
 - 2 Corinthians 3:5—
 - John 5:19—
 - John 15:1-4—
 - Matthew 28:20—

3. Remember, too, that you do not earn your salvation by participating in His mission. You received His favor and grace when you became His disciple. What are some proper motives for being involved in His mission, according to the verses that follow?
 - Matthew 9:35-38—
 - Acts 4:18-20—
 - 2 Corinthians 4:13—
 - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15—

4. The best way to be involved in God's mission is to be so full of His truth and love that you just can't help but be involved. This is the motive Peter and John refer to in Acts 4:18-20. What had they "seen and heard?" What have you "seen and heard" (in a somewhat different sense from them)?

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We thank God for the decision you have made to turn your life over to Him. We are in awe at God's great love and power to save us and make us new, just as you have recently experienced. The church family at Southeastern is committed to help you in your new life in any way we can. May God bless you on your journey to become like Him.

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for use of the Southeastern Church of Christ
6500 Southeastern Ave.
Indianapolis, IN 46203
(317) 352-9296
office@southeastern.org

5. What will happen to those who get involved in God's mission, according to 2 Timothy 3:12?

6. What is a reason for this? See 2 Corinthians 1:8-10.

7. What are some ways you may have to suffer if you get involved with God's mission? How should you respond to suffering?

Summary of Seventh Week

As a follower of Jesus, you both imitate Him in your personal life and help continue His mission in the world. You must approach every aspect of this mission as He did, as a servant. You should be looking for ways you can do good to others, share the news of Christ with them, and help other believers mature as Christians. However, like in every other aspect of Christian life, you must not attempt to do these things by your own power. You must continue to let God into your heart and life and allow Him to strengthen you for this mission. If you do get engrossed in His mission, strengthened by His power, nothing on earth will be more rewarding!

What Happens Now?

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR PERSEVERANCE in working through this study guide! Today is a big day for you. In a sense, you are going to be “weaned.” This bottle is now empty and it’s time for you to learn to feed yourself.

THE TIME YOU SPEND FEEDING YOURSELF from the Word of God will be a key ingredient to your growth (Matthew 4:4; John 6:63). Perhaps one place to begin is to work through the church’s Bible survey.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR GROWTH is for you to meet with other Christians. The Sunday assembly and mid-week groups are gifts from God designed to help you (Hebrews 3:12-13). Don’t neglect them.

YOU ALSO NEED TO OFFER YOURSELF in carrying out the mission of God. This congregation has some ways you can get involved in doing good for people, spreading the news and helping others mature. This is explained in our “Passion For People” weekends. You may also want to ask your brothers and sisters how you can get more involved.

ANOTHER NECESSARY PART of your growth is prayer. As you humble yourself before the Father and ask Him to work out His divine will in your life, make sure to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3). He has walked this way, faithful to God. He calls you to follow Him.

“May God Himself, the God of Peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”
—1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

*I will show you what he is like
who comes to me and hears my words
and puts them into practice.
He is like a man building a house,
who dug down deep
and laid the foundation on rock.
When a flood came,
the torrent struck that house
but could not shake it,
because it was well built.*

Luke 6:46-48